

SiGHTiNGS!

WORLD OCEANS DAY 2018 CELEBRATIONS

A whale of a time events!

ALENA MURANG x MARECET

A TRASH-TASTIC 2018!

From coastal cleanups to fabric recycling

SNEAK PEAKS

Entering 2019 with sound!



1. Words from the Helm	3
2. Langkawi Dolphin Research	4
3. Matang Dolphin Research	10
4. Dugong Research & Conservation	
i. Research	12
ii. Island Womenfolk Livelihood Programme	14
iii. Sanctuary	15
5. Matang Dolphin Edu-Tour	16
6. Pulau Sibul Nature Excursion	18
7. Alena Murang x MareCet	20
8. World Oceans Day 2018	
i. Making Waves in Sg Pelek	21
ii. 1 Utama WOD & Gaia-MareCet photo contest	22
iii. Main Place USJ Marine Awareness Event	26
9. Trash-Tastic 2018	
i. Waste Management Association of Malaysia (WMAM) Eco Youth Challenge	28
ii. International Coastal Cleanup	30
iii. Kloth Fabric Recycling	32
10. Sea, Science and Schools Marine Education Programme	34
11. MareCet Talks	36
i. TEDxUCSI University Talk	
ii. Kuala Lumpur Eco Film Fest 2018 (KLEFF)	
12. Conferences 2018	
i. International Dugong Symposium, Japan	37
ii. 20th Student Conference on Conservation Science, Cambridge UK	38
iii. Important Marine Mammal Areas Workshop, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	39
iv. International Conference on Communities, Conservation and Livelihood, Canada	40
v. IUCN Red List Symposium, UMT, Terengganu	
13. Christmas Bazaars	41
14. Welcome New Member!	42
15. 2019 Sneak Peeks!	
i. World Wildlife Day 2019	42
ii. Ocean Maze	43
iii. Entering 2019 with sound!	44
iv. Blue Classroom	45
16. Thank You to our Supporters!	46
17. Volunteer Testimonials	48
18. Lil' MareCet Shop	49



WORDS FROM THE HELM



Wow! Where did 2018 go?! Just like that, we're in 2019, with an already full schedule of research and conservation work ahead of us.

It was our 6th year of being MareCet, and glad to say we had a very packed and productive 2018, which saw us run some big marine conservation awareness events, participating in international and local conferences and symposiums, ran our first International Coastal Cleanup event, speak out about a large-scale development that was going to threaten important dolphin habitat, welcomed a new member to the MareCet family, and finally, got ourselves an office space!

In the beginning, we thought we would mostly be doing research on dolphins, for the rest of our lives. That was what we were passionate about, and that was what we'd learned and was rearing to put our skills to the test. But here we are now, still living that dream, however only to have broadened our horizons and our skill sets - because we learned on the job that in wanting to do conservation, the keyword is "translation". Translating our research work into finding solutions to real-life scenarios has since seen us contribute to various national plans, the latest being the Dugong Sanctuary Management Plan for the proposed Dugong Sanctuary in Johor, contributed to the nomination and review of IUCN Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) for Malaysia, assisting local communities with livelihood development, and sharing our knowledge base on marine mammals and their environment with students and society at large. Truly, there is never a dull moment and we are always kept on our tippy toes!

MareCet stands tall because it continues to receive the gracious and generous support from so many parties. We make every effort to ensure we don't let our supporters down, and we hope we have not. As a small token of our appreciation, we share with you now all our trials and tribulations of 2018 and give you a sneak peak of what's in store for 2019. Thank you for being those shoulders that we could stand on so that our beacon for marine conservation can be seen even from afar!

Fairul & Louisa





Two humpback dolphins swimming close to an outboard engine boat which was hauling up their fishing net



A humpback dolphin leaps out of the water, close to our research vessel in Perlis



"Pink Steps", whom we first sighted in 2010. We were so thrilled to see her again in Dec 2018! She was seen with an older calf

Since 2016, our flagship project, the Langkawi Dolphin Research Project (LDR) expanded to cover the coastal waters of Perlis and Kuala Kedah. The current focus of LDR has been on the social structure of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins in Langkawi, Perlis and Kuala Kedah. Our aim is to reveal the relationship patterns between individual humpback dolphins and understand the driving factors of their social structure.

In addition, we are investigating the movement of humpback dolphins between Langkawi waters and Perlis-Kedah coastal waters, and the impacts of human activities on the dolphins' behaviour. We are grateful to have had the funding support of the Conservation Leadership Programme and the Nagao Natural Environment Foundation in 2018 to conduct our research activities.

The project has yielded some exciting preliminary results! A total of 102 sightings of three cetacean species were recorded over 32 days of boat surveys in 2018 (May-June and November-December surveys).

The three species were the Indo-Pacific finless porpoise (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*), Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*), and Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*). The latter species is found to only inhabit the coastal waters of Perlis and Kedah (excluding Langkawi).

Much to our delight, we saw familiar Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin individuals during our 2018 field season. A humpback dolphin individual which we nicknamed "Pink Steps" was sighted in Langkawi in December 2018 after six years since we last saw her in 2012. Back in 2012, she was always seen with a larger calf, and in 2018, she was with yet another calf! What is more exciting is that three individuals, two of which



Bryde's whale, spotted off the coast of Perlis



A humpback dolphin preying on a marine catfish



A humpback dolphin chasing after a squid resulting in the squid squirting its ink as an escape mechanism



A bigfin reef squid underneath the large layer of squid ink. Can you spot the squid?

were first sighted in 2011 and one in 2012 in Langkawi waters were sighted five years later in Perlis waters!! This confirms that the humpback dolphins move between Langkawi and Perlis waters. However, more surveys and further analysis have to be carried out before we can say anything more conclusive.

The main highlight in LDR's 2018 was definitely our Bryde's whale sighting. Yes, you read this correctly! A WHALE sighting! We were at the end of one of our transect lines off the Perlis coast, where we were about to measure water parameter data, when suddenly, we saw a huge dorsal fin about 250m away from our research vessel. We were sceptical at first, and then "poof", a huge blow (exhaled air that forms a bushy stream of vapour) was seen. That was when the team erupted in joy and did a victory dance! "Paus! Paus! Paus!" (Paus = whale in Malay) was shouted to the volunteers and boat skippers to get them to manoeuvre the research vessel closer to the whale. We followed the whale from a distance for a good 30 minutes before it disappeared.

We were also treated to other interesting dolphin behaviours such as humpback dolphins feeding on different types of prey such as catfish, octopus, squid and cuttlefish. The hunting strategy that a humpback dolphin applies to feed on catfish was finally revealed to us and recorded! The dolphin first used its flukes to slap the catfish to stun them.

Once the catfish became disoriented and floated on the water surface, the dolphin swam in a certain angle towards the fish and bit off the its body, leaving the catfish's head with its sharp spines. We collected the catfish heads to study how these dolphins select the catfish that they consume.

On a different occasion, a humpback dolphin was sighted chasing after a bigfin reef squid (*Sepioteuthis lessoniana*), causing the squid to swim away quickly and squirting its ink straight out of the water, leaving a huge patch of blank ink behind as it swam for cover! Certainly a most dramatic day for that squid!



A possibly pregnant humpback dolphin

Our team also had a sighting of a possibly pregnant humpback dolphin and the rare opportunity to witness some highly-sexual behaviour in a group of humpback dolphins, whereby one dolphin was caught on camera flashing his boy parts!



A male humpback dolphin engaging in highly sexual behaviour



A newborn finless porpoise carcass

Despite the highlights, we also had our lows in 2018. We encountered four dead marine mammals, all in the span of one week in May!

Three were finless porpoises and one was a humpback dolphin. Out of the three finless porpoises, one was a newborn bearing foetal folds. These cases are agonizing, and our team will continue to document and monitor cases of deaths of cetaceans in the area. Our findings are always used in finding solutions and making recommendations to the authorities for conservation and management.

Apart from research, we have been working closely with local governmental agencies, NGOs, schools and communities in outreach activities.

By the invitation of the Department of Fisheries Malaysia (Perlis), a workshop was conducted in February 2018 to share general information on cetaceans and train the fishermen on marine mammal stranding response. A total of 120 fishermen attended the workshop.

Two marine education programmes were conducted in May 2018 in SJK (C) Choon Siew, Perlis and SMK Mahsuri, Langkawi respectively.

The latter programme was done in collaboration with the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA). Our education programmes brought marine mammals and the sea to life to many of the students who, despite living near the coast and on an island, were unaware about the marine ecosystem in their backyards!



Awareness workshop for fishermen in Perlis with the Department of Fisheries, Malaysia



JPS ISMP Meeting



Marine education programme for students of SJK (C) Choon Siew, Kuala Perlis

MareCet also made an important contribution to environmental policy planning when the Department of Irrigation and Drainage Malaysia (JPS, Perlis state office) invited our team on-board to be a part of the working group for the development of an Integrated Shoreline Management Plan (ISMP) for Perlis. We participated in two roundtable discussions in January and March 2018 and provided some information from our LDR project findings and suggestions to the draft document.

We are so excited to announce that MareCet's nomination of Langkawi-Perlis-Kedah waters as an IUCN Important Marine Mammal Area (IMMA) was accepted in September 2018. The nomination was made based on all our research findings since 2010 and we consider this a huge milestone for our organization and country to have our project site gain international recognition status. The status of an IMMA is a global initiative developed by the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force to identify areas of habitat throughout the world's seas and oceans that are important for marine mammals to be considered for management and conservation.

In 2019, we are adding on yet another research component to LDR - the study of dolphin acoustic behaviour in relation to human activities and the environment! To read more about it, check out the 2019 sneak peeks section in this newsletter!

The LDR project would not have been as great as it was if not for the generous help of the following individuals - Koh I-Ern, Paramjeet Kaur Mithoo Singh, Goh Kai Zhi, Wong Su- Ann, Dr. Ong Chee Hong, Mary Soh Chooi Bing, Looi Mei Ling, Goh Shang Min, Angeline Tang, Eddie, Pak Dan, Khairul, Abang G and Abang Mi.



