

20 May 2012: The 10th International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise

On Sunday, 20 May 2012, the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise (IDBHP) was celebrated around the shores of the Baltic Sea for the 10th time.

Special events on this day took place in Denmark: at the Fjord & Bælt Centre; in Finland: in the Särkänniemi Dolphinarium; in Germany: at Duisburg Zoo, as well as in the Alexander Koenig Zoological Research Museum and in the Oceanographic Museum of Stralsund; in Poland: at the Kościuszki Square in the city of Gdynia; and in Sweden at the Stockholm Aquaria and in the Gothenburg Natural History Museum.

Denmark

Over 100 interested guests visited the [Fjord & Bælt Centre](#) in order to learn more about the Baltic harbour porpoise. The entrance fee for children was reduced by 50 per cent. Visitors enjoyed seal and porpoise demonstrations and talks about harbour porpoise biology and distribution, the threats in terms of pollution, fisheries and underwater noise, and how the Centre works on these issues both in the field and with the trained animals. In his presentation, scientist Magnus Wahlberg introduced whales and their senses, and then focused on the harbour porpoise and its use of sound. The presentation included videos on how the Centre undertakes research on harbour porpoise hearing and echo-location and discussed some of the results from these investigations and how they may relate to the problem of keeping harbour porpoises away from gillnets. Therefore a special emphasis was placed on the SAMBAH project (Static Acoustic Monitoring of the Baltic Sea Harbour Porpoise) and the results that may come out of that project. Through the exhibition visitors could read and learn more about the project, which will help to contribute to more effective conservation measures and population estimates for Baltic harbour porpoises. The Centre also ran a quiz, where the visitors could win nice porpoise-inspired prizes. The visitors were very happy about being served with porpoise-shaped biscuits baked by a local bakery. In Denmark the whole day was a great success and the activities went very well.



Finland

The International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise was celebrated in the [Särkänniemi Dolphinarium](#) of Tampere. The main event on this day was a lecture given by the project leader for the Finnish part of the SAMBAH project, Olli Loisa, about the Baltic harbour porpoise. Children had the possibility of taking part in a drawing contest. Also, there was a stand offering T-Shirts with the imprint 'Get a porpoise in your life', playing on the similarity between the words 'porpoise' and 'purpose'.



© H. Frisch
"Get a porpoise in your life"
T-Shirt

Germany

The team of the Harbour Porpoise Group of the [German Oceanographic Museum](#) in Stralsund showed five self-explanatory posters in the OZEANEUM with the following themes: Biology of the harbour porpoise, geographical distribution of the porpoise family, food of the harbour porpoise, echo-location and risks for the Baltic harbour porpoise. In addition to this the visitors had the possibility of seeing the documentary called: "Small whale in great need" in one of the video corners. At the cash desk of the OZEANEUM the staff pointed out that the visitors could find this special exhibition and handed out some information flyers about the endangered small cetacean to them. Inside the museum signs showed the right way to the small special exhibition.

In the [Zoo Duisburg](#) the Baltic Harbour Porpoise Day was celebrated nearly two weeks later, namely on 3 June. Because many dolphin species are in danger of extinction, and not only the Baltic harbour porpoise, the zoo decided to broaden the scope to a 'Dolphins Day' to highlight the serious predicament of many marine mammals. In preparation of the event, a 5 m x 30 m fishing net was stretched out



© Zoo Duisburg/Zooarchiv

Fishing net with 16 different species of life-sized dolphins and porpoises

between three trees. Two-dimensional models of 16 different kinds of dolphins in their original size were placed in this fishing net, illustrating the risk they face of ending up as bycatch. This display will be shown permanently. The following day, a sign was put up in the zoo informing visitors of the broad support for the protection of dolphins: since September 2009 116,660 signatures have been collected for this cause.



© H. Frisch

Blue whale-sized porpoise drawing

Last year, five-graders had painted a blue whale-sized porpoise onto the pavement near the dolphinarium. This was revived for this year's event. Also, several information booths highlighted threats for dolphins, such as overfishing, environmental pollution and underwater noise, and provided information about the biology of the animals. There also were many interesting activities for children, who could get porpoise or dolphin face paints or go on a treasure hunt with a metal detector.

In the evening, Ms Heidrun Frisch, Coordinator of the ASCOBANS Secretariat in Bonn, gave a presentation about the Baltic harbour porpoise and the international efforts to conserve it. She highlighted especially the work undertaken under ASCOBANS and the Jastarnia Plan for the recovery of the Baltic harbour porpoise.



© I. Normann

Talk about the Baltic Harbour Porpoise

The third event in Germany for the Harbour Porpoise day was hosted by the [Zoologisches Forschungsmuseum Alexander Koenig](#) in Bonn, which allowed the ASCOBANS Secretariat to display an exhibition with life-sized inflatable whales, dolphins and porpoises from 18-22



© A. B. Garcia

Children learning what to do when they find a stranded dolphin on the beach

May. School groups and other visitors to the museum had the opportunity to experience the true size of “small” cetaceans, listen to short interactive presentations on the animals, the threats they face and how everyone can contribute to their conservation.

Especially popular were the life-stranding simulations, during which children learned how to respond if they find a dolphin or porpoise on the beach. In addition, a colouring and origami area for children was offered and many beautiful works of art were

prepared. Adults and children alike also had opportunity to browse the exhibition banners and of course choose which information material to take home from a wide range available.



