



Welcome

We hope you enjoy reading our Winter Snapshot with positive stories about building knowledge, and future leaders and scientists.

Leanne Nguyen, our inaugural Research Fellow, had a dream to work in Marine Science. She started with us as a student intern in 2019, then volunteered, completed her Honours degree last year, and is now back as a Fellow.

Inspired by our *i sea, i care* program at primary school, Ella Hutchinson volunteers with us while studying marine science. Her contributions are so significant that we created a role as an Assistant Fellow.

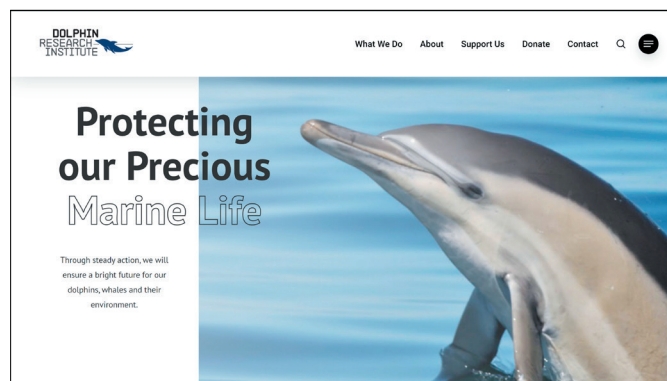
Leanne's work two years ago achieved lasting improvements to the Two Bay's Whale Project. Ella's work in the past months confirmed the third generation of common dolphins.

Leanne and Ella's stories illustrate how our long-term integrated programs support each other to achieve impact.

This is what makes DRI unique and effective.

Throughout this snapshot, there is a common focus on the future; understanding the situation for our dolphins, whales and their environment, working in the community to provide opportunities for education, citizen science and volunteering, and developing future leaders and scientists.

The future needs a strong organisation. We want to acknowledge the trustees at the Helen Macpherson Smith trust for the belief shown in DRI to make a \$45,000 capacity-building



grant to re-develop our website and implement the Salesforce Not For Profit Success Pack to run our organisation better. We also acknowledge the JMS Foundation and JIW Foundation. We are also grateful to Salesforce, Google, and Microsoft for their trust in us.

Our new site is live, and we still have many improvements to make. We would welcome your feedback as users.

Looking to the future means also planning succession for our board and team. We certainly hope that one of our fellows may return to a leadership role. Part of it is a renewal for our board. We acknowledge that Paul Curtin retires after eight years as a director, including Chairman. Paul leaves a legacy of steering DRI through some challenging years. We also acknowledge three new directors who also help set DRI up for a strong future.

Paul Ramadge, Chairman

Jeff Weir OAM, Executive Director

Inaugural Research Fellowship

We proudly introduce Leanne Nguyen as the recipient of our Inaugural Research Fellowship.

Leanne is an outstanding young scientist who recently graduated from Monash University with an Honours degree focused on studying little penguins.

She will make significant contributions to our research programs on dolphins and whales and help mentor interns.

The high calibre of applicants for the fellowship made it so difficult for the selection panel that we created another position for Ella Hutchinson, also from Monash, to work with our team.

Our dream, in time and as we expand our fundraising activities, is to appoint more fellows in research and education and behaviour change. This is an integral part of the future of the Institute.

You can see an interview with Leanne on our website by following the QR code.





A Remarkable Detective Story Spanning Three Dolphin Generations

Our last research survey for 2021, combined with seventeen years of detective work, helped uncover a remarkable story of success for three generations of Port Phillip's common dolphins.

It started with the challenge of finding common dolphins during Summer when we suspect they spread over a broader area to find prey. We saw bottlenose dolphins near Mornington but no sign of the commons - for at least 5 hours - then we got a break!

The distant sign of diving birds provided the clue we were looking for. After travelling nearly half the way to Geelong, we found the birds and our dolphins feeding together.

The top image shows a young calf, Lucky, with an older dolphin called Bud. This is one of many images of these two dolphins, strongly indicating a mum-calf pair.

The detective work by our research team tracked Bud back to 2015, when it was still a young calf. The image (right) clearly shows it covered in teeth rakings from other dolphins and the same injury to its dorsal fin as in the top picture.

'Bud' stands for 'banged-up dolphin'. It's



a reminder that it can be tough being a dolphin, even to the point of being savaged by members of your own family!

It's more common to see these injuries on dolphins in Bass Strait. Perhaps Bud was attacked by a transient dolphin that visits from time to time from outside the bay? Maybe they wanted to mate with Bud's mother - so they needed Bud out of the way? We may never know.

