

LANGKAWI DOLPHIN RESEARCH

Fanbelt the dolphin is alive!

THE WHALE PROJECT

First research & conservation project on large whales in Malaysia!

WHALES ON-THE-WHEELS

MareCet's mobile 'Whale Truck' for marine education

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION NETWORK FALL EXPO 2019

Life-changing experience for MareCet!



WORDS FROM THE HELM

The year 2019 went like a flash in the pan, and while 2020 is looking like a challenging year, we hope to remain active in our line of work. As always, we remain so grateful for all that we achieved, the many opportunities to grow bigger and better and for all the support we continue to get from so many different people.

MareCet team members went places in 2019 - from Bali to Messina, Da Nang to San Francisco and Tokyo to Barcelona, all in search of further conservation networking, new knowledge and also to present our work and efforts to a wider global audience. Our team had the opportunity to attend the International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas, the Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN) Fall Expo and the World Marine Mammal Conference (which saw our dear Vivian winning an award for best student presentation!) to name a few.



One of our 2019 highlights was certainly to have been at the WCN Fall Expo and subsequent capacity building workshops that followed. The high levels of positive energy and encouragement that surrounded us throughout that Expo-workshop week was phenomenal, to put it simply. We were mingling and exchanging ideas and stories with a diverse crowd of conservationists, some of whom were multiple award-winning Earth champions. We must admit we were a little starstruck at times! The Expo crowd itself was certainly a wonderful one and for the first time ever, we experienced being in a sea of people who genuinely love and support wildlife conservation, it was euphoric.

We got to “test the waters” for our new project on large whales when we set out in May 2019 in search of the tropical gentle giants roaming our offshore waters of northwestern Peninsular Malaysia. We were not disappointed; our efforts were rewarded with amazing sightings of bubble-net feeding Bryde’s whales, which further proved to us how important this project is and cemented our desire to make it happen. This year, we will properly commence the whale project, which will be the very first study of its kind in Malaysia that is dedicated to large baleen whales, and we are ready for this whale of a discovery! Thanks to the support of our local Selangor state government, we had the opportunity to be creative and bring our marine education programme outdoors, on wheels. We successfully hosted a Whales-on-the-Wheels mobile truck event, also the first time marine education was “served” on a vehicle that went around two public beaches. It is then our dream that someday soon, we could take our “whale truck”, as we call it, on a nationwide tour. Any takers here for sponsorship? ;)

Malaysians are always proud of our batik craft heritage, so are we at MareCet. Check out our lil’ MareCet shop page to see the beautiful and originally designed and 100% Malaysian made dolphin-themed Lumbatik products we debuted in 2019, and read the story behind how Lumbatik came to be, supporting local livelihoods and marine conservation.

Without further ado, please enjoy all that we have put together in this edition of SiGHTINGS! 2019/20 and read for yourself all that MareCet has done last year and will continue to do. Year-to-year your support has enabled us to keep on keeping on, enabled us to grow from strength to strength, and enabled us to be stewards for our marine mammals and oceans. This year, we want to improve as an organization and create more impact for marine mammal conservation in Malaysia. Please stand with us and cheer us on from the sidelines, or better still, come join us in this mare-thon! We are each just a drop in the sea, but together, we can make waves in the vast ocean.

Fairul & Louisa

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6,244 km²

Across 3 field sites recognised as IUCN Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs)

4

Local university student interns provided with training and exposure to conservation work

232

Local school students reached via MareCet's marine education programmes

34

Volunteers engaged for cetacean surveys and local outreach events

67

Hours spent observing dolphins to determine behaviour in the presence of human activities

6

Local community members across 3 states supported through handicraft development and purchases

55

Hours spent recording dolphin sounds to investigate the impacts of underwater noises

201

Attendees reached across 7 public/corporate conservation talk events

1,992 km

Covered over sea during cetacean monitoring surveys

34

Participants from 8 countries engaged at the regional ASEAN conservation-focused workshop co-organised by MareCet

SPECIAL FEATURE: FANBELT the dolphin is ALIVE!