Marine education programme for students of SMK Mahsuri, Langkawi



Our volunteers



Langkawi remains one of the best places in the region to sight Indo-Pacific finless porpoises



Humpback dolphin individual named as "Table Mountain" which was first sighted in Langkawi waters in 2012 was re-sighted in Perlis waters in 2017



Humpback dolphin "Kai" can be seen with its "hunky gym body", which is actually an indication of poor body condition probably due to malnutrition. It was first sighted in 2011 and still re-sighted in 2018 in Langkawi waters



Matang Dolphin Research plods on quietly

In 2018, MareCet's Matang Dolphin Research project (MDR) mostly focused on data analyses and preparing publications using the data that we have collected from three years of field surveys between 2013 - 2016. We have an upcoming scientific publication on the distribution and habitat characteristics of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, Irrawaddy dolphins and Indo-Pacific finless porpoises in Matang's coastal waters which has been submitted to an international peer-reviewed journal. Population estimates through photo-identification and line-transect methods have been generated for the three species of coastal cetaceans in Matang for upcoming publications, and was also used in the nomination of Matang as an Important Marine Mammal Area (IMMA).

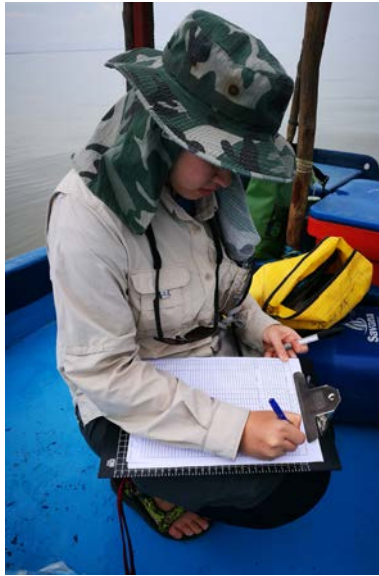
We are also working on analysing our data on Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin movement patterns in Matang, and learning the ropes on using a GIS-based Bycatch Risk Assessment Toolkit (ByRA) which our colleagues in the USA had recently developed to analyse the risk of fishing activities to the cetaceans in Matang.

In May 2018 we conducted a fisheries sampling survey to sample the prey species found in the Matang dolphins' habitat to assist us in our study on the potential prey species of dolphins. Fish, squids, octopus and prawns were sampled from fishermen and were dried and ground to fine powder for stable isotope analysis. We are thankful to Professor Aaron Fisk from the University of Windsor, Canada for providing assistance in stable isotope analysis. We will continue to analyze the data that we have collected to better understand the ecology of coastal cetaceans in Matang, so that the research results can help guide the conservation of cetaceans and their habitat in the future.

We are so excited to announce that MareCet's nomination of Matang coastal waters as an IUCN Important Marine Mammal Area (IMMA) was accepted in September 2018. The nomination was made based on all our research findings since 2013 and we consider this a huge milestone for our organization and country to have our project site gain international recognition status. The status of an IMMA is a global initiative developed by the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force to identify areas of habitat throughout the world's seas and oceans that are important for marine mammals to be considered for management and conservation.



Surveying the seafood catches in Matang, to deduce what the dolphins' prey species are



Preparing dolphin skin samples for stable isotope analysis

Dugong Research and Conservation Project

The myth of mermaids continue to enthrall humanity all over the world, although scientists feel that the gentle and charismatic sea cow, also known as dugong, is what gave rise to the myth.

Here in Malaysia, MareCet has had the opportunity of researching and expending conservation efforts for dugongs at the east coast of Johor since 2014 via our Dugong Research and Conservation Project (DRC)! Our research was structured to be multi-disciplinary in approach, covering topics of ecology, biology and also social science. We have had the privilege and opportunity to collaboration on this project with scientists from the University of Malaya, Kyoto University (Japan), Mote Marine Laboratory (USA), Universiti Putra Malaysia and SEAutions Sdn Bhd. We are grateful for the funding support for this project that were provided by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the GEF Dugong and Seagrass Project, and co-financing from a University of Malaya Research Grant and Rufford Grant provided to our collaborators, Dr Jillian Ooi and Heng Wei Khang from the University of Malaya.

In 2018, we continued our research on the feeding habits of the dugong, discovering that the seagrass meadows at Pulau Sibü are very dynamic, which leaves much more to be learned and explored. Through the feeding trails surveys, we identified areas that are core feeding grounds for the endangered dugongs and now know that the main seagrass species they feed on in the area are *Halophila ovalis* and *Halodule uninervis*. Our study on the acoustics (sound) of dugongs in relation to how their use of habitat also continued, as we monitor the dugong acoustic patterns in the 'vocal hotspot' which we discovered off Pulau Tinggi in 2014, and the main feeding grounds at Pulau Sibü. It appears thus far that the sound patterns of the dugongs have changed between the years, and we are still trying to unravel the reason for it!

All that science-y matters aside, the highlight of our project's 2018 has got to be the baby dugong we observed underwater!! It was a bittersweet moment, as we were finishing up our sampling underwater when we started hearing high-pitched chirps coming from a certain direction. Soon enough, the chirps got louder and out of the cloudiness of the sea water emerged a lost baby dugong, frantically calling out for its mother. It was a moment etched in our memories forever, and we could only hope that after the baby dugong swam away from us, it reunited with its mother, eventually.

Have you seen my mommy?



Photo credit: Wong Si Peng

Dugong Research and Conservation Project

Our project entered into a new phase in late 2018, exchanging the light Cessna aircraft with an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) to continue with monitoring efforts of dugongs and human activities in the area with less cost and better safety. We were guided by Dr Koh Lian Pin and Mr Pang Kee Yen from Conservation Drones to assist us with getting set up and for some preliminary training on handling the drone. Thank you to both for their assistance and time! In 2019, we plan to replicate some of our previous aerial surveys using our drone, to monitor the presence of dugongs and other marine megafauna around Pulau Sibü and Pulau Tinggi.

There was a worrying number of dugong deaths in 2018 - a total of 6 dugongs were found dead around Pulau Sibü and 1 found dead near Pulau Besar. In most of those cases, the cause of death could not be identified and unfortunately our team were unable to get to them. We are working closely with the Department of Fisheries Malaysia to tackle this issue, but one thing's for sure - time is of the essence and our authorities need to take stringent measures to protect this species if we are to avoid local extinction!

We are so excited to announce that MareCet's nomination of Mersing Archipelago waters as an IUCN Important Marine Mammal Area (IMMA) for dugongs was accepted in September 2018. The nomination was made based on all our dugong and seagrass research findings since 2014 and we consider this a huge milestone for our organization and country to have our project site gain international recognition status. The status of an IMMA is a global initiative developed by the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force to identify areas of habitat throughout the world's seas and oceans that are important for marine mammals to be considered for management and conservation.

We want to give a shout out to our collaborators and volunteers who were integral parts of the DRC in 2018. These are: Dr Jillian Ooi, Heng Wei Khang, Affendi Yang Amri, Kee Alfian, Dr Kotaro Ichikawa, Keiya Uehara, Karen Tsuzura, Kotaro Tanaka, Yuma Kugai, Goh Kai Zhi, Wong Si Peng, Ashley Chua, Nazirul Amin, Ahaddi Shahrom, Azimah, Noresimah Shahrom, Affandi Awang, Yusri Mohd Noor and Mohd Zuhdi Nordin.



Empowering island womenfolk through sewing

Supporting local community development in the areas where we work is big on our agenda, as people are unable to pay attention to conservation if they struggle to survive from day-to-day. With the funding support under the GEF Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project, we were able to kick-start our Women Livelihood Development Project in Pulau Sibul, Johor to assist the womenfolk on the island in producing unique handmade island products that they can eventually build a business around.

We ran some informal workshops with the womenfolk beforehand to gauge their interest in participating in the livelihood project and to discuss and decide the direction of the development of potential island products. In April 2018, we ran a sewing training workshop with trainers from The Batik Boutique to introduce and teach the women the basic knowledge and skills in sewing and product-making. The women learned to sew using sewing machines and produced three products – dugong-themed zip pouches, tote bags and plush toys over the one-week training workshop. In October 2018, we conducted a Phase II training workshop at the Batik Boutique sewing centre in Kota Damansara to continue assisting the women in further developing their sewing skills and diversifying the range of products they can produce. The Phase II workshop saw them learning about costing calculations and producing three new products – headbands, passport holders and toiletry bags.

In 2019, MareCet will continue with efforts to guide the women in marketing and business development, with the hopes that they can eventually run a sustainable cottage industry centered around the endangered dugongs that call Pulau Sibul home. If you would like to purchase any of these products, please browse our Lil' MareCet Shop section of this newsletter! Proceeds support these women as well as dugong conservation.





Road to Establishment of the Johor Dugong Sanctuary

MareCet has been conducting research on dugongs and their seagrass habitats around the Mersing Archipelago since 2014 and have been using findings of this research to advocate for increased protection and conservation for the area.

In 2016, the Johor State Government announced its intention to establish the Johor Dugong Sanctuary and appointed MareCet to assist in its development. MareCet has been working closely over the last two years with the Johor National Parks Corporation (JNPC) to collaborate with other relevant agencies such as the Department of Fisheries Malaysia, the then Department of Marine Park Malaysia (as this is now absorbed into the Department of Fisheries, but at the time it still existed), Marine Department, Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency, Mersing District Council, and the local communities around the area to achieve this goal.

A Delineation Plan and a Management Plan has now been developed to provide a framework for the establishment of this Sanctuary. The proposal has been submitted to the relevant agencies to gazette the area officially as a marine reserve in December 2017 and is currently awaiting decision.

In July 2018, Mr Virgil Zetterlind from the Anthropocene Institute in the USA made a site visit to Pulau Sibu to assess the feasibility of installing the M2 Marine Monitor system, which we had recommended in the Dugong Sanctuary Management Plan to assist the authorities in monitoring vessel activities.

MareCet continues to advocate for improved management of our marine habitats, especially in important marine areas such as the Mersing Archipelago, which has now also been globally-recognised as an





What do you do when you wish to see some dolphins in the wild and would like to experience how it's like to be a dolphin researcher?

If you can't commit for long fieldworks periods and only have a day to spare, join our Matang edutours, where you can depart from KL in the morning, join a three-hour boat ride to see dolphins in the wild and learn about our dolphin research in Kuala Sepetang, and be back in KL in the evening!

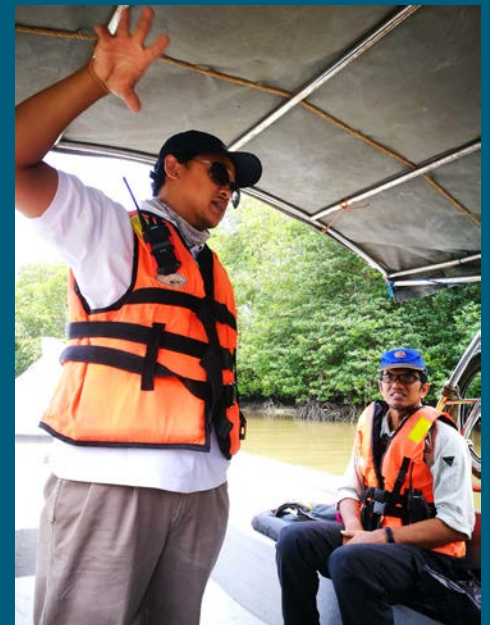
In 2018, MareCet conducted three Matang Edutours on 27 January, 20 May and 2 September. We had great joy sharing our knowledge about the dolphins that we are studying in Matang with the participants, and spending time with the participants in nature at beautiful Kuala Sepetang that is fringed by mangroves.