What we do know, thanks to more detective work, is that Bud's mother is one of the original common dolphins that came into the bay. Using subtle but lasting scars, we tracked Bud back to a photo taken on 25 March 2013 as a newborn alongside Esther.

We have known Esther since 2007, and we have seen her for most years since. Her first calf born in the bay was in 2007, then others in 2010, 2013, 2015 and 2019.

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Western Port Study & Interns

Interns like Gareth and Jessica (above) are helping to build an understanding of the bottlenose dolphins in Western Port.

They are among nine internships we have hosted so far in 2022 from Monash, Deakin,

Melbourne and Federation Universities.

In addition to their survey hours, interns complete other projects to support our education, communication, behaviour-change, and IT goals.

We see hosting interns as an important part of DRI's role to help develop the next generation of scientists.

Leanne, our Research Fellow, was an intern three years ago.

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Esther is the first generation, with Bud one of the second generation.

Lucky represents the first solid evidence of the third generation of common dolphins in our bay since 2005.

Further work is bound to find other members of "Gen-3".

ID photos like these are the foundation of our research programs. Each image is like a "fin print" and helps build a picture of the population size, associations of individuals, calving rates and success, and other essential measures crucial to the dolphins' protection. We have more than 130,000 photo-ID images taken over 31 years!

Port Phillip's common dolphins are a remarkable success story, growing from a handful in 2005 to the point where we have a catalogue of over 85 individuals. This is on top of over 100 resident bottlenose dolphins.



(Image: Bud as a new-born alongside Esther 25 March 2013.)

In contrast, in 2021, the South Australian government announced an investigation into why their dolphins are not surviving.

The third generation of common dolphins in the bay is a success story for some champion dolphin mums and their remarkable home.

Oh – and it might be a good idea to re-think coming back as a dolphin in a future life – it's tough being a dolphin!

Your support makes this important work possible - thank you.



Report for 2021

How many eyes does it take to capture the movement of whales through central Victorian waters? **The answer is LOTS!**

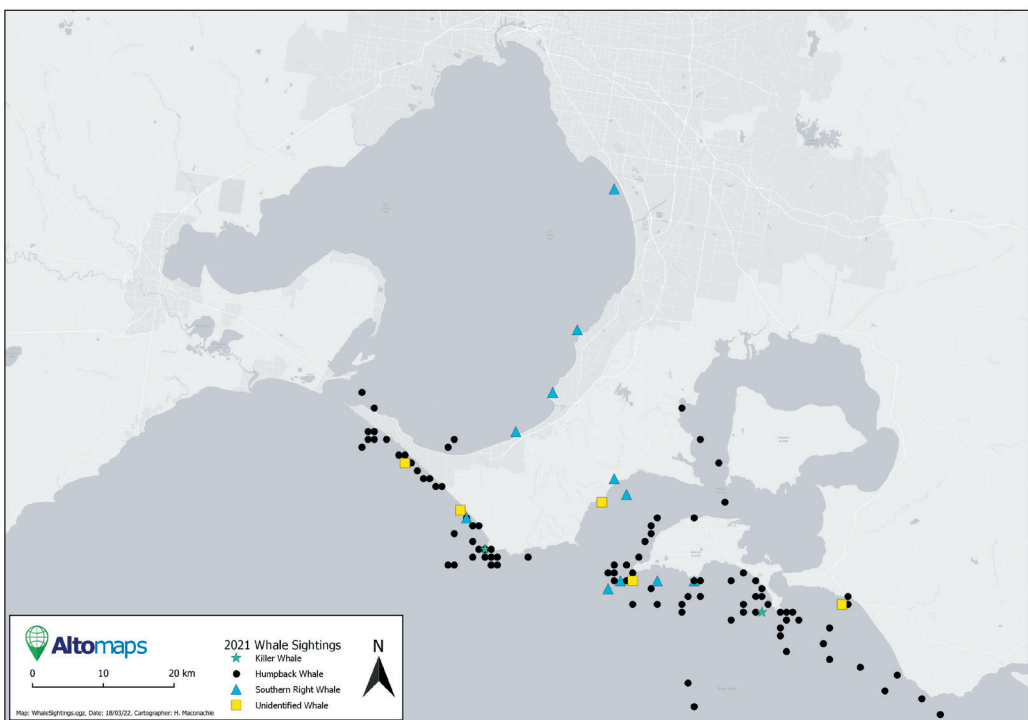
And this is exactly what the Two Bays Whale Project has delivered since 2015 in collaboration with Wildlife Coast Cruises, DRI and the community to record the movement of large whales in Port Phillip and Western Port and Bass Strait from Barwon Heads to Inverloch.