It was another day of dolphin survey on a September day of 2019. The research vessel seared through the slightly turbid waters of Langkawi, trailing a stream of white wake that dispersed as it lost its energy. Camera shutters fired away as Dr. P and Sandra peered intensely through the camera lens to capture photos of the humpback dolphins' dorsal fins in the group of an estimated 100 animals, what we refer to as a superpod. The dolphins were traveling southwards in the direction of Pulau Tuba and spread out over 1 kilometer. The camera panned and zoomed in to several dolphins that were scattered some distance away. As the setting sun began to fill the sky and clouds ablaze with deep red flames, the dolphins' were mere silhouettes to be captured on camera. Suddenly, a silhouette of a small, bent dorsal fin that broke the water's surface just a little was seen. The outline of the dorsal fin became apparent after several attempts of capturing photos of it - a flat top with a detached leading edge dangling to the right side. "Wait.... Could this be.....", Sandra blurted out, followed with a shriek "FANBELT!". That evening, back at our living quarters, we hurriedly downloaded the day's photos and opened up the photo of Fanbelt from 2017. Lo, and behold, all the scarring and nicks and notches matched up between the photos taken 2 years apart.

Fanbelt is an Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin with a mutilated dorsal fin which was first sighted by the team in August 2017 in Langkawi and Perlis waters across the span of a week. It was named after a belt-like object, probably parts of a boat engine that was discarded, wrapped around its body and cut through its dorsal fin. The belt inflicted wounds on its flank and restricted its movement. Despite the heartbreaking sight, the team was not able to help Fanbelt due to the lack of resources and means to free it from the object. In our subsequent surveys in 2017, 2018 and early 2019, we had not seen it, which had led our team to slowly lose hope and believe that Fanbelt could have succumbed to its injuries.

Back to that momentous September 2019 day, we were overjoyed and relieved to see Fanbelt and learn that it is still ALIVE! Most importantly, it is no longer bounded by the engine fan belt. Fanbelt's story is a reminder to our team of the importance of continuous monitoring and conservation efforts to safeguard these marine mammals and their environment. Although Fanbelt is now free from its shackles, it was always swimming alone within that large group of dolphins, keeping its distance from the rest of the animals. We don't yet understand why, but perhaps this behaviour of isolation has something to do with Fanbelt's previous injury, shaping its social dynamic within the larger pod. It is for this reason, of many reasons why MareCet emphasizes the need to understand how human activities influence the species' behaviour and ecology so that we can lobby for their protection using robust scientific findings.



Fanbelt seen in 2017, with object wrapped around its body

Fanbelt seen again in 2019, free of the object around its body

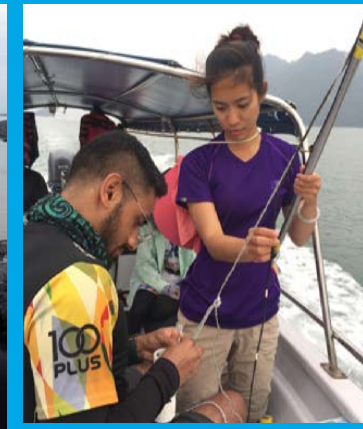


The year 2019 was a fruitful one. MareCet took a big step closer to gathering vital information on the effects of human activities on coastal cetaceans, by venturing into the underwater acoustic realm for the Langkawi Dolphin Research (LDR) Project. Like putting pieces of a puzzle together, the acoustic component will complement the social structure component to better understand the influence of human pressures on the species population. We are proud to be collaborating with our colleagues Dr Satoko Kimura and Dr Kotaro Ichikawa from Kyoto University, Japan, on the said study of acoustic ecology of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins and Irrawaddy dolphins in Langkawi-Perlis. We have since recorded dolphin whistles, clicks and burst pulses, and are also discovered that they “bark” and “fart” too! Interesting behaviours of spyhopping Irrawaddy dolphins and Indo-Pacific finless porpoises, as well as feeding Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins were observed.

Langkawi and the adjacent Kedah-Perlis water with our neighbour Thailand are officially recognized as Satun-Langkawi Archipelago Important Marine Mammal Area (IMMA) by the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Area Task Force. IMMA is an identified area of habitat that are important for marine mammals to be considered for management and conservation. This is Malaysia’s first transboundary IMMA which could be a stepping stone to facilitate transboundary conservation and research efforts in the future. This is a significant achievement for the team, with hopes that this can be an incentive to the local government to protect and prioritize the dolphins and their habitats.

Check out this feature article on our work:
<https://www.fauna-flora.org/news/dolphin-friendly-designation-protecting-vital-marine-habitat-malaysia>

Working photos of the team on surveys



Research Paper published!