Participants got to see the dolphins at a safe distance and learn about their ecology and behaviour, and sometimes the names of the frequently sighted individuals. Participants also get to learn about how we record field data and water parameters, and a bit about the history of Kuala Sepetang, its 200-year old fishing villages, cockle harvesting, fish farms, and observe different types of fishing activities.

Matang edutours enable us to continue monitor the population of dolphins in Kuala Sepetang, and we hope to share our work with more participants in the future so that more people get to learn more about dolphins in Malaysia and grow appreciation for our marine environment.

Do join us in 2019!

For trip details and dates, please follow our excursions page on Facebook named Marine Excursions & The Blue Classroom by MareCet.



Vivian, the Matang Dolphin Research project leader, providing participants with information about the dolphins in Matang and what could be expected during the edu-tour

A *Sibu-eautiful* Nature Excursion



Beautiful things are made for sharing, and at MareCet, we want to share with you the beauty of our project sites. These are usually places off the beaten path where the average tourist may not get to. Thus in 2018, we launched our Pulau Sibu Nature Excursion 4D3N Package to share with others the unique island where verdant seagrass meadows are grazed upon by the charismatic yet endangered dugong, its landscape and local island culture.

We crafted a nature excursion that would bring the best parts of Pulau Sibu to life - its iconic wildlife (the dugongs), colourful seascapes, idyllic kampung living, wholesome home-cooked kampung meals and enchanting jungle that rewards one with breathtaking views at the top of the hill. We even threw in some eco-documentary screening and optional do good deeds (i.e. beach cleanup) for good measure! The excursion was not only designed to provide the guest with an experience like no other, but also to support local livelihoods on the island, as we only engage with local service providers and tap into their rich knowledge of the area.

Guests stay at Twin Beach Resort but are given guided walks, hikes and trips throughout most of the island. If you are one who is mainly caught up in the concrete jungle and in need of a different perspective, then this excursion is just what the doctor ordered for you! There is also quite a bit of free time for you to relax during the trip, so hurry, what are you waiting for?!

The next excursion will take place on 1 - 4 May 2019, so interested parties may contact us at outreach.marecet@gmail.com to enquire more or to book a spot! Our 4D3N package price for 2019 is RM1,199* (all inclusive on-island, commencing with departures from Tanjung Leman jetty).

* MyKad holders will need to pay an additional RM10 for marine park fees; Non-MyKad holders (non-Malaysian) will need to pay an additional RM35 for marine park fees and RM10/night/room for tourism tax



VISITOR TESTIMONIALS

"I wanted to say how much I enjoyed the first Pulau Sibu Nature Excursion by MareCet. It was very well organised with a lot of thought given to the visitor experience and flexibility built in to respond to our wishes. The balance of organised activities and free time was perfect and even the organised activities were relaxed and natural. The accommodation was truly basic - think camping with a solid floor - but fun. The location was exquisite - the two beaches on opposing sides of the island are a unique bonus. There was very good snorkelling off the shore. Jol Ern and Louisa were knowledgeable and accommodating. The activities really helped us to get a sense of the great work being done by MareCet not only to monitor the dugongs, but also to promote the benefits of a genuine sustainable eco-tourism, in which local people can share the benefits and thus own the preservation of their marine environment. The extras (hill walk, kampung tour, coconut oil manufacture, flying foxes etc) all gave great memories of this beautiful island. Well done MareCet and keep it up." — Stuart Johnson

"It was really exciting to see the dugongs. Although dugongs are very shy and we didn't get to go extremely close to them, but I still enjoyed the experience and learn about their ecology - where they live, what they eat. The other thing that I really enjoyed was getting to see the village "kampung" life on the island and learn about stories of the people living there and how their life changes over the decades. I also enjoyed the experience where we learn how coconut oil is made on the island and seeing the flying foxes. The beaches on Pulau Sibu are lovely with white sandy beach, turquoise water and coral reef to explore around. The place was very quiet and peaceful with very few people and minimal boat noise on the island which allows us to relax and enjoy the nature. The whole trip was really good." — Holly Barclay

"I joined this excursion expecting to see dugongs, explore Sibu Island as it is one of the least known island on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, and learn more about the dugongs and the island. I have to admit that I haven't been disappointed at all and it was a great excursion. Village visit that involves interacting with locals, visiting coconut oil, and eating mangrove oyster also added value to the excursion - these are the things that we couldn't find in other tourist excursions. Another bonus of this excursion that I really appreciate was the scientific knowledge sharing by the guides, Louisa and Jol Ern to know more about the dugongs here. Sibu Island has amazing landscapes, beautiful, untouched and pristine nature, which you can't see anymore on other commercialized islands. The nature here is really intact, and the locals are very nice and friendly. It was a great great experience for me." — Maxime Feraille

WHEN YOU PROTECT THE OCEAN, YOU PROTECT YOUR FUTURE!

This year for World Oceans Day 2018, we teamed up with Ms Alena Murang, a wildly talented Kelabit artist and musician from Sarawak who plays the 'sape' (a traditional Orang Ulu lute), to inspire a message of concern and hope for the protection of our seas, through speech, song, and seni (art).



Tapping into her heritage and close relationship with nature, she travels the world to tell the stories of her ancestors and of her generation through art and music. Alena is very quickly gaining global recognition as a star in the indigenous music field, and we couldn't be prouder and glad to have had her support and the opportunity to collaborate with her!

Via Art4 Studio, Alena's social enterprise, she drew an original artwork on two pieces of canvas titled "Sea of Life", which was inspired by the Orang Ulu "Tree of Life" motif. The traditional Tree of Life design was adorned with sacred animals, and Alena translated these into the Oceans charismatic organisms. The motifs, the "swirls" are based on the principle of balance and flow. The artwork was displayed during our World Oceans Day 2018 event at 1 Utama Shopping Centre, and was eventually sold separately to the highest bidders, partial proceeds of which were donated to MareCet (thank you, Alena!).

Alena also lent her beautiful voice and music to a short video which we produced and launched in conjunction with World Oceans Day 2018, with the kind in-kind assistance of Fishermen Integrated, an award-winning Malaysian web advertising company. The splendid video may be viewed at:

<https://www.facebook.com/marecetresearchorganization/videos/1893406197384337/>

(please help us share it far and wide, we want the message to reach all corners of the Earth!)



Making Waves in Sungai Pelek, Selangor's Coastal Gem - A World Oceans Day Marine Education Fun Fair

Do you know where Sungai Pelek is located?

In conjunction with World Oceans Day 2018, MareCet had co-hosted a public event with Small Potato in the Secret Pot (土豆的秘密基地), a local homestay in Sungai Pelek, Sepang (usually only famous for the F1, but worth exploring for more than just that). The event was named "Making Waves in Sungai Pelek, Selangor's Coastal Gem - A World Oceans Day Marine Education Fun Fair" and was held on 23 June 2018, to share information and raise public awareness and appreciation towards our marine environment plus encouraging public participation in marine conservation. This event was supported by the Selangor State Government under the Selangor State Environmental and Green Technology Small Grant Programme, and was officiated by YB Hee Loy Sian, Selangor State Environment, Green Technology and Consumer Affairs Committee Chairman (thank you, YB Hee!).

Different educational and fun-filled activities were conducted during the event, which included conservation booth exhibitions by MareCet, Save Our Seahorses Malaysia, Turtle Conservation Society of Malaysia and the Environmental Interpretive Centre by Malaysian Nature Society, photo gallery of MareCet's work, marine mammals and other marine life, a marine debris "nightmare corner", World Oceans Day photo booth, colouring and painting activities, and screening of 'A Plastic Ocean' documentary.

We also conducted a coastal cleanup along Bagan Lalang beach at the Sepang Gold Coast with some volunteers and students from SMK Kelana Jaya. We would like to thank our event funder, co-host, invited conservation NGOs, volunteers, visitors and participants wholeheartedly for making the event a huge success! We think we really did make waves on that day!



1 Utama Shopping Centre & MareCet World Oceans Day 2018 Celebrations

It was a big year for MareCet in 2018 - with the biggest event of all being MareCet's World Oceans Day 2018 celebrations at 1 Utama Shopping Centre in Bandar Utama. The event was opened to the public and ran from 12 - 15 July 2018 at the Centre Court of the shopping mall. We planned and executed the event to be in an interactive and engaging manner for visitors, showcasing MareCet's efforts over the years, highlighting issues plaguing our seas today, provided activities from which the young and the old could learn more about our marine life, and presented everyone with ideas and options on how to be more eco-friendly in daily living.

The event featured a custom-made Ocean Maze, constructed entirely from recycled and upcycled materials, to take visitors through the beauty of our seas and the harsh realities our blue planet is facing these days. Visitors were first awed by the diversity of marine life and the importance functions of marine ecosystems, and then taken through a "sea of trash" where they were "hit" in the face by floating plastic water bottles and other random bits of debris, and see several marine creatures stuck in discarded fishing nets. Then the visitors were "treated" to a meal of seafood with microplastics and given a test of their awareness about marine conservation. One exited the maze by contemplating on our hopes for the oceans and hopefully were inspired to do their part for the environment.

We were incredibly fortunate and glad to have had some of our eco-champion comrades participate as booth vendors at this event - thank you so much to Pernod Ricard Malaysia, SharkSavers Malaysia, Save our Seahorses Malaysia, Sampah Menyampah, Mah Meri Cultural Village, Lembah Barakah Organic Orchard, Kloth Malaysia Sdn Bhd, Trash Hero Malaysia, WWF-Malaysia Melaka turtle programme and Reef Check Malaysia who were there to share information, products and tips on conservation and green living.

It was such a pleasure to have the indigenous Mah Meri maskman and cultural dancers from Carey Island, Selangor, perform for us twice to the tunes of their traditional music in dance moves that honour their ancestral sea spirit! They also had demonstrations on how to weave animal figurines from pandanus leaves.

We were also fortunate to have been provided several art installations depicting ocean woes and issues such as our Ghost Net Monster and Wall of Perspectives designed and created by local artist Nizar Sulaiman.