© A. Peters

The colouring and origami area

Photographer Roland Frisch took and prepared 360° panorama [photos](#) of the exhibition on the evening before the official opening and kindly provided them to the ASCOBANS Secretariat free of charge.



„Little Planet“ projection of the exhibition area panorama

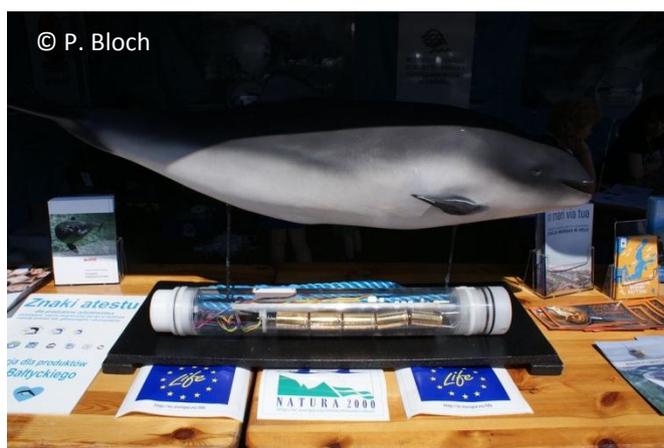
The interactive panorama can be viewed when clicking on the static preview below.



Preview of the interactive panorama
[\(click to open\)](#)

Poland

In Poland, the celebration of the 10th International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise took place on the Kościuszki Square in Gdynia near the monument of the harbour porpoise. The [Hel Marine Station](#) of the Institute of Oceanography of Gdansk University prepared a special information stand and the exhibition, which concerned the threats to and ways to protect these animals in the Polish area of the Baltic Sea.



© P. Bloch

Life-sized model of a Baltic Harbour Porpoise with an exhibition model of POD and LIFE + and NATURA 2000 stickers



The statue of Harbour Porpoise with an ASCOBANS sign

For the younger visitors, Hel Marine Station prepared a special place with a colouring book with Harbour porpoises and Baltic fish. All children that took an active part in the competition won a balloon filled with helium and the inscription: "Save a Baltic Harbour Porpoise". Those who produced the

best drawing received a gift with logo NATURA 2000 and Life+, which celebrated their 20th anniversary.

LOTOS S.A group, Hel Marine Station's sponsor, prepared a place especially for children. They constructed a special House of the Harbour Porpoise, which was painted by children. This was one of many attractions specially aimed at children organized by LOTOS; others included quizzes and face painting.



Face painting in the LOTOS stand



House of the Harbour Porpoise at the end of the day

At the Hel Marine Station stand helium balloons were the biggest attraction for children. We gave away 100 balloons with the Natura 2000 logo and over 800 balloons with “Ratujmy Bałtyckie Morświny” (Help protect Harbour Porpoise) sign. That activity combined with a table with colouring books for the youngsters gave us the opportunity to talk with hundreds of visitors about Harbour Porpoises and ways to protect them.



Fun table for children, in the background display of alternative fishing gear



Special balloons with a harbour porpoise on them were a really hit with the children

For other visitors Hel Marine Station prepared many interesting booklets about harbour porpoise biology, their conservation and threats to their population in the Baltic Sea. Visitors showed considerable interest in the booklets that described the SAMBAH project (the Hel Marine Station is participating in this project). For that reason we displayed PODs (porpoise detectors) on the stall. These are devices that record sounds emitted by Harbour porpoises under the water. We also presented several models of pingers. Among many exhibits visitors could watch a trap net (an alternative fishing gear for catching cod) which are designed in such a way as to prevent bycatch of marine mammals and birds.

350 SAMBAH project leaflets, 370 Harbour Porpoise leaflets, 280 Fishermen and Harbour Porpoise leaflets, 270 Pinger leaflets, 600 postcards with Harbour Porpoise pictures on them and many other items and leaflets about the Baltic Sea and small cetaceans were given away.

One week later, on 27 May, Hel Marine Station ran a similar stand at the Baltic Science Festival, a huge event organized by a number of academic centres. That event helped to spread information how to protect Baltic Sea life among students and academic teachers.

Sweden



Photo opportunity

sounds, displayed along the permanent SAMBAH project exhibition in the facility. There was also a porpoise photo-opportunity and a quiz walk about harbour porpoises with the chance of winning some nice prizes. Children took part in a drawing contest and had lots of fun drawing Baltic harbour porpoises and dolphins.

Since no visit of real porpoises could be expected, two stationary models of porpoise dorsal fins were placed in the sea just outside Aquaria.



Porpoise models in the sea outside Aquaria



© Fredrik Stenholm

Visitors at the Natural History Museum learning about the harbour porpoise

The [Gothenburg Natural History Museum](#) and the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwAM) in collaboration with SAMBAH and Kolmården Djurpark have been using a frozen harbour porpoise for demonstration purposes. The animal had stranded on the west coast of Sweden and had been collected in order to determine the cause of death and test for environmental toxins. A harbour porpoise skull was also presented to visitors, as well as a slide show of harbour porpoises with click sounds.

Some short lectures about the species, its conservation status, the threats it faces, current research and conservation measures for harbour porpoises and their habitats were given during the five hour event.



© Fredrik Stenholm

Frozen porpoise

The ASCOBANS Secretariat would like to say a big THANK YOU to all who participated in the 10th International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise!