Our Matang Dolphin Research is currently in “hibernate” mode as we progress with data analysis leading to us discovering more about the cetacean populations in Matang, Perak that we have been studying since 2013. What we’ve learned so far is that most of the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins in Matang are generally found closest to the shore in the shallow estuaries, followed by Irrawaddy dolphins and Indo-Pacific finless porpoises that are found farthest from the shore in deeper coastal waters. Based on photo-identification of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, we’ve discovered that Matang’s coastal waters are utilized by non-mixing groups of inshore resident dolphins in the estuaries and non-resident dolphins in the offshore waters. The former are seen regularly around Matang, however the latter are seen much less often.

So the big question is, where do the non-resident dolphins come from, and where do they go?

We published a peer-reviewed research article in the journal *Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems* in 2019 titled, ‘Distribution and habitat characteristics of three sympatric cetacean species in the coastal waters of Matang, Perak, Peninsular Malaysia’. This publication represents the first detailed assessment of distribution and habitat use of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, Irrawaddy dolphins and Indo-Pacific finless porpoises in the coastal waters of Matang and it serves as baseline information for future research, cetacean conservation and habitat management in Matang.

For those who are interested in our paper, you may access it at the following link:

[10.1002/aqc.3121](https://doi.org/10.1002/aqc.3121)

Our Matang dolphin research was also presented as posters at the World Marine Mammal Conference in Barcelona in December 2019. Vivian’s award-winning poster was titled, “Ranging patterns of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins (*Sousa chinensis*) in the Matang Important Marine Mammal Area in Perak, Peninsular Malaysia”, while Sandra presented a poster titled, “Social structure of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins (*Sousa chinensis*) in the Matang Important Marine Mammal Area in Perak, Peninsular Malaysia”.



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RESEARCH ARTICLE

WILEY

Distribution and habitat characteristics of three sympatric cetacean species in the coastal waters of Matang, Perak, Peninsular Malaysia

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Abstract

1. Coastal cetaceans in Southeast Asia are poorly studied and are particularly vulnerable to anthropogenic threats, especially in intensive fishing grounds.
2. To investigate the distribution and habitat characteristics of cetaceans in the productive coastal waters of Matang, Perak, Malaysia, boat-based line transect surveys were conducted between 2013 and 2016.
3. The Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) was most frequently encountered at 3.87 sightings per 100 km, followed by the Indo-Pacific finless porpoise (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*) at 1.72 sightings per 100 km, and the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*) at 0.66 sightings per 100 km.
4. The mean group size was largest for humpback dolphins (8.4 individuals), followed by Irrawaddy dolphins (6.4 individuals), and finless porpoises (2.8 individuals).
5. Humpback dolphins exhibited a clustered distribution concentrated mainly in shallow estuarine waters (<10 m deep and <5 km from river mouths), whereas Irrawaddy dolphins were more widely distributed in farther coastal waters (<15 m deep and <15 km from river mouths), and finless porpoises were mostly found farthest from the shore in coastal waters (10–25 m deep and >15 km from river mouths).
6. The spatial distribution of the three cetaceans overlapped minimally, and this is likely to reflect the distribution of preferred prey resources, species interactions, and their differential responses to anthropogenic activities and species dominance.
7. The results from our study serve as baseline information for future research, conservation, and habitat management of these vulnerable and endangered coastal cetaceans. Conservation actions are recommended for the Matang area.

KEYWORDS

conservation, encounter rates, group size, habitat use, Indo-Pacific finless porpoise, Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin, Irrawaddy dolphin, spatial patterns



Welcome to The WHALE Project!



The MareCet team has been getting sighting reports of whales from around Pulau Payar over the last few years, and have seen some whales too during our dolphin surveys around Langkawi and Perlis. Driven by our own scientific curiosity, in May 2019, we embarked on a brief survey to see what's "out there" in the offshore waters of Langkawi. With the support of public donors, Telaga Harbour and also Idaman Suri, our survey was made possible.

So what did we find? Out of the 5 days on the water, we encountered Bryde's whales (*Balaenoptera edeni*) on 2 of the days. Not just any Bryde's whales, but we had an actively feeding pair! Additionally, it wasn't just any feeding whales, they were bubble-net feeding whales! When most people hear about bubble-net feeding in whales, the species that usually comes to mind are humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). This innovative technique of feeding in Bryde's whales is much less known, and we're so excited to have documented it during our survey.



