

## Common dolphin Photo-ID Volunteer Position in the Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand

A volunteer is required to assist with a PhD study investigating the abundance, social structure and site fidelity of common dolphins (*Delphinus* sp.) in the Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand. This PhD project is part of the ongoing research of the New Zealand Common Dolphin Project (NZCDP) and the Coastal-Marine Research Group (C-MRG) at Massey University Albany, Auckland. (<http://cmrg.massey.ac.nz>).

### PROJECT BACKGROUND:

The Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand, is an important habitat for common dolphins that occur in the Gulf year round and use the region extensively for foraging and nursing. Common dolphins in this region consistently utilise inshore coastal waters, making them vulnerable to the effect of tourism, pollution, and inshore recreational bycatch.

### DATES:

While the field season runs year round, currently volunteers are needed from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2014 – 28<sup>th</sup> February 2015. A minimum commitment of two months is required and priority will be given to those who can commit for longer periods.

LOCATION: Auckland, New Zealand

### FIELDWORK:

The volunteer position entails assisting during field surveys and analysis of common dolphin fin photo identification. The successful applicant will gain valuable experience in conducting marine mammal field research, identifying individuals based on dorsal fin characteristics, and the use of databases for archiving field data.

Field work is physically and at times mentally demanding but it is a great opportunity to gain knowledge in visual cetacean surveying, to get hands-on field experience in relation to survey techniques, photo-identification, behavioural observations, and improve practical skills (data analysis, photo-ID).

Fieldwork is weather dependent and can vary between weekdays and weekends. Assistants need to be available full-time including weekends and be prepared to work long hours with early starts. Surveys will be conducted from a 20m whale and dolphin watching vessel.

### RESPONSIBILITIES:

- . Assisting with boat-based photo-identification surveys from a local whale and dolphin watching vessel, collecting environmental, location, and behavioural data for dolphin groups (25% of the time).
- . Subsequent analysis of photo-identification data in the lab, including assistance with photo sorting, matching, lesion identification, data entry and maintenance of a long-term photo-id catalogue. Research assistants should be prepared to work long days in the office analysing of photographs and matching them with the photo-identification catalogue (75% of the time).

As this is a volunteer position, there is unfortunately no monetary compensation or living provisions. The successful candidate should arrange their own accommodation in Auckland, living expenses, travel costs and visa.

#### PREREQUISITES:

- . Be reliable, adaptable, hardworking and patient as fieldwork is highly weather dependent. This means office based work during bad weather and long consecutive days in the field when weather permits.
- . Have a mature and independent attitude towards marine mammal research
- . Speak fluent English
- . Be sociable, enthusiastic and have a positive attitude
- . Strong interest in the marine environment and conservation
- . Participants must be able to swim and should be comfortable working on boats

#### QUALIFICATIONS:

- . The project is well suited to upper level undergrads, recent grads and graduate students who have some background in Biology, Marine Biology, Ecology, Zoology or related fields
- . Basic computer proficiency in MS Office (especially Excel)

#### Preferred qualifications but not required:

- . Field research including photo-identification experience
- . Previous experience in survey techniques and especially in marine mammal research
- . Prior experience working on research vessels
- . Experience with Endnote
- . First AID/CPR certification

#### APPLICATION PROCESS:

Applicants should send a short email to [k.rankmore@massey.ac.nz](mailto:k.rankmore@massey.ac.nz), using "photo-id position" as the subject line. The email should include an outline of why you would like to work on this project, the dates when you are available to assist on the project, your qualifications and relevant experience. Please also attach a brief CV including at least one reference acknowledging your relevant experience.

Early application is recommended as applications will be examined in order of reception.