

18 May 2014: The 12th International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise

On Sunday, 18 May 2014, the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (IDBHP) was celebrated around the shores of the Baltic Sea for the 12th time.

Special events on this day took place in Middelfart, Denmark, in the Särkänniemi Dolphinarium in Finland, in the Lithuanian Sea Museum and at the Hel Marine Station in Poland. Activities related to the IDBHP also took place in Germany.

For the first time this year, the event was organized with the help of a [Facebook event page](#), which local organizers were invited to make use of for announcing and reporting on their events.

Denmark

In the small town of Middelfart in Denmark the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise was celebrated to commemorate the town's historical porpoise hunt and to highlight present-day conservation efforts. The [website](#) of the **Middelfart Museum** provides more information on the celebrations (in Danish).



Middelfart, Denmark © <http://www.middelfart-museum.dk/marsvindag>

Finland

The [Sarkänniemi Dolphinarium](#) in Tampere used the opportunity afforded by the IDBHP to inform visitors about the harbour porpoises in Finnish waters, the threats they face, the country's engagement in ASCOBANS, as well as conservation and sightings projects. A drawing contest for children was again very popular and information material was distributed.



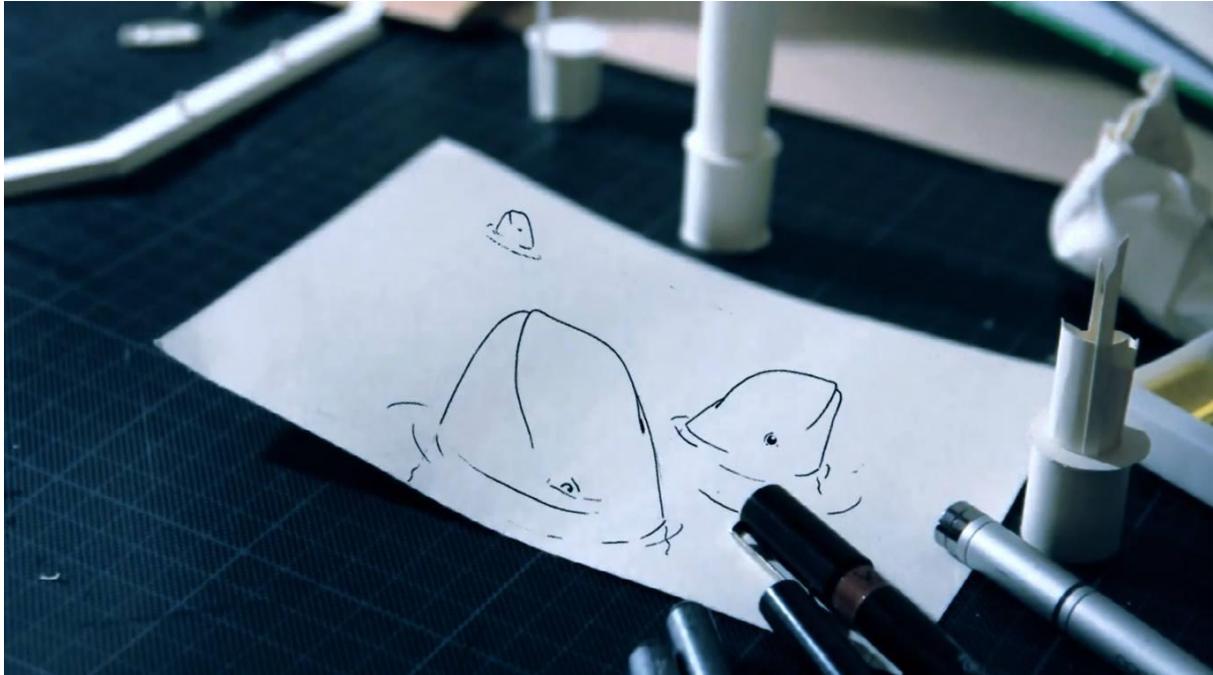
Tampere, Finland © Kai Mattson ([Facebook event page](#))

Germany

[Whale and Dolphin Conservation \(WDC\)](#) presented the results of its cooperation with the Design University Hochschule Anhalt:

With creative ideas and the message “a picture says more than thousand words” in the back of their mind, a small group of students from the Design University in Dessau sat down and created some remarkable short films, 3D and stop-motion animations with the clear message: we have to save the harbour porpoise before it's too late!

WDC presented the projects created by the students on the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (IDBHP) on 18 May 2014 on www.wdcs-de.org/walheimat. Following a public ballot, on 31 October 2014 the project with the highest number of votes will be presented at whales.org.



Design University in Dessau © WDC

In March 2014, the **ASCOBANS Secretariat** presented a new website for children to the public, "ASCOBANS Kids" (www.kids.ascobans.org). In the run-up to IDBHP, a naming competition was held for the website's mascot, a little cartoon harbour porpoise.



ASCOBANS Kids (www.kids.ascobans.org) © ASCOBANS

The winning name, Bubbles, was suggested by Baleigh from Aberdeen, UK, who was one of many participants in the naming competition announced on the website in March, which received entries from a number of European countries and Canada.

Bubbles' name was announced on the occasion of the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise.

Lithuania

At the [Lithuanian Sea Museum](#), the occasion was marked on 16 May with a variety of events dedicated to the ecosystem of the Baltic Sea, such as a series of workshops “Eco wave” and the intriguing interactive video exhibition “Bestiarium marinum” by Aukse Petrulienė from “Psilicone theatre” in Kaunas. According to the artist, the bestiarium is meant to convey the drama of the fauna in the Baltic Sea in relation to the condition of society. Tiny dolls made of silicone portrayed the creatures from the Baltic Sea, while explanatory texts transformed scientific information to witty slogans and animated videos.

Specifically for the Harbour Porpoise Day, two whale miniatures were made available, commemorating two bycaught porpoises in the spring 2001 in Melnragė. Back then, a young male harbour porpoise tangled himself in the fishermen’s nets and died. Another adult female porpoise was caught by a trawl further away from the shore and died, too. Visitors were not only welcome to touch the silicone miniatures of the whales, but also use their imagination in guessing what past or future adventures these whales may embark upon.

The events were followed by the programme of the Long Night of Museums, during which a film on the harbour porpoise by director Vytautas Jankevičius was premiered. The evening finished with the performance of Linas Švirinas “Grock” studio together with the dolphins called “The wave of clean music”.



Lithuanian Sea Museum © Aukse Petrulienė



© Simona Mikalkevičiūtė

Poland

In Poland, the celebration of the IDBHP took place in Hel, within the Blue Village area, around the newly established museum dedicated to the Baltic Harbour Porpoises called “The House of the Porpoise”. The [Hel Marine Station](#) of the Institute of Oceanography of Gdańsk University had prepared an outdoor event combined with an information campaign about the biology and ecology of these mammals. The main objective was to raise awareness about the population of the Baltic Harbour Porpoises, which are still little known in the Polish society. An exhibition presented the equipment used to study and protect these animals, e.g. PODs (acoustic porpoise detectors), cod pots (porpoise-friendly fishing gear) and pingers (acoustic deterrents).

Employees of the Hel Marine Station answered visitors’ questions and guided them around the exhibition and museum. Guests visiting the museum were particularly interested in films presenting observations of dolphins and whales sometimes appearing in Polish coastal waters. Many were surprised that in addition to the native porpoises, visitors to Polish waters include common dolphins and occasionally such rare animals as humpback or fin whales.



Hel Marine Station, Poland © Jarosław Jankowski

The ASCOBANS Secretariat would like to say a big THANK YOU to all who participated in the 12th International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise!