During this survey, we encountered a whale with a deep but healed propeller strike wound in front of its dorsal fin which we have nicknamed "Crater" - a reminder that we need to study these whales more and understand their conservation needs. We plan to continue surveying these whales this year in 2020 where possible, where we also hope to investigate whether the almost similar-looking Omura's whales (*B. omurai*) are found in the area too.

If you would like to support this very first project on large whales in Malaysia, you may make your contributions at:

<https://www.simplygiving.com/event/marecet-whaleproject>



MareCet hosts a Fulbright Fellow

MareCet had the privilege and honour of hosting Profesor Ellen Hines from San Francisco State University in the US for a few months in 2019 during her Fulbright Fellowship Programme.

During her time spent with us, she very generously held a training workshop for our team and some other invited colleagues on the Bycatch Risk Assessment (ByRA) toolkit which Professor Hines and her team of international colleagues had developed.

She also participated in our June and September 2019 dolphin surveys in Perlis and Langkawi, and we hope she had a great time! Here is what she had to say:

"Greetings all, I'm a marine mammal scientist from San Francisco State University. I've known Dr. Ponnampalam since 2008, when we researched dolphins in Thailand together. So, when I applied for a Fulbright Fellowship for summer of 2019, I knew where I wanted to go and who I wanted to work with! I was lucky enough to join MareCet scientists in the field in Langkawi and Perlis for 2 field seasons last summer. Rarely have I seen such knowledgeable and dedicated scientists. I was especially impressed with the intern program!

PhD students Sandra Teoh and Saliza Bono thoroughly prepared the interns for their field experience and as a result, the interns were able to feel great about their contributions to the research. I was also happy to have had the opportunity to teach about ByRA in the hopes that local Malaysian scientists and conservationists will find good use for assessing conservation threats to marine mammals. We all learned a lot and had a wonderful time!

Thanks MARECET!"



MareCet's Sea, Science and Schools Marine Education Programme

MareCet continues to run our Sea, Science and Schools Marine Education Programme in 2019, focusing on local schools in Langkawi Island.

We conducted our programme with SK Langkawi on 16 June, and Maktab Mahmud Langkawi and SMK Kelibang on 30 and 31 October respectively. We had indoor lectures and interactive activities with 52 Standard 4 to 6 students in SK Langkawi, and we brought 50 Form 3 students from both Maktab Mahmud Langkawi and SMK Kelibang on a field trip to Kilim Geoforest Park and ran indoor lecture and game session to share with the students about marine mammals in Malaysia and our research in Langkawi!

Through the programme, we hope to inspire and groom the young generation of Langkawians to be appreciative and proactive towards conserving our ocean and the marine environment.



Whales On-the-Wheels Marine Education Truck!

MareCet launched and ran our mobile marine education event, "Whales On-The-Wheels" for the first time!

On 9 November 2019, MareCet stationed our 'Whale Truck', a custom-designed event truck with marine education elements, at Pantai Kelanang and Pantai Morib in Kuala Langat, Selangor.

The 'Whale Truck' was furnished with different learning stations - a mini marine laboratory, marine mammal photo gallery and information sharing corner, 'Be A Dolphin Researcher' experience corner, marine debris nightmare learning corner, photo booth and kids colouring corner.

The event aimed to share knowledge and generate public awareness about the ocean, marine life and ecosystems, as well as marine conservation issues. This event was supported by the Selangor State Government Environment, Green Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation, and Consumer Affairs Committee, under the Small Grant for Environment and Green Technology Programme for the State of Selangor 2019.

It is our humble hope that someday we can do a **Whales On-The-Wheels** nationwide tour through our beautiful country Malaysia. If you're interested to support this, do contact us, we would love to hear from you.



If you are interested to find out more about our Whales On-the-Wheels truck or enquire further, kindly contact us at outreach.marecet@gmail.com or +6011 1577 6802



