

17 May 2015: The 13th International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise

For the last 13 years, the 3rd Sunday in May has been used to celebrate the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (IDBHP) around the shores of the Baltic Sea. Also in 2015, a diverse range of educational and entertaining events took place in several countries.

A [Facebook event page](#) was used to allow local organizers to announce and report their events. All reports and many pictures are still available there. Below is a compilation of the reports on events reported to ASCOBANS.

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 © Peter Storm



Finland

The [Sarkänniemi Dolphinarium](#) in Tampere used entire weekend to inform visitors about the harbour porpoises in Finnish waters. By means of an exhibition, the state of knowledge about the animals and recent research, especially the SAMBAH project, were highlighted.



The occasion was also used in order to give another push to the national sightings campaign, which has been going on since the beginning of the millennium and has brought promising results.



Tampere, Finland ©
Kai Mattsson

Germany

Stralsund

The German Oceanographic Museum organized an event in the OZEANEUM in Stralsund. Scientists informed the visitors of the museum about the native harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea. A special focus was placed on what is known about the two populations in German Baltic waters, as well as the threats and pressures from human activities that affect this small toothed whale. Information in the form of



posters and leaflets was made available to visitors, making use both of ASCOBANS material and of information generated through the sightings project of the German Oceanographic Museum. Everybody could test their knowledge via a quiz on a laptop. The greatest challenge in the quiz was to differentiate man-made sounds from marine mammal vocalizations – not easy even for professionals.

A great highlight for the youngsters was the museum mascot “Walfred”, a large harbour porpoise. Young and old could interact with him, taking pictures or even dancing with him.



Of course, lots of harbour porpoises were painted. To give an impression how many porpoises are left in the Baltic Proper and how threatened they are, the pictures were hung up on a net.

The day was a great success. In a playful way the scientists could impart information about the harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea to the public.

Stralsund, Germany © Deutsches Meeresmuseum

Bonn & Cologne

The ASCOBANS Secretariat used the occasion of the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise to stage theatre performances in Bonn and Cologne.

“Fräulein Brehms Tierleben” (Frollein Brehm’s Life of Animals), a Berlin-based theatre company, is dedicated to bridging the gap between modern scientific research on animals and public interest. Magdalena Artelt a member of Fräulein Brehms Tierleben performed “*Phocoena phocoena* – Der Schweinswal” twice on Saturday, 16 May in Bonn’s “EUROCENTRAL Theater”, which had provided the stage free of charge to the ASCOBANS Secretariat.

On Sunday, 17 May, a short version of the same play was shown five times in Cologne Zoo, where a special environmental day was taking place. The zoo provided a room in the “Zoo Schule” (zoo school) and visitors, including many children, were directed there via announcements through the zoo’s PA system.



Bonn, Germany © Bettina Reinartz



Magdalena Artelt as „Fräulein Brehm“
© Karsten Bartel



Cologne, Germany © Bettina Reinartz

Online

Whale and Dolphin Conservation, WDC, Germany, used the internet in order to engage children. In a [special campaign](#) announced through multiple channels, porpoise experts were sought who would write their own fact sheets with interesting and funny facts about harbour porpoises, such as an explanation why the species is called “Schweinswal” (pig whale) in German, where they like to live, and what they need to be happy and safe.

By directing the children to the WDC online species guide, they were informed about the threats and pressures the species faces, and the worrying situation of the Baltic population.



Poland

The Hel Marine Station of the Institute of Oceanography of the University of Gdansk organized an educational booth in Gdynia, providing information intended to raise awareness about the mysterious and little known mammals living in the Baltic Sea.

The stand contained many different exhibits, including equipment used in research on porpoises around the world. There were also some devices used for active protection of these animals, such as acoustic deterrents.

The younger audience was also not forgotten. Colouring books were given to children as gifts and many bookmarks, stickers, key chains and helium-filled balloons with the image of the harbour porpoise were handed out.



Another highlight of the celebration of the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise was the adoption of the ranks of the WWF "Blue Patrol" by the Mayor of Gdynia, Wojciech Szczurek.

Gdynia, Poland © J. Jankowski (Hel Marine Station)



Coalition Clean Baltic

CCB highlighted the IDBHP and the Baltic harbour porpoise in an [article](#) published on their website, highlighting among other things the revised brochure "[The Baltic Harbour Porpoise Needs Protection!](#)", which includes the key findings of the SAMBAH project as well as urgent calls for actions needed to improve its conservation status. The brochure is currently available in English, Danish and Swedish. More language versions are planned.

The ASCOBANS Secretariat would like to say a big THANK YOU to all who participated in the 13th International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise!