1 Utama Shopping Centre & MareCet World Oceans Day 2018 Celebrations

Our event was packed with exciting eco-demonstration workshops, from making your own paper straw, bin liners and reusable t-shirt tote bag, to turning used cooking oil into washing soap, and to a delicious soup recipe that is an excellent substitute to shark's fin soup by lifestyle personality Davina Goh aka Davina da Vegan!

Not forgetting our scientific research roots, we ensured that our event included a showcase of all our efforts in cetacean and dugong research to date, and a mini marine biological laboratory corner where visitors had the chance to view baby seahorses under the microscope! The mini lab was made possible by a variety of marine specimens loaned or donated to us by Dr Amy Then (University of Malaya), Dr Chew Li Lee (USCI University), Dr Adam Lim (SOS Malaysia), Harris Heng (University of Malaya) and Lim Kean Chong (University of Malaya), and a digital microscope loaned to us by The Datai Langkawi. Thank you to all our contributors!

This event was a massive undertaking for MareCet, being our largest organized event yet, and we most certainly could not have pulled it off without our generous and fantastic sponsors - 1 Utama Shopping Centre (venue sponsor), Pernod Ricard Malaysia (main sponsor) and GSR Environmental Consultancy Sdn Bhd. Not forgetting the amazing enthusiasm and efforts of all our event volunteers without whom we could not have had such success - major thank yous are owed to Goh Kai Zhi, Paramjeet Kaur, Quek Yew Aun, Teng Shyin Ee, Nawal Nor Said, Ecklyn Fok Fei Mei, Mok Yi Wen, Ashley Chua Tsu Fia, Low Kyle Young, Chua Li Pei, Anis Asma, Wong Su-Ann, Goh Hao Ching, Lim Su Jin, Kayleigh Hughes, Hannah Xavier, Lim Hwei Chin, Ashton Lim, Woo Xiang Jun, Liew Wai Ching, Qasrina Almas, and Yu Ke Xin.

We also greatly appreciate the in-kind sponsorship from Giordano Malaysia who very kindly provided our event team and volunteers with their 'Amazing Ocean' t-shirts to wear during this event.

Will we do another World Oceans Day event like this one in 2019? We don't know yet. However, do stay tuned for smaller related events in this coming year!



1 Utama Shopping Centre & MareCet World Oceans Day 2018 Celebrations



Gaia-MareCet Photo Competition

In conjunction with 2018's World Oceans Day, Gaia and MareCet launched a photography competition called 'The Oceans Story'. Gaia, a social enterprise, is dedicated to wildlife conservation in Malaysia, and at the moment focuses on the conservation of hornbills. In the name of love for animals, the two came together to run the photo competition, aimed at highlighting the beauty and plights of Malaysia's natural marine environment within Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

The competition was also held to promote, educate and inspire Malaysian youths on the importance of marine biodiversity and ecosystems, and to encourage them to think about pertinent conservation topics while shooting through their lenses.

The competition submission period took place from May 2018 to June 2018 and approximately 50 people took part in this competition, aged between 15 and 30.

The top 20 images were displayed at 1 Utama Shopping Centre, and this gave the young photographers a chance to see their works in print and on exhibit in a popular public place.

Gaia and MareCet would like to congratulate the top three winners of 2018;

- 1st: Sandra Liew**
- 2nd: Arvin Gavanam**
- 3rd: Yong Lin Tan**



"A Bruised Ocean"
by Sandra Liew



‘A Walk for The Ocean’ and marine awareness with Main Place Mall USJ

We love it when corporate bodies take an interest in marine conservation!

Main Place Mall USJ partnered up with MareCet to organize a Marine Awareness Campaign from 18 to 26 August 2018 to raise marine awareness among their shoppers and visitors. The event allowed visitors to learn about marine mammals in Malaysia, MareCet’s marine conservation efforts and marine threats and issues through various exhibitions and activities including the Ocean Maze, marine photo gallery, ‘Be A Dolphin Researcher’ game booth and marine debris display and game corner. We also partnered up with Kloth Malaysia to run another round of fabric recycling and collection campaign during the event.

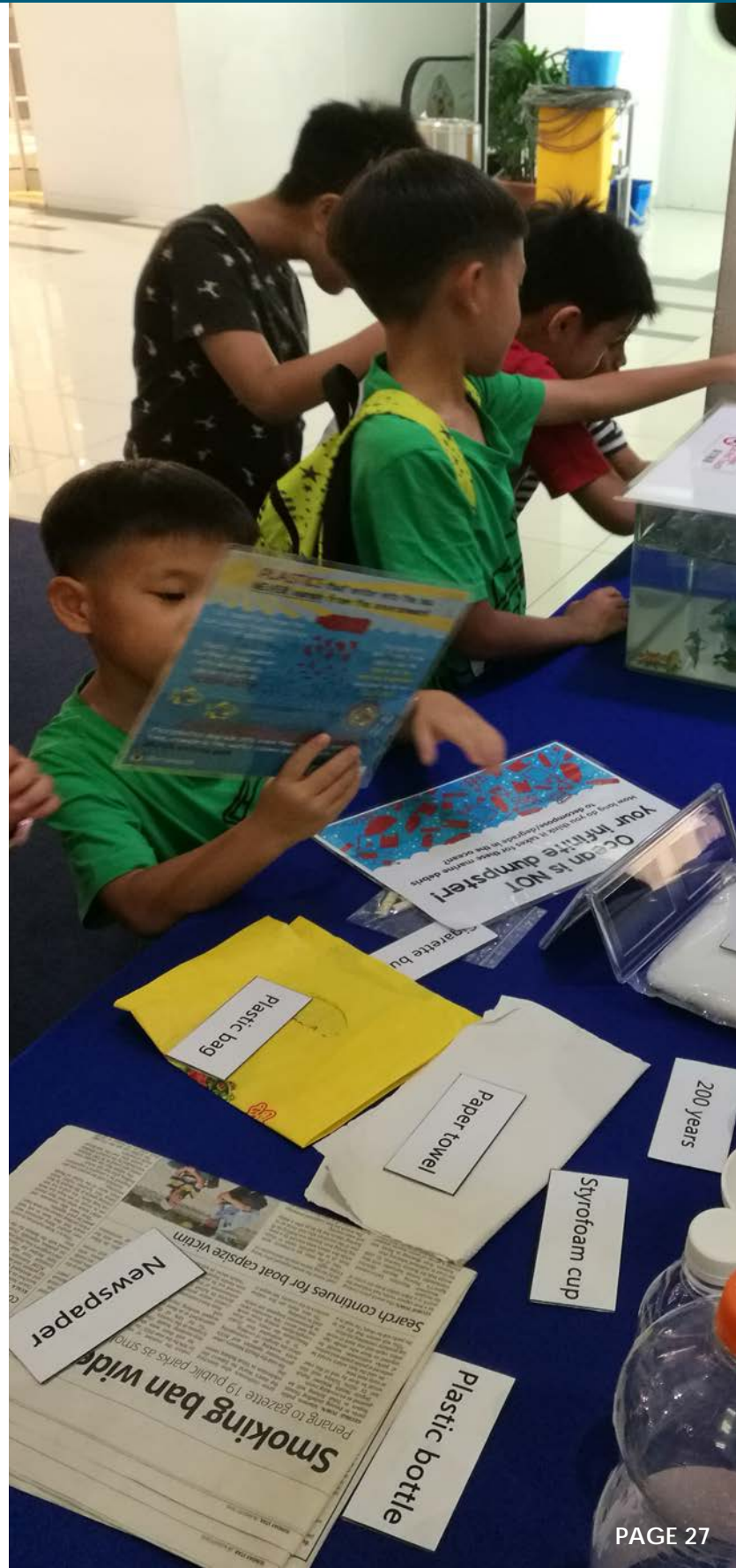
We managed to collect a whopping 9,417.5 kg of fabrics and clothes items over the 9-day period, thus prevented these amounts of fabric and textile waste from entering into landfills and our ocean!

On 28 October 2018, Main Place hosted their annual walkathon with 2018’s theme being ‘A Walk For The Ocean’. The walkathon not only promoted healthy living but was also to raise funds for MareCet and increase public awareness on marine conservation.

A total of 1500 people entered the fun walk, which resulted in a total of RM6,000 being raised for MareCet. We sincerely thank Main Place Mall USJ for choosing us as their charity partner and supporting our work in marine research and conservation. Not forgetting also the many people who walked for the ocean on that October morning - thank you so much!



'A Walk for The Ocean' and marine awareness with Main Place Mall USJ



Waste Management Association of Malaysia (WMAM) Eco Youth Challenge Marine Debris Programme 2018

The year 2018 saw MareCet partnering up with SWM Environment Sdn. Bhd. for the Waste Management Association of Malaysia (WMAM) Eco Youth Challenge Marine Debris Programme 2018. For starters, our Outreach Coordinator, Jol Ern delivered a talk titled "Talking (Marine) Trash" for the International Solid Waste Association Young Professional Group (ISWA YPG) Malaysia Chapter during their "Launch and Tea Talk" on 29 January 2018 to share knowledge and insights on marine debris issues among young Malaysians. Following on from that, we conducted a series of awareness programmes and events with 10 selected schools across the three southern region states of Peninsular Malaysia - Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Johor between April to July 2018. We conducted talks and interactive activities at schools to share knowledge and raise awareness among the students on marine environmental topics and marine debris issues facing our ocean. We also organized several coastal cleanups - (1) Pantai Saujana, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan, (2) Pantai Puteri, Tanjung Kling, Melaka, (3) the coast of Sungai Rengit, Pengerang, Johor, (4) Pantai Tanjung Sedili, Sedili Besar, Johor, and (5) Pantai Mersing, Mersing, Johor to help prevent marine debris from entering into the ocean and to encourage students and school communities to be more proactive towards environmental protection. Approximately 1,550 kg of trash was collected from these five coastal cleanup sessions, with plastic bottles, drink straws, plastic bags, food packaging and cigarette butts dominating the items that were collected.



List of schools involved:

- SMK Sri Mersing, Mersing (Johor)
- SMK Mersing, Mersing (Johor)
- SMK Tan Sri Jaafar Albar, Sedili (Johor)
- SMK Tanjung Datuk, Pengerang (Johor)
- SMK Datuk Haji Abdul Samad, Port Dickson (Negeri Sembilan)
- SMK Kampung Baru Si Rusa, Port Dickson (Negeri Sembilan)
- SMK Tinggi Port Dickson, Port Dickson (Negeri Sembilan)
- SMK Kampung Gelam (Melaka)
- SMK Klebang Besar (Melaka)
- SMK Seri Tanjung (Melaka)

Through this programme, we reached an estimated 650 students aged 13 to 17 years from across the 10 schools.