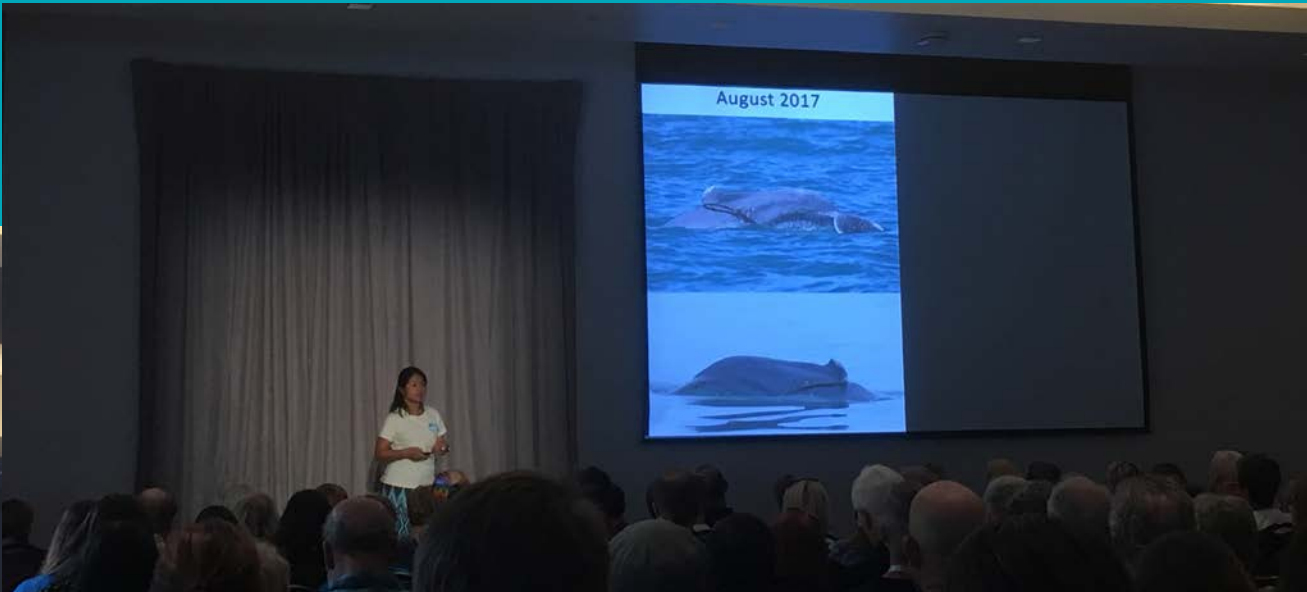
Wildlife Conservation Network 2019 Fall Expo, San Francisco

A seemingly “too-good-to-be-true” e-mail invitation to MareCet to a wildlife expo in San Francisco led to a wildly amazing week for our organization, an experience etched in our minds and hearts forever.

The Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN), a US non-profit based in San Francisco, California, had contacted us to be a Guest Speaker and booth vendor at their Fall 2019 Expo. Both Dr P and Sandra represented MareCet for this week-long of events, which included donor engagement events, an evening listening to the famed Dr Jane Goodall and being called up on stage to meet her afterwards, speaking and manning a booth at the Wildlife Expo, and several days of workshops for building organizational and communications capacity. We interacted with such an enthusiastic crowd of wildlife supporters who needed no convincing as to why the work of conservationists are so important.

The WCN workshops gave us a new perspective on how we could do better as an NGO, and steps we needed to take to be more impactful in this field of work. The week of workshops also afforded us the amazing opportunity of interacting and forming friendships with wildlife conservationists from all over the world, which include those from MarAlliance (sharks and rays, The Caribbean), Macaw Recovery Network (Costa Rica), Ewaso Lions (Kenya), Saiga Conservation Alliance (Uzbekistan), Global Penguin Society (Argentina) and Painted Dog Conservation (Zimbabwe) and Okapi Conservation Project (DR Congo), to name a few.

We are so grateful to Joyce Wang and Tommy Sheridan of WCN for taking a chance on us, and to the WCN itself for the life-changing experience and support to MareCet!



International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas, Greece



The Fifth International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA) was held in Costa Navarino, Greece, in March 2019. This marks the second time MareCet has participated in the ICMMPA and this edition of the conference did not disappoint.

Due to the very small participation from Asia, MareCet became the unofficial Asian 'representative' highlighting the issues relating to MMPAs in Asia during the various sessions and discussions held at the conference. Issues such as MMPA designation, governance, management, and sustainability were brought to the forefront during the course of the conference. ICMMPA 5 included the first meeting of Important Marine Mammal Area (IMMA) regional coordinators thus keeping the momentum moving in the designation, and eventually management, of IMMAs across the globe.

As the Co-Coordinator for the North Indian Ocean and South East Asian Seas IMMA Region, MareCet's own Co-Founder, Fairul, attended the meeting to provide insights on the progress on IMMAs in the region.



