

15 May 2016: The 14th International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise

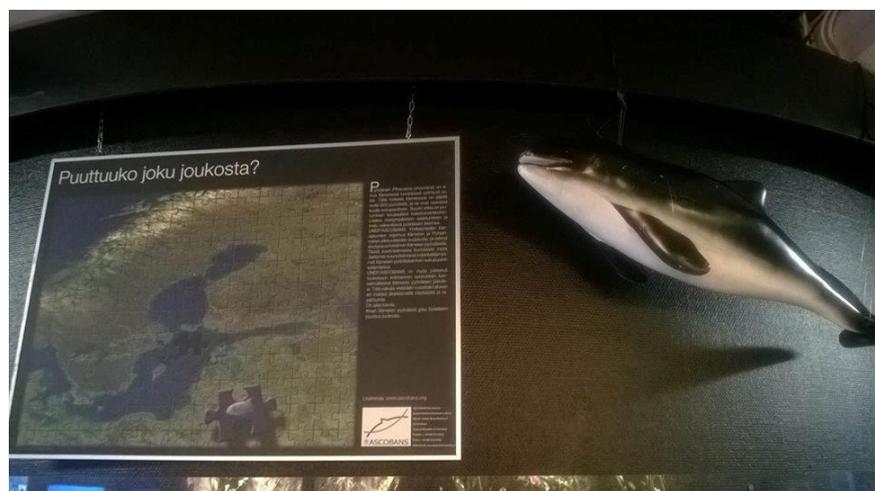
On Sunday, 15th May 2016, the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (IDBHP) was celebrated around the shores of the Baltic Sea for the fourteenth time.

Celebrations and related activities were held in Finland in the Särkänniemi Dolphinarium, in Lithuania at the Lithuanian Sea Museum, in Germany at the Timmendorfer Strand and in Poland at an open air event in the city of Gdynia.

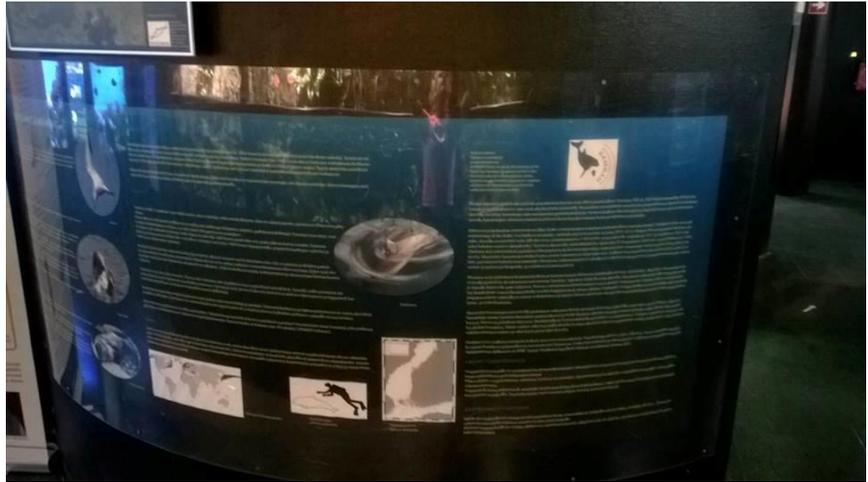
A [Facebook event page](#) was created to provide support and gather information related to the different activities. Local organizers in the countries around the Baltic used the page to communicate and spread news about their events. Below is a compilation of the reports on events that were sent to ASCOBANS.

Finland

The Särkänniemi Dolphinarium promoted an exhibition about mammals seen in Finnish waters of the Baltic Sea. They celebrated the Baltic Harbour Porpoise Day and spread knowledge about this cetacean species. Even though they are only found in small numbers and are rarely seen, the Baltic harbour porpoises are resident in Finnish waters. Among the activities, the results of the international project SAMBAH (Static Acoustic Monitoring of the Baltic Sea Harbour Porpoise) were presented and ASCOBANS leaflets were made available for the visitors.