WMAM Eco Youth Challenge



MareCet and the International Coastal Cleanup 2018, Pulau Sibul, Johor



The International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) initiative started 30 years ago with the Ocean Conservancy, an international marine conservation NGO. Their first cleanup was done on a beach in Texas, USA, and now, every 15th Sep, volunteers from all the world bind together to conduct beach cleanups and data collections on an annual basis!

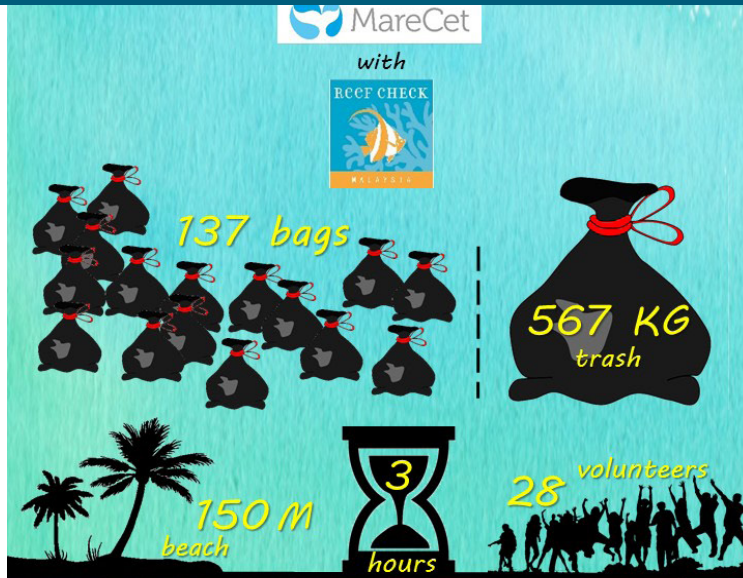
Over the last two years, MareCet team members kept encountering marine debris whilst being out in the field - on the beach, on the water's surface, in the water column, on the seabed, and embedded deep into the bottom sediment! There were even some cases of stranded marine mammals in Malaysia that were found to have died from ingestion of plastics! Incredibly frustrating!!

In 2018, we decided to be a part of the ICC movement in Malaysia, joining many others around the country on 22 September 2018 in cleaning up the many beautiful but trashed beaches we have. We chose Pulau Sibul, our dugong research and conservation project site, as the place to do our cleanup. Teaming up with our conservation counterpart, Nazirul Amin from Reef Check Malaysia, we had 28 volunteers assisting us in cleaning up a 150-m stretch of beach along the uninhabited Teluk Kambau, on the east side of the island. In three short hours over such a short span of beach, we managed to collect a whopping 567 kg of trash!! Check out our infographic to see what items we'd collected.

We want to say thank you to everyone who came to cleanup the beach with us, and a special shout out goes to the Johor National Parks Corporation and Sea Gypsy Village Resort on Pulau Sibul for their assistance in transporting the collected trash off the island. We also express our appreciation to SWM Environment Sdn Bhd for placing a collection bin for us at Tanjung Leman and for collecting the trash away for recycling and disposal!!



MareCet and the International Coastal Cleanup 2018, Pulau Sibu, Johor



ITEM	QUANTITY
Plastic drink bottle	2,543
Glass drink bottle	61
Drink can	15
Styrofoam	2,818
Food wrapper	17
Plastic container	42
Plastic bottle cap	145
Metal bottle cap	3
Toothbrush	22
Straws/Stirrer	21
Forks/Knives/Spoons	45
Fishing buoy	243
Fishing rope/net	145 KG
Cigarette lighter	56
Cigarette butt	1
Fabrics	6
Jerry can/Bucket	21
Metal item	8
Foam/Plastic packaging	167
Life jacket	1
Tiny pieces (glass/foam/plastics)	62
Drink carton	15
Slippers/Shoes	384
Tyre/Construction materials	3
Plastic bag	6
Plastic bottle (e.g. bleach)	45
Disposable cup/plate	20
Tobacco wrapper/packaging	5
Paper bag	1
Teapot	1
Appliances (e.g. kettle, washer)	8
Plastic lid	29
Strapping band	2
Balloon	1



Fabric Recycling with Kloth Malaysia



Refused-derived fuel from worn-out fabrics to be used as alternative fuels for heavy machinery in factories

Did you know that in Malaysia alone, approximately 2 million kg of fabric waste is generated daily? Did you also know that the fashion and textiles industry is the second most polluting industry in this world, after the petroleum industry?

A cotton t-shirt can take up to 6 months to decompose, while other clothing items can take anywhere between several years up to 100 years to degrade! When clothing and fabrics break down, many pollutants such as chemicals, dyes and methane are released into our environment, leaching into our breathing space and water sources, including the sea. We've seen clothes stuck in the sand on the beach, and sometimes even floating at sea. Our dolphins don't need clothes, and we decided we had to try and do something about it!

In late 2018, MareCet officially teamed up with Kloth Malaysia Sdn Bhd, a local company dealing with fabric recycling and closing the loop towards circular economy with it. Together, we have been championing for more people to recycle their fabrics and clothes by encouraging businesses to adopt a fabric recycling bin, and having public fabrics collection events.

In August to December 2018 only, we have collected more than 16,000 kg of fabrics and clothing items from the public via two events held at 1 Utama Shopping Centre in Bandar Utama and Main Place Mall in USJ, and another one at our own headquarters in Subang Jaya!!!

SEEKING FABRIC RECYCLING PARTNERS

Are you a **BUSINESS**
or **COMMUNITY**
ORGANIZATION
interested in having a
fabric/clothes
recycling bin at your
premise*?

*Areas covered:
Selangor, KL, Putrajaya, Negri Sembilan,
Melaka, Johor (until Muar only)



Want to join us in
the movement to
keep fabrics out of
our overflowing
landfills and oceans?

Contact us at:
outreach.marecet@gmail.com
or
011 1577 6802



In Partnership With



Collections during World Oceans Day Event, 1 Utama Shopping Centre



Literally overwhelmed at our HQ in Subang Jaya

What happens to all the items we've collected? They are sent to our fabric recycling partner operator, Lifeline Clothing Malaysia Sdn Bhd, where the items are sorted into categories. Items that are still in usable condition will be sent to charitable organizations or sold to bundle stores, those that are in poorer conditions are cut up and used as industrial wiping cloths, and items that are beyond use are shredded and compressed into pellets that make engineered fuel for cement kilns. The aim of this recycling initiative is to divert discarded fabrics away from landfills and our seas!

If you are interested in adopting a bin, or running a public collection event on our behalf, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us. We would love to hear from you!

Dolphins don't need clothes!



Collections from Main Place Mall, USJ



Other locations within the Klang Valley where you may drop off your unwanted clothes and fabric-based items are:

The Hive Bangsar:

92A, Lorong Maarof, Bangsar Park, 59000 Kuala Lumpur

The Hive Ampang:

1F, Hock Choon Supermarket, 241 Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur

Free Tree Society:

91, Jalan Limau Purut, Bangsar, 59000 Kuala Lumpur

Lot 10 Mall:

Levels 1, 2, 5 @ 50, Bukit Bintang Street, Bukit Bintang, 55100 Kuala Lumpur

MareCet's Sea, Science and Schools Marine Education Programme

Despite being a maritime country surrounded by tropical seas, and one of the largest seafood-consuming countries in Southeast Asia, most Malaysians are largely disconnected from the ocean and its importance. Gasp!!

Environmental education is a vital yet lacking component in the country's national school curriculum. It is imperative that Malaysians are civic-minded and inculcated with the sense of awareness, empathy and appreciation for the natural environment, including her productive seas.

At MareCet, we believe that it is best that environmental education is incorporated into the lives of Malaysians starting from a tender young age. Thus our Sea, Science and Schools Marine Education Programme is designed to share our work on marine mammals in Malaysia and transfer ecological knowledge about the ocean and its importance with primary and secondary school students attending national schools. We hope to inspire and groom a generation of civic-minded Malaysians with strong appreciation for the seas that sustains our living on land.



Starting April 2018, we have conducted our Sea, Science and Schools programme with several schools across Peninsular Malaysia including SK Sri Pantai (Mersing, Johor), SJK(C) Pai Chee (Mersing, Johor), SJK (T) Mersing (Mersing, Johor), SK Tenggaroh 3 (Tenggaroh, Johor), SK Tenggaroh 6 (Tenggaroh, Johor), SJK (C) Choon Siew (Perlis), SMK Mahsuri (Langkawi, Kedah), and SMK TTDI Jaya (Shah Alam, Selangor).

Our programme was conducted in various forms including lectures/talks, interactive activities and hands-on mini workshops to engage the school students in different marine topics and issues.





MareCet is based in the Klang Valley, yet we often receive requests from schools out of town. Thus we constantly need a small stream of funding to enable us to travel to these schools to run our programme. If you would like to support us for this programme, you may make your contributions at:

<https://simplygiving.com/nonprofit/marecet>

EVERY CENT HELPS!

If you're a teacher or parent and are keen for us to run this programme in your child's school, you may contact us at outreach.marecet@gmail.com.



TEDxUCSIUniversity talk

Our Council Member, Vivian, gave an inspiring TEDx talk at UCSI University, Kuala Lumpur on 21 July 2018. The theme of the TEDxUCSIUniversity event was 'Parallax', to look at ideas that are presented from other people's points of view and recognize that they could be different views. The title of her talk was 'Breaking the surface: Marine Mammals in Malaysia' and she shared about her journey in the field of marine science and (delightfully) unexpected foray into marine mammal research and conservation efforts in Malaysia. Her talk also gave a brief introduction to marine mammals in Malaysia, human threats, and actions that can be taken to contribute towards their conservation.

The video of the talk can be viewed at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTwzkbRvxMQ>



KLEFF Wildlife Conservation Forum

Jol Ern, our Outreach Coordinator, had the pleasure of being invited to share her personal story with the youth at the 11th International Kuala Lumpur Eco Film Fest (KLEFF) on how she got into the field of wildlife conservation.

The Wildlife Conservation Forum was held at the White Box at Publika Solaris Dutamas, Kuala Lumpur on 24 October 2018. In her talk titled, "Is It Really Bikinis, Piña Coladas and Swimming with Dolphins", she addressed the misconceptions that people have when she introduced herself as a marine mammal researcher and conservation practitioner.