World Marine Mammal Conference, Barcelona



Photo Credit: Eszter Mátrai

The MareCet team of Dr P, Vivian and Sandra had the amazing opportunity to attend and present at the World Marine Mammal Conference that took place in Barcelona on 8 - 12 December 2019, which was attended by 2640 people from all over the world.

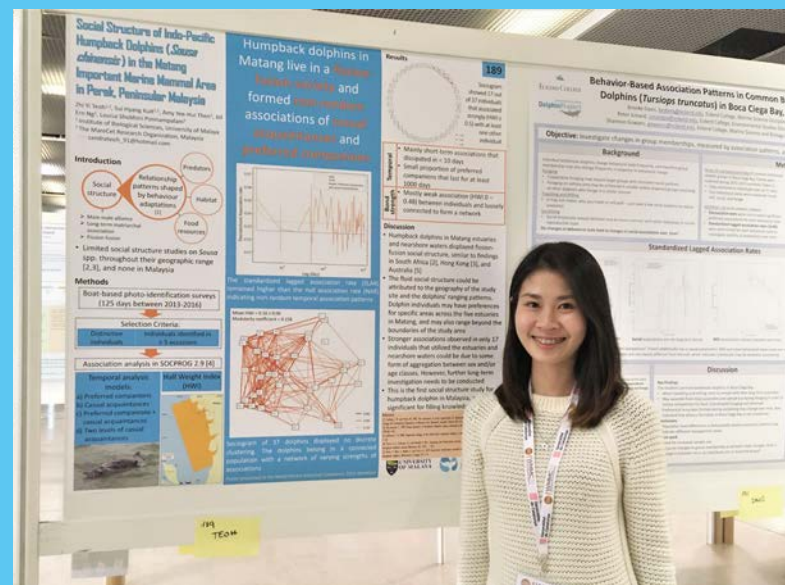
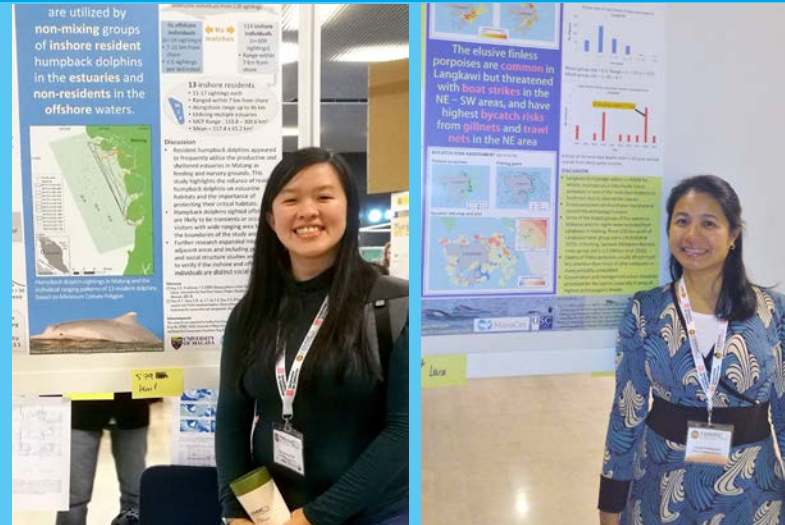
All three presented posters ranging from Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin movement patterns and social structure in Matang, Perak, to shining some spotlight on the presence and conservation needs of Indo-Pacific finless porpoises in Langkawi, Kedah.

We're also so very proud of our Dr P who delivered a plenary talk which was very well-received by the audience. Dr P had shared her personal story of dreams and ambition of doing marine mammal research and conservation work, and the challenges that she (and the team) had to overcome in making working in this field in Malaysia possible.

Her talk got many tweets and mentions on social media, many of whom said they were inspired!

The plenary talk by Dr P may now be viewed at:
<https://youtu.be/9tUjxKnALj8>.