The data is shared with local, national and international bodies, including the Southern Hemisphere Whales and Climate Project.

While COVID won't have affected the movement of whales, people were affected and fewer sightings were received during the pandemic than in previous years.

In 2021 we recorded 150 separate sighting events of three species (southern right, humpback and killer whale) and 259 individual whales.

The Two Bays Whale Project uniquely validates every sighting to filter out multiple reports of the same event and capture images. This provides a solid basis for this vital program.



The Victorian Humpback Whale Catalogue

We identify and track humpback whales from images of their flukes (compared to dorsal fins for dolphins). DRI now hosts the Victorian Humpback Whale Fluke Identification Catalogue, supporting David Donnelly, our Research Officer, to build on work he started decades before. Fluke images contributed to the Two Bays Whale Project are shared with other researchers through the online tool 'Happywhale', finding sighting matches in Tasmanian, New South Wales and Queensland waters.

The catalogue now holds 205 individual whales, an increase of 55 since 2020. Right is the 200th fluke added in late 2021.

The Victorian Humpback Whale Fluke Identification Catalogue is now available on our website.



The Island Whale Festival



1-3 July
2022

Phillip
Island

Join us at the 2022 Island Whale Festival. DRI was an instigator of the festival and proud to see it grow into an award winning event.

Our inflatable whale, education team and researchers will be there running programs. We will keep you posted through all our communications.



Education

The joy of school being back is evident for one of our Ambassadors – even through the mask and snorkel! The seals also seem to approve.

The challenges of the past two years have not left us entirely, but we are privileged to be able to work again with children from pre-school to VCE, university and older groups. Here are some other images of our programs at work.

Ambassadors for the 'Great Southern Reef'

This year more than 500 *i sea, i care* Ambassadors work in their school communities as peer educators (below) to help share stories about our unique marine environment.

2022 Ambassadors are now formally Ambassadors for the 'Great Southern Reef'. Marine scientists and educators introduced this concept across Australia's southern coasts to signify the importance of temperate waters with our kelp forests and species that are mostly only found in our waters. We will share more about this innovation as the year develops. You can see a video with our Education Director, Mandy, describing the initiative on our website.

We thank our many schools, teachers, parents and Ambassadors for overcoming many challenges to attend workshops and enthusiastically work in their school communities. Thanks also to our loyal council partners; the City of Casey, Greater Dandenong, Kingston and the Mornington Peninsula Shire.



Images of Ambassadors at work: Underwater and above water with the seals (above), Ambassadors peer-teaching and marine values workshops (next page bottom) and Past Ambassador Mentor workshop (next page top).



Ambassador Mentor Program

Another exciting innovation for 2022 is a Mentor Program for past Ambassadors to support them to continue their environmental leadership role after they transition to secondary school (or from grade 5 to 6). Jaiden (standing third from left) was an Ambassador in 2021 and produced the bags and calendars shown to raise funds for DRI and other charities. Mandy and Jacqui helped the students set goals like developing a 2023 marine calendar and blogs for World Ocean Day.



We would love to also hear from past ambassadors and develop an Ambassador Alumni group.
Please contact Mandy at education@dolphinresearch.org.au



FUTURE GENERATIONS APPEAL

You can imagine the watchful mother dolphin (above) keeping a close eye on her tiny newborn calf.

It's amazing to see these little guys work so hard to keep up with mum with what seems to be six fluke strokes for every one of their mum's! It also takes a while for them to progress from jerky belly-flops to graceful leaps.

It's a remarkable success story spanning three dolphin generations. So far this year, we are aware of seven calves that have been born in in Port Phillip.

Many of their cousins born in Adelaide and Perth do not survive - it's too late for them.

This is why our long-term programs are so crucial here - to empower action and find answers to crucial questions now - before it's too late.

How are the numbers going? Are the calves surviving and reproducing successfully? Are there issues to be concerned about? What's going on with their environment? What education, behaviour-change and other programs are needed? Where are the next generation of environmental leaders and scientists coming from?

Future generations face climate and population growth extremes, making our programs even more important in the decades to come.

Your support of the Future Generations Appeal will give us the power to address the more crucial questions and to create more Fellowships for research, education and behaviour change.

To donate, just use the QR Code or go to our website.



Thank You To Our Valued Supporters



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