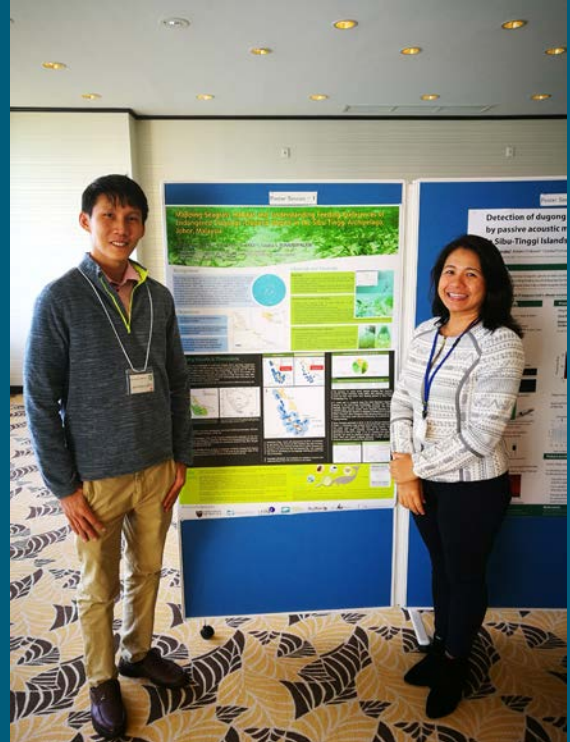
Alongside other wildlife conservationists in Malaysia, she gave a talk to the youth on what sparked her interest and motivation to work in the field of wildlife conservation, the challenges that she faces in her daily work and lessons that she has learnt.

Jol Ern also answered the questions of youths who are interested to pursue wildlife conservation as a career. So, has it really been bikinis, piña coladas and swimming with dolphins? Jol Ern would tell you, NO! But, the ride has been worth the while thus far.



International Dugong Symposium, Toba, Japan

In February 2018, our Dr P presented on MareCet's dugong research and conservation project at the 2nd International Dugong Symposium at Toba, Japan, where she had been invited by Dr Kotaro Ichikawa from Kyoto University and Mr Yoshihito Wakai from Toba Aquarium, to speak. She spoke to an audience comprising many of the world's top dugong scientists as well as local Japanese postgraduate students. Her presentation titled, "The Mermaids of the East Coast of Johor, Malaysia, and the Road to the Johor Dugong Sanctuary" earned her some praiseful comments from world-renowned dugong scientist Professor Helene Marsh from Australia's James Cook University, who commended MareCet's efforts thus far for dugong conservation in Johor! A few sub-components of the project were also presented by MareCet's project collaborators as posters at the symposium. These were "Mapping dugong habitat and understanding feeding preferences of endangered dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) in the Sibu-Tinggi Archipelago, Johor, Malaysia" presented by Harris Heng who is currently a MSc student at the University of Malaya, and "Detection of dugong feeding events by passive-acoustic monitoring in Sibu-Tinggi Islands, Johor, Malaysia" by Kotaro Tanaka who is currently pursuing his PhD at Kyoto University, Japan.

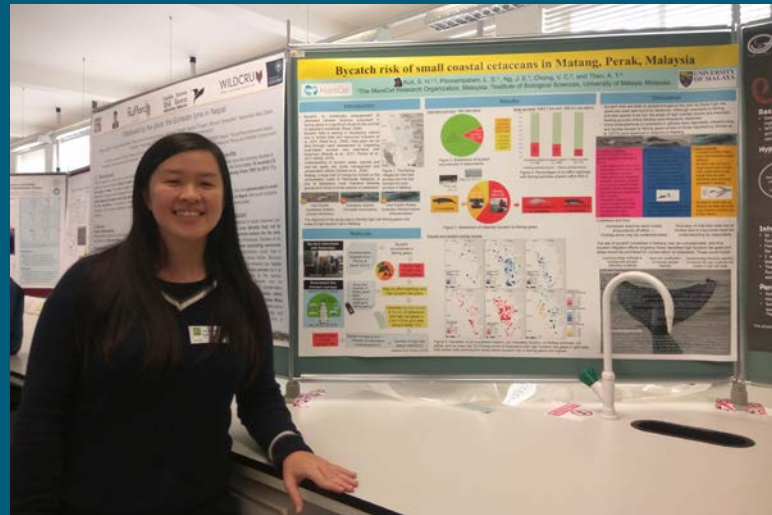


20th Student Conference on Conservation Science, University of Cambridge, UK

In March 2018, our team member Vivian had the opportunity to attend the 20th Student Conference on Conservation Science (SCCS) at the Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge, UK. The conference was attended by young conservation researchers from the biological, environmental and geography departments of universities across 55 countries. Vivian presented a poster on 'Bycatch risk of small coastal cetaceans in Matang, Perak, Malaysia' which showed the spatial risks that humpback dolphins, Irrawaddy dolphins and finless porpoises face on getting accidentally entangled in high risk fishing gears. The analysis was based on a combination of interviews with local fishermen and live observations during boat-based surveys.

It was a great experience for Vivian to learn new ideas from other conservationists and she especially enjoyed the inspiring plenary talk by wildlife conservationist, Dr. Paula Kahumbu. Vivian had the opportunity to network with other students who are conducting conservation research on wildlife species around the world. She also had the opportunity to visit the Cambridge University Museum of Zoology that showcases the diversity in the animal kingdom, which included a fin whale skeleton and specimens discovered by famous naturalists, Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace. Vivian also joined the historical walking tour of Cambridge University and visited some of the famous colleges, such as Trinity College and King's College.

SCCS strengthens the careers of young conservation scientists around the world through conferences in Cambridge, Australia, Bangalore, Beijing, New York and Hungary. To learn more about SCCS Cambridge, visit their website at www.sccs-cam.org.



Malaysia and marine mammals on the global map of importance! (Important Marine Mammal Areas Workshop, Sabah)

In March, MareCet was invited to participate in the 3rd Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMA) Workshop, which was held in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, organized by the Joint IUCN-WCPA Marine Mammal Protected Area Task Force. The workshop was focused on identifying areas considered as important for marine mammals in the North East Indian Ocean and South East Asian Seas region. These areas were selected and nominated by marine mammal researchers through the fulfilment of pre-determined criteria which are being used consistently across the world.

A total of 34 marine mammal specialists and observers from 17 countries identified 42 candidate IMMAs for the region after working through more than 100 areas of interest (AoI) submitted for consideration. This is the highest number of candidate IMMAs nominated so far for any region assessed showcasing the breadth of diversity and importance of this region for marine mammals!

Upon detailed review by independent assessors, 36 areas were accepted for designation to full IMMA status. Of these, seven are found in Malaysia, with three located in Peninsular Malaysia, three in Sarawak and one in Sabah (Table 1).

Table 1. IMMAs in Malaysia

No	IMMA Name	Location
1	Satun-Langkawi Archipelago	Peninsular Malaysia
2	Matang Mangroves and Coastal Waters	Peninsular Malaysia
3	Mersing Archipelago	Peninsular Malaysia
4	Kuching Bay	Sarawak
5	Similajau-Kuala Nyalau Coastline	Sarawak
6	Bay of Brunei	Sarawak
7	Lower Kinabatangan Estuarine and Coastal Area	Sabah

At the conclusion of the workshop, MareCet's Vice-Chairperson and Co-Founder, Fairul, was selected to join the IMMA Task Force as Co-Coordinator for the North East Indian Ocean and South East Asian Seas region together with Dr. Jo-Marie Acebes (Philippines) and Dr. Putu Liza Mustika (Indonesia).

The IMMA designation is an important milestone for these areas as they are now globally-recognised as areas of utmost importance for marine mammals. MareCet will continue to work collaboratively with governments, local communities and the private sector to enhance conservation efforts of these IMMAs in the years to come.



International Conference: Communities, Conservation and Livelihoods, Halifax, Canada

In May 2018, MareCet's member, Sophie had the opportunity to participate in the International Conference on Communities, Conservation and Livelihoods in Halifax, Canada. The conference was held at the Saint Mary's University from 28 to 30 May 2018. Sophie presented a talk titled, "Are You Game For This? Assessing Local Stakeholders' Perceptions On Conservation and Intention to Participate In A Proposed Dugong Protected Area In Johor, Malaysia".

In her talk, she presented about the opinions and thoughts of local communities around Mersing, Pulau Sibul and Pulau Tinggi on dugong conservation. The trip was supported by the GEF-Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project. It was a great learning experience for Sophie and to network with people from other organizations around the world who work on community-centred conservation and sustainable livelihoods initiatives.



IUCN Red List Symposium at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu

Dr P was invited to speak at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Symposium and Red List Assessment organized by Universiti Malaysia Terengganu in September 2018. She presented her talk titled, "Evaluating marine mammals on the IUCN Redlist - The Southeast Asian context" whereby she examined the challenges and gaps in assigning appropriate conservation statuses to marine mammal species in Southeast Asia. Her talk also called on new approaches for evaluating those species in this region, so as to be able to monitor species statuses more accurately here.



MareCet at Christmas Bazaars 2018

MareCet would like to thank the **American Association of Malaysia (AAM)** and **Association of British Women in Malaysia (ABWM)** wholeheartedly for providing us a charity booth at both their Christmas Charity Bazaars on the 2nd and 25th November 2018 respectively, held at the Renaissance Hotel Kuala Lumpur in support of our work! All proceeds from the sales of our custom-made merchandise went towards funding our continuous efforts in marine conservation.





NEWEST MEMBER!



We are very pleased to welcome a new member to the MareCet family! Introducing Saliza who has volunteered a lot of her time for MareCet (the only one who has ever knitted us little dolphin and dugong toys), and who has such keen interest in our cause.

We'll let her tell you more about herself, cheers!

My name is Saliza Bono and it is an honour to be a part of MareCet, an NGO that I have been involved with since 2014. I have always been passionate about marine mammal studies since I was a kid and being a part of an NGO that focuses on marine mammal is all I could ever dream of. I am currently a PhD candidate at Kyoto University, Japan, and will undertake research on the acoustic ecology of both Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins and Irrawaddy dolphins in Langkawi and the adjacent mainland. I recently graduated from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, with a Masters degree in Biological Science and prior to that, I graduated from James Cook University, Australia with a Bachelor's degree in Marine Science.

I carried out research on the effects of offshore wind farm construction on harbour porpoise in the Moray Firth, Scotland for my Master's thesis. I have volunteered with Vivian and Sandra in the past years with their research and also helped out at awareness campaigns for MareCet. I can't wait to be more involved with MareCet and to experience all the future outcomes of MareCet. I look forward to working with the amazing team members of MareCet!

