• **Job Title:** FIELD ASSISTANTS FOR RESEARCH ON HAWAIIAN SPINNER DOLPHIN

Added here on 20 May 2012

**Job Type:** volunteer position

**Opportunity location:**

**Closing date (if specified):** No date specified (will remain here for 90 days from posting date)

**Opportunity Description:**

I am seeking experienced research assistants to join the existing team for my PhD field work that aims to a) quantify possible effects of human interactions on spinner dolphins (Stenella longirostris) in resting bays in Hawaii and b) assess the effectiveness of time-area closures as a proposed mitigation tool. This is the first stage of a long-term project on spinner dolphins along the west coast of the Island of Hawaii by Murdoch University, Western Australia (http://mucru.org/) and Duke University, North Carolina (http://nicholas.duke.edu/marinelab/).

The project aims to collect baseline data on the local abundance, distribution and behaviour of spinner dolphins using a suite of modern visual and acoustic techniques in four spinner dolphin resting bays in Hawaii. These data will be used to determine residency and fidelity patterns and investigate the possible effects of human interactions on the spinner dolphins and to assess the effectiveness of time-area closures as a mitigation approach. This will assist in determining the long-term viability of the spinner dolphin population and the sustainability and management of the human interactions within the resting bays.

**FIELD WORK**

Boat based photo-identification surveys will be conducted in each of four resting bays off the west coast of the Island of Hawaii and at another control site, possibly off the island of Molokai, to evaluate abundance of spinner dolphins, in addition, group focal follows will be carried out on spinner dolphins both inside and outside the four resting bays. Where possible, the movements and behaviour of spinner dolphins and boats will be studied from local cliff tops overlooking spinner dolphin resting bays using a digital theodolite. Theodolite data will be used to derive time series of information on activity state, path sinuosity, speed, and synchronicity of schools.

Bottom-mounted acoustic recorders will be deployed in the resting bays, that will also be subject to photo-identification- and theodolite studies described above. Initially, acoustic survey periods will coincide with daily visual observations in order to link acoustic detections with the distribution and behaviour of dolphins.

Field work will be physically and at times mentally demanding but you will have the opportunity to observe and gain hands-on experience and improve existing skills in relation to theodolite survey techniques, photo-identification, and behavioural...
observations. This experience will be most useful to students or anyone hoping to pursue a career in behavioural ecology or population biology.

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS
I am seeking skilled research assistants to commence in July 2012. Assistants will help collect information on spinner dolphin abundance, distribution and behaviour off the west coast of the Hawai‘i Island. The field season will last until mid January 2013. Because of the training required, applicants must be willing to commit to the project fulltime for a minimum of two months. Applicants willing to participate until the end of the field season will be given preference.

PREREQUISITES
1. Enrolled in or completed a degree in biology, marine science, animal behaviour or a related field
2. Previous field experience with marine wildlife (photo-identification, theodolite tracking and boat handling skills would be advantageous but not a prerequisite).
3. Be enthusiastic, team oriented, have a positive attitude and good sense of humour as well as a genuine interest in marine mammal science.
4. Be adaptable 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. Fieldwork will vary between weekends and weekdays.
5. Be prepared to work long days in a small vessel in small team of three-five people
6. Be able to commit for a minimum of five days a week for two months (though applicants willing to commit for longer will be preferred)

Unfortunately, I am unable to provide monetary compensation or living provisions and research assistants will be responsible for travel to Hawai‘i and their own living expenses. PLEASE ONLY APPLY IF YOU ARE ABLE TO COMMIT TO THE PROJECT.

For more info, contact:

If you are interested, please provide a short CV and cover letter attention of Julian Tyne (j.tyne@murdoch.edu.au).

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http://mucru.org/group-members/julian-tyne/
http://www.nicholas.duke.edu/spinners