Tampere, Finland © Kai Mattsson



Tampere, Finland © Kai Mattsson

Lithuania

The Lithuanian Sea Museum in Klaipeda, as is by now tradition, also celebrated the IDBHP. A special video was made to attract the public's attention and raise awareness: people on the streets, squares and other frequently visited areas were asked questions about the harbour porpoise, its habitat, and human impact on the animal. The statements made include the following:

- Harbour porpoises are the smallest cetacean in the world.
- It's really a challenge to see a harbour porpoise on the Lithuanian coast.
- Harbour porpoises are very playful, they like to explore and communicate.
- Sometimes harbour porpoises are sad.
- Intense fishing, shortage of food, and noise pollution are the main threats to harbour porpoises.
- Harbour porpoises are endangered sea mammals!
- The future of Harbour porpoises may depend on you.
- If you want to see a harbour porpoise, be friendly to the sea!
- Together we will learn to explore, enjoy and preserve our harmony with the sea.

The video, which can be accessed under videos on [the Lithuanian Sea Museum's Facebook page](#), received more than 4,700 views.

Germany

At the Timmendorfer Strand in Germany a group of private people held a small event that day by distributing ASCOBANS brochures and a flyer they had designed explaining concerns about the planned Fehmarn Belt Fixed Link and its potential effects on the harbour porpoise population.



Mit ökologisch-dynamischen Grüßen
Ingo Lükemann (l.), Jonathan Trinks, Dr. Felix Benary und Christian Harms gaben Informationen zur
Situation des bedrohten Ostseeschweinswals

Poland

In Poland, the celebration was held in Gdynia during an annual open air event combined with an information campaign. The event was promoted to raise ecological awareness among the public and a sense of responsibility for the Baltic harbour porpoise.



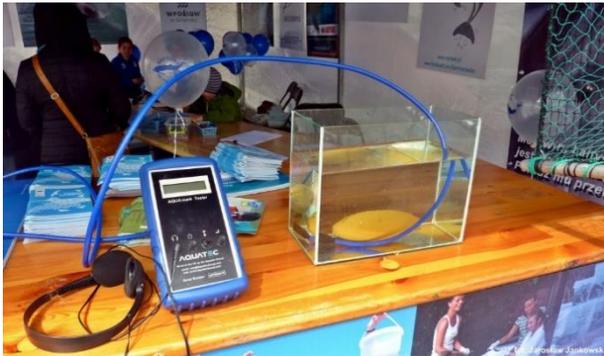
Gdynia, Poland © J. Jankowski

The Hel Marine Station of the Institute of Oceanography, University of Gdańsk, along with WWF Poland, organized an educational stand on Kościuszki Square to propagate knowledge about the Baltic harbour porpoise.



Gdynia, Poland © J. Jankowski

During the day, the Hel Marine Station's crew, together with WWF Poland's Blue Patrol volunteers, provided information about the Baltic Harbour Porpoise and showed devices used in their research, conservation and monitoring programs for the harbour porpoise. These included devices (POD's) used for detecting Harbour Porpoise presence and pingers which help to prevent harbour porpoise bycatch by warning the animal about gillnets by emitting ultrasonic sound. There were also pinger testers on the stand so that visitors could hear the sound used for warning porpoises. The public was also made aware of how to mitigate the problem of harbour porpoise bycatch by using alternative fishing gear such as cod pots that pose less threat to marine mammals.



Gdynia, Poland @ J. Jankowski



Special activities for kids, such as a stand with colouring books and gadgets such as bookmarks, stickers, key fobs and helium balloons sporting the image of the harbour porpoise and the slogan: "Save the Baltic Harbour Porpoise" were distributed.



Gdynia, Poland @ J. Jankowski



Clubs of winter swimmers also supported the IDBHP. Several groups of people, passionate about winter swimming, gathered around the harbour porpoise statue and marched towards the Gdynia City Beach, where they symbolically bathed for the sake of the harbour porpoise.



fol. Jarosław Jankowski



Gdynia, Poland © J. Jankowski

“The idea of this event was to remind us that the Baltic is the home of many living creatures and it matters a great deal to them, as well as to us, that it remains clean, safe and habitable”, said Jarosław Jankowski, adding: “We regret that in the place where IDBHP was held we were not honoured by the presence of harbour porpoises that would have been seen 70 years ago swimming in President Basin along Kosciuszko Square.”