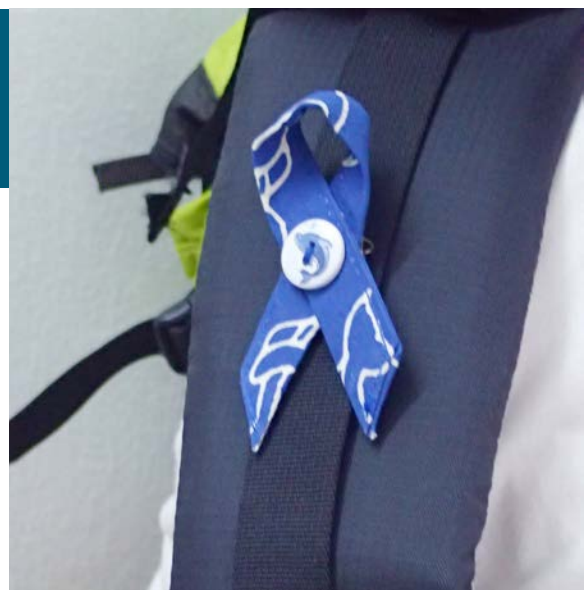
UN World Wildlife Day 2019 mini campaign

The United Nations World Wildlife Day (WWD) is celebrated annually on 3 March, and for 2019, the theme is going to be "Life below water: for people and planet". It would be the first time in the history of the UN WWD whereby the focus will be on MARINE species!** Needless to say, us MareCetians were most happy to hear this piece of news.

In conjunction with WWD 2019, MareCet is going to launch its very own marine conservation awareness ribbons at the beginning of March. Each ribbon will be priced at RM15, with the proceeds going toward our dolphin and whale research and conservation project in Langkawi. We hope that you'll support this mini campaign and purchase a ribbon, and pin it up with pride and love!

To purchase the ribbons, you may e-mail us at outreach.marecet@gmail.com.

** Read more about #WWD2019 at: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2018/focusing-on-marine-species-for-the-first-time--the-next-world-wi.html>



**WORLD
WILDLIFE DAY
3 MARCH**

Be aMAZEd by the Ocean Maze by MareCet



Looking for something different for your corporate, school or private events? The Ocean Maze by MareCet is available for rent!

Educational and awareness - Information and exhibits about marine life and ecosystems that encourage appreciation towards marine biodiversity and create awareness for marine conservation

Fun and interactive - Dive into the beauty and intrigue of the ocean through fun and engaging exhibits covering a wide range of ocean-themed topics

Kind to Mother Earth - The Ocean Maze was made from eco-friendly upcycled and recycled materials including scrap wood, used event carpets, discarded plastic bags and bottles, abandoned fishing nets and marine debris collected from local beaches.

The maze measures 4.5 m (width) x 6.7 m (length) x 1.9 m (height)

For further enquiries and/or to rent our Ocean Maze, please email us at ask.marecet@gmail.com or contact us at 011 1577 6802.

Be aMAZEd by the Ocean Maze by MareCet



Entering 2019 with sound!

“Echolocation is the MOST powerful pair of glasses”- Dory.

This reference from the animated movie, Finding Dory, tells us the importance of echolocation for animals by using sound to see. In Malaysia, little is known about the acoustic behaviour of the dolphins in Langkawi waters. Hence, we are embarking on an exciting research topic for the Langkawi Dolphin Research project this 2019 - understanding the acoustic behavior of both the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins and Irrawaddy dolphins. We want to gather information about what type of sounds these dolphins are producing in various group behaviours and also group sizes. We are also curious to understand how noise pollution (e.g. vessel noise) in these study areas can affect the way dolphins communicate.

Imagine being in a very loud concert, and you are trying to talk to friends, can you hear them? This is called sound masking, and several studies in other countries have witnessed the effects of boat noise masking dolphin communication. So we want to find out if the dolphins in Malaysia also experience sound masking and the extent of its effects on the sounds produced by the animals. Studying the acoustic behaviour of these elusive coastal dolphins is necessary to help us better protect these animals from the increasing rise of human pressures and a noisy marine environment.

This work will be in collaboration with the marine mammal acoustic experts from Kyoto University, Japan.



A Marine Education Field Trip by MareCet

The Blue Classroom @ Pulau Sibul, Johor

The Blue Classroom by MareCet was designed for the purposes of educating and creating awareness among the youths.

The Blue Classroom provides an all-rounded marine biological learning experience beyond typical school syllabus. Participants get to learn from real-life marine biologists with local site experience (since 2014!) on different marine topics, participate in real environmental conservation activities, and explore rarely visited areas to discover unique marine habitats. At Pulau Sibul, charismatic dugongs, local culture, and even an ancient volcano are some key highlights!

If you are interested in joining the Blue Classroom Pulau Sibul trip, or are keen in booking a group trip as part of a school activity, please contact us at outreach.marecet@gmail.com or call 011 1577 6802 for further details.

Our original trip runs as a 6D5N programme, however, we can customise the programme to suit your intended duration too, be it shorter or longer.

This is a wonderful opportunity to do something different, and experience the outdoors with people working in this field!

6D5N Pulau Sibul

Price:
RM2700++ per pax (group of 20 pax)

Trip period:
Only available between April to September



Dugongs & Seagrass

Take a boat ride out to the dugong habitat in search of elusive dugongs and learn about the animal and their seagrass habitat. The area is the last stronghold for dugongs in Peninsular Malaysia!

Experience Local Island Living

Walk around the local village surrounded by its tall coconut trees, traditional kampung houses and wandering animal residents (cows, sheep, chickens). Be immersed in the everyday lifestyle and culture on the island, and listen to colourful stories from the past.



EXPLORE THE TROPICAL ISLAND OF PULAU SIBUL AND LEARN ABOUT THE MARINE TOPICS IN **THE BLUE CLASSROOM** WITH MareCet

Marine ecosystems

Explore different marine ecosystems on and around the island and learn about the functions and importance of each unique ecosystem and their inhabitants!



Snorkelling & Coral Reef



Mangroves



Intertidal Shore & Tidepools



Tropical Rainforest & Jungle Trekking



Be A Marine Biologist

Experience how it's like to be a marine biologist in the field and learn how marine field surveys (including quadrat sampling, transect survey, marine mammal photo-identification) are conducted.

Photovoice Mini Project

Mini group project focused on the investigation and discussion of on-site marine conservation topics



Sharing: Career in Marine Conservation

Knowledge and experience sharing by our own instructors about real-life marine conservation work

Eco-documentary Screening

Watch an award-winning marine documentary and discuss about marine conservation issues facing the ocean today



Beach Cleanup

Make waves! Join hands to keep our ocean and the dugong habitat clean and healthy!



This field trip is open to participants aged between 15 to 25 years old (terms & conditions apply)

Price **INCLUDES**: Accommodation and meals for 6D5N, boat transfers, instructor and local guide fees, educational materials

Price **EXCLUDES**: Marine park and jetty fees, roundtrip transportation* to Tanjung Leman Jetty, Johor (*recommendation/arrangements can be made upon request)

It has been a very productive and successful year for MareCet, and as always, we would not be where we are without the kindness, generosity, love and support from our partner organizations and eco-cheerleaders out there! Please know that we cherish each and everyone's contributions, no matter the size or form, and know that we could not do what we do, achieve what achieve, and be where we are, without any of your help and support. Thus we would like to close off the year and this newsletter by saying a huge TERIMA KASIH / THANK YOU to all who have journeyed with us throughout 2018. Thank you for parting with your funds, your time and your muscles to give us a helping hand.





THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS:

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AND OUR VOLUNTEERS:

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 Abdul Razak bin Zainuddin
 Nurul Hanisah bt Irwan
 Muhammad Ibrahim Shah
 Rosland Godiun
 Norma bt Muhammad
 Muhammad Haikal bin Rosland

Fishermen crew
 Adam Miranda
 Debbie Goh
 Andrew Tan

Most Volunteered Person - Sharon Tan



It has been a truly rewarding experience volunteering with MareCet! Ever since I found out that Malaysia had our own dolphins and porpoises swimming around our seas, AND we had our very own NGO which were doing all they could to help promote awareness and conservation - I became that little 12 year old girl all over again, just that little bit obsessed with dolphins and whales.

Though I spent most of my adult years NOT in the scientific community, and am an interior designer by profession, I was only too glad to find out that there would be opportunities to contribute! The absolute highlight for me was when I joined the team on the Langkawi Dolphin Research Survey in 2017 and seeing them swim in real life, in their home surroundings was just too amazing. And it was also during that trip I found out, that I was not alone in my obsession.

It has been fascinating to learn about the dolphins' and porpoises' behaviour and just how much hard work goes into ALL the various conservation work MareCet is tirelessly doing; spending sleepless nights and literally all their energy. I am most thankful that I am able to contribute however I can, and thanks to the whole MareCet team for letting me! Thank you MareCet for all the good you guys do!

Volunteer Testimonials

The experience is nothing like your fancy overseas whale/dolphin watching tour. MareCet takes you to the mysterious world of unicorns of the ocean; dolphins and the cetacean family, where you'll learn about how and why scientists from MareCet study these Malaysian marine mammals, which are in dire need of attention, as public awareness of their existence is almost none. Overall, an experience filled with shots of awe, great laughs, unforgettable friendships and tales.

- GOH KAI ZHI

I am glad I signed myself up for this opportunity which was never short of unique experiences. It was an enjoyable time learning and working with passionate MareCet researchers while observing different species of dolphins and their behaviour from the boat. The highlight of it all was the sighting of a Bryde's whale during the survey. Dolphin-utely whale not forget that moment!

KOH I-ERN

Thank you Marecet for such an amazing experience, never would've imagined such huge populations of dolphins and sometimes even occasional sightings of whale is possible in the Northern waters of our very own Straits of Malacca!!! Hats off to the tremendous effort and hard work you all put into promoting awareness on cetaceans and other marine related conservation work by working with not only the government; but also schools and members of the public. The opportunity given to volunteers like myself to tag along for research trips is truly a brilliant idea. So thank you all so very much for the selfless effort put into taking care of marine wildlife that do not have a voice of their own, may the waves you guys have started keep getting stronger!

- PARAMJEET KAUR MITHOO SINGH



Shop for A Whaley Good Cause at the Lil' MareCet Shop!