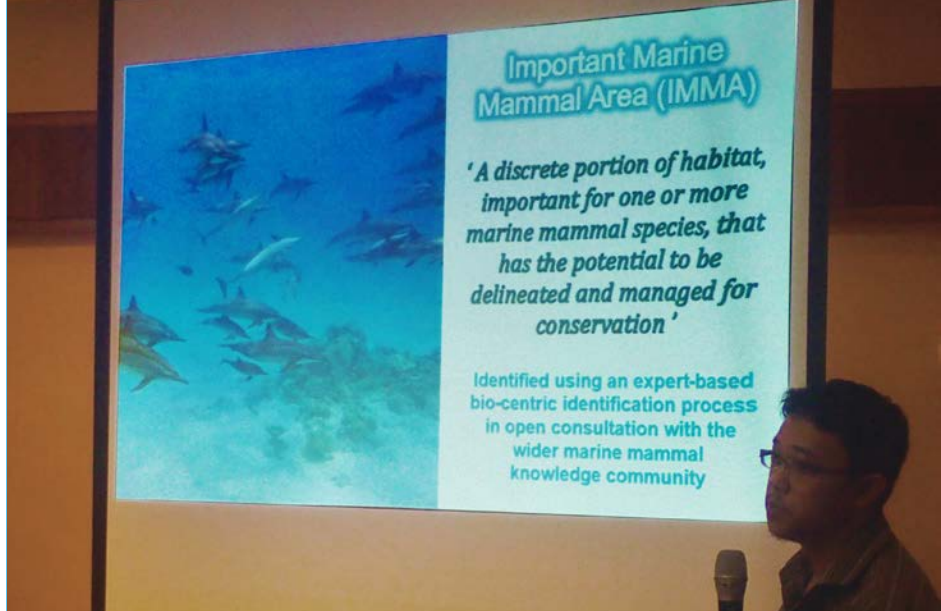
Last but not at all least, we are so proud of Vivian for bagging the award for best student presentation for the Asian region!! We would like to thank the Society for Marine Mammalogy for the travel grant support that made it possible for us to attend the conference.



ASEAN Workshop on Migratory Marine Mammals

MareCet co-hosted the Conservation of Migratory Marine Mammals and Other Endangered Marine Organisms for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with the Institute of Ocean and Earth Sciences (IOES), Universiti Malaya and the then Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology, Energy and Climate Change (MESTECC), in February 2019.

The workshop was attended by government representatives, marine mammal specialists, policy-makers, researchers and civil society members from the ASEAN member nations. Participants spent the three days discussing issues relating to the conservation of migratory marine endangered organisms, focusing on marine mammal species, and how to better streamline transboundary research and management efforts. The findings and recommendations from the workshop were compiled in a report which was then submitted to the ASEAN Secretariat for further consideration and action.



Waste Management Association of Malaysia Annual Conference



Photo credit: Waste Management Association of Malaysia

MareCet was invited to Waste Management Association of Malaysia (WMAM) Annual Conference with the theme “Plastics: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly” on 31 July 2019 to share insights of improper disposal of plastic waste and its impacts toward marine life.

The conference was attended by various local and international corporations and institutes, governmental agencies and NGOs.

Jol Ern delivered her talk titled, “Talking (Marine) Trash: Plastic Pollution in the Ocean” to highlight the local and global issues of marine plastic pollution and threats facing our marine wildlife and environment, as well as human living and well-being.

Expedia Talk, World Oceans Day

In conjunction with World Oceans Day 2019, Dr. P and Jol Ern gave talks at Expedia Malaysia on 17 July.

In line with 2019's WOD theme 'Gender and the Ocean', Dr. Louisa delivered her talk titled “Gender & Ocean: A Malaysian Odyssey” to share her own “odyssey” in chasing her childhood dream in marine mammal science, breaking many glass ceilings in the field of marine science and conservation in Malaysia and contributing her (wo)manpower to marine conservation.

Jol Ern shared about our “responSEAbility” and how we, as travellers, can minimize our impact to marine life and the environment while travelling and enjoying ourselves in nature through her talk titled, “Be A ResponSEable Traveller, Whale You?”.

MareCet also took part in the Expedia Day of Caring Annual Event on 18 September to share and promote our edu-trips and nature excursions in Matang, Perak and Pulau Sibu, Johor.

Expedia Malaysia also initiated ‘The WHALE Project Ambassadors’ fundraising campaign for our WHALE Project, whereby the ambassadors shared fun facts on their social media about Bryde’s whales to help boost the publicity and draw public attention to encourage more donations to the project via the existing Simply Giving online fundraising platform.

Spare the whales some change please, whale you?