“Passionate about Dugongs” T-Shirt

Price: RM 40 each
 Colour: Green
 Size: Regular fit (S, L, XL); Ladies fit (S - XL)
 Material: Fully-combed 100% cotton

Marine Mammal Doodle Tote Bag

Price: RM 40 each
 Size: 40 cm x 35 cm (height x length)
 Colour: Pastel pink on grey
 Material: Nylon



Marine Mammal Doodle Zip Pouch

Price: RM 30 each
 Size: 12 cm x 21 cm (height x length)
 Colour: Pastel blue on grey
 Material: Nylon

Shop for A Whaley Good Cause at the Lil' MareCet Shop!



Recycled Paper Notebook

Price: RM 10 each
Designs: Dugong, Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin
Size: A6 (14.5 cm x 10 cm); 30 sheets / 60 pages
Material: Recycled kraft paper



Postcard

Price: RM 1 each
Designs: Dolphins (Indo-Pacific humpback Dolphins & Irrawaddy dolphin), Dugongs



Passport Holder

Price: RM 40 each
Designs: Dolphins, Mermaid scales
Size: 14.5 cm x 21 cm (height x length)
Material: Cotton mix polyester

Headband (For Kids)

Price: RM 20 each
Designs: Mermaid scales, Happy whales, Colourful sea
Material: Cotton mix polyester



Shop for A Whaley Good Cause at the Lil' MareCet Shop!



Handmade Fins-Sew-Lovely Mum & Calf Felt Keychain

(detachable - calf is attached to mum with magnet)

Price: RM 25 each

Designs: Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, Dugongs

Material: Felt



Handmade Fins-Sew-Lovely Single Animal Felt Keychain

Price: RM 15 each

Designs: Dolphin (grey, pink, blue), Dugong

Material: Felt



Tail Fluke Keychain

Price: RM 10 each

Material: Zinc alloy

Dugong Plush Toy

Price: RM 60 each

Size: Approx. 30cm x 16cm x 14cm
(length x width x height)

*Fabric design may vary.

Contact us to know what's the in-stock fabric design.

Shop for A Whaley Good Cause at the Lil' MareCet Shop!

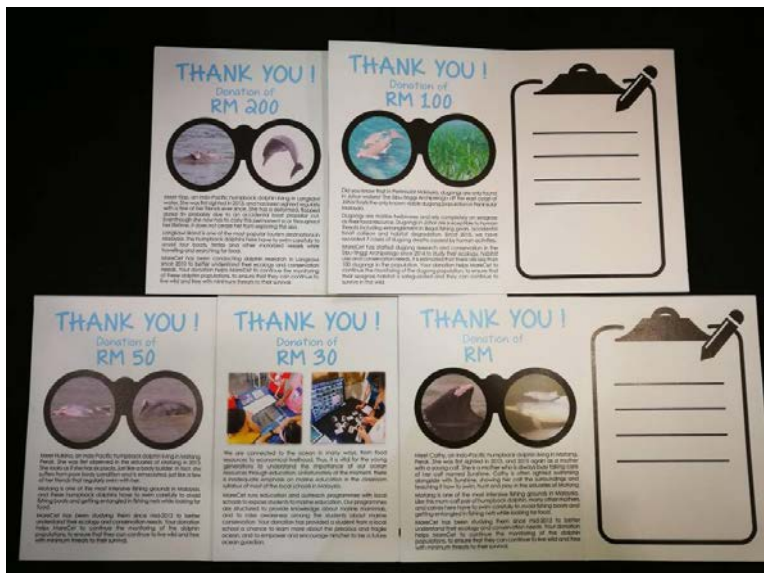
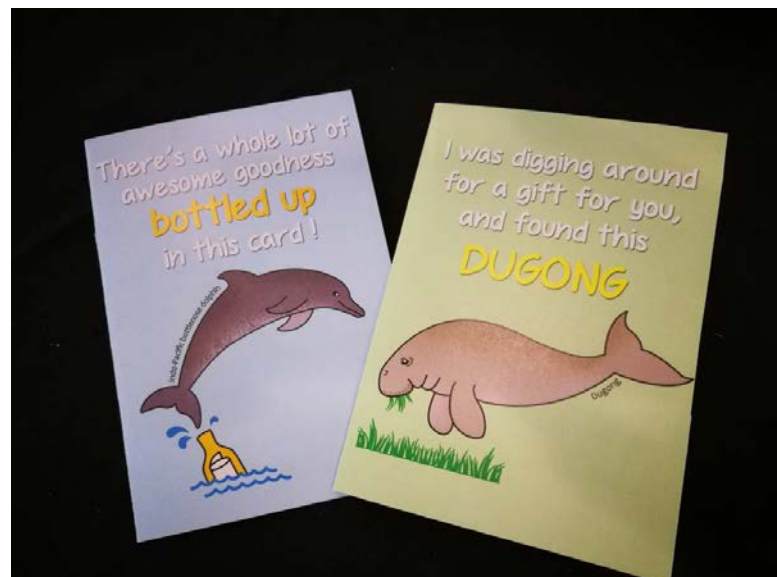


Waterproof Stickers (yes, we've tested it and it's true!)

- (1) Langkawi Dolphin Research
Price: RM 3 each
Size: 10 cm x 12 cm
- (2) I support marine mammal conservation!
Price: RM 5 each
Size: 15 cm x 6 cm
- (3) Love & protect the dugong
Price: RM5 each
Size: 8 cm diameter (round)

Giftcards

- (1) Here's a WHALEY BIG gift for you - RM 200
- (2) I was digging around for a gift for you, and found this DUGONG - RM 100
- (3) You will DOLPHINITELY LOVE this gift! - RM 50
- (4) This card serves a PORPOISE (purpose) - RM 30
- (5) There's a whole lot of awesome goodness bottled up in this card! - open amount (minimum of RM 10)



Shop for A Whaley Good Cause at the Lil' MareCet Shop!



Handcrafted Bracelet - Edeni (Adjustable Cord)

Price: RM 20 each
Designs: Dolphin/tail fluke charm,
 cord available in multiple colours
Materials: Zinc alloy charm, hemp cord



Handcrafted Bracelet - Monocerus (Wrap-around)

Price: RM 20 each
Designs: Tail fluke/fish hook charm, cord
 available in multiple colours
Materials: Zinc alloy charm, hemp cord



Handcrafted Bracelet - Robustus (Release Buckle Clip)

Price: RM 20 each
Sizes: Slim-width (approx. 1.2 cm),
 Thick-width (approx. 2.2 cm)
Designs: Cord available in multiple colours
Materials: Zinc alloy charm, paracord



Tail Fluke Necklace (Adjustable Cord)

Price: RM 15 each
Materials: Zinc alloy pendant, synthetic leather cord



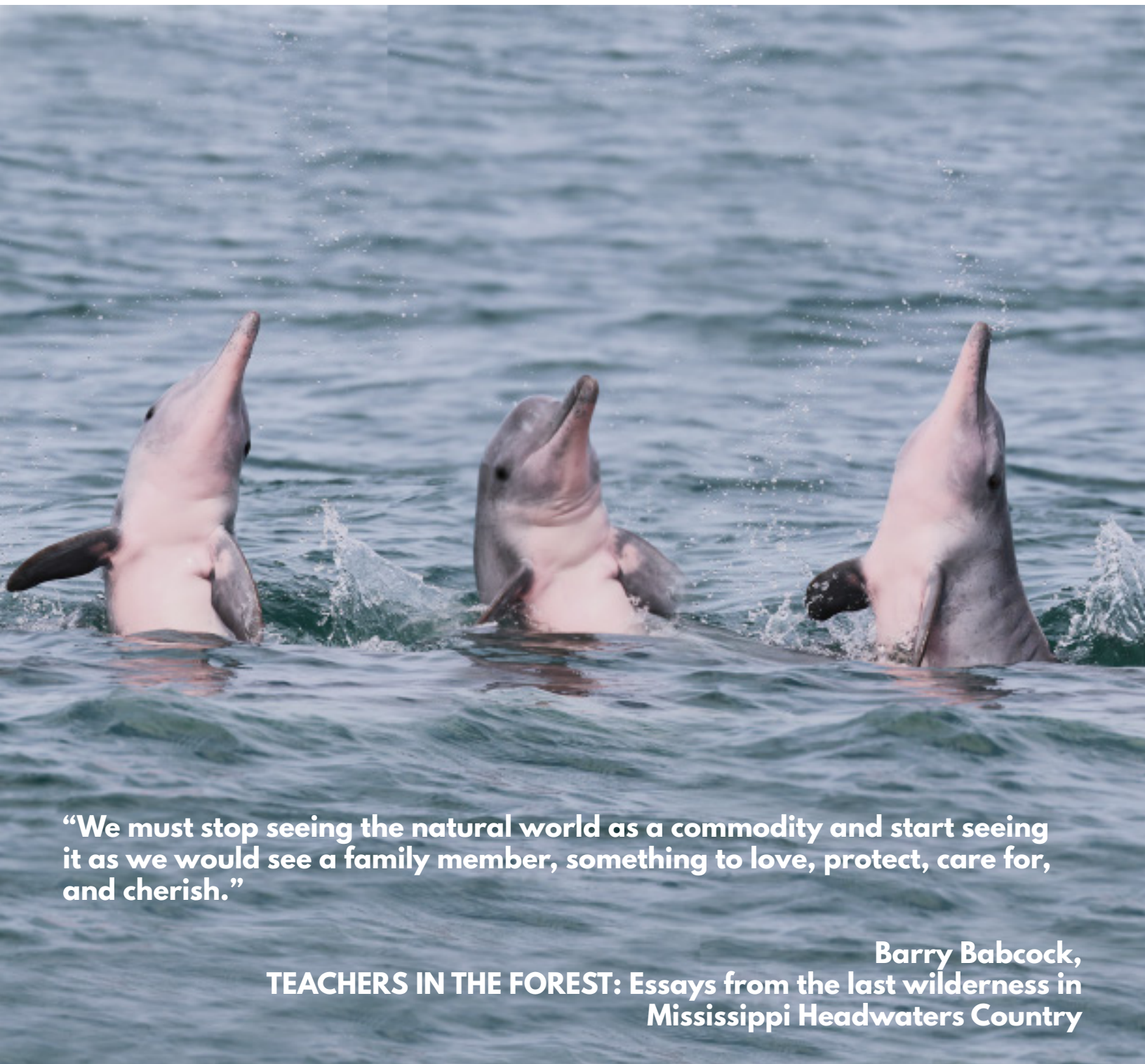
MARECET RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

@marecet 

Langkawi Dolphin Research 

+6011 1577 6802 

web: www.marecet.org 



“We must stop seeing the natural world as a commodity and start seeing it as we would see a family member, something to love, protect, care for, and cherish.”

Barry Babcock,
TEACHERS IN THE FOREST: Essays from the last wilderness in
Mississippi Headwaters Country