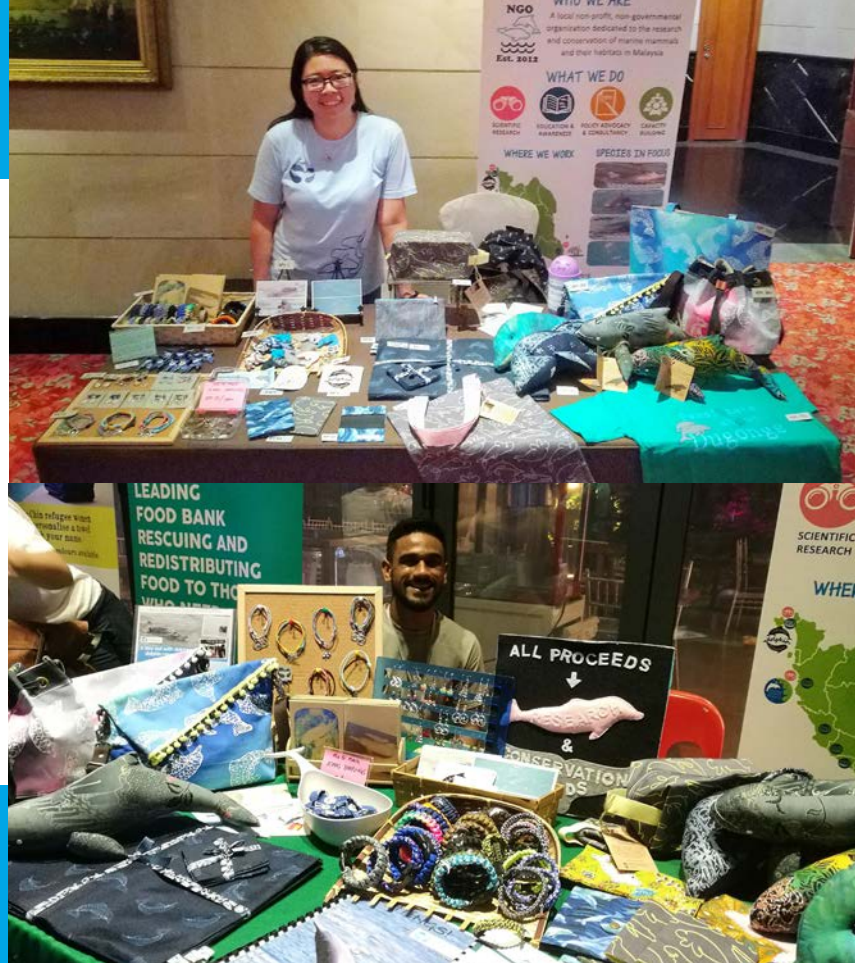


Booth and Bazaar Events

MareCet participated in several booth and bazaar events throughout 2019.

These were the DRT Show Malaysia, Swimin12 Sports Day, Main Place Mall T-shirt Tote Bag Making Workshop, German Speaking Society Kuala Lumpur (GSSKL) Sparkling Charity Christmas Bazaar and the Association of British Women in Malaysia (ABWM) Christmas Bazaar.

For all of these, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the following for sponsoring us the booth space at the respective events so that we could be present to share information about MareCet and to raise precious funds via sale of our fundraiser merchandise - DRT Show Malaysia, Swimin 12, Himalayan Social Journey Malaysia, Main Place Mall, GSSKL and ABWM.



MareCet's Live Love Party



Kayleigh is a marine scientist but, Kayleigh made a band! In December 2019, Kayleigh Hughes, one of MareCet's biggest supporters and recurring volunteer, debuted her new funk rock band called Kayleighs Soul at the MareCet Live Love Fundraiser live show. We never knew Kayleigh could sing so well until she took to the stage with her 8-piece band which also included a trumpeter and a trombonist.

Thank you Kayleigh for the ever-continuing love and support for MareCet and for raising monies for us through your music!

To music lovers out there, check out Kayleighs Soul at <https://www.facebook.com/LoveThatFunkRock/>



The Launch of LUMBATIK!

Batik is a big part of traditional Malaysian artisan heritage, and so we wanted to create something beautiful, authentic and exquisite to share this heritage with the world at large while fundraising for MareCet's research and conservation efforts.

We are so excited and so proud to introduce our Lumbatik fabric and associated products! What is Lumbatik? It is MareCet's very own custom-designed batik, inspired by the Indo-humpback dolphins we study and the traditional motifs of Peninsular Malaysia where we are based. The name Lumbatik is the amalgamation of the words 'lumba-lumba' which is the Malay term for dolphins and batik. The 'batik dolphin' design was drawn by Darshini Kandasamy and the batik itself was produced by a small batik maker in Kuala Perlis, where MareCet has been studying the dolphins since 2016.

If you are interested to see what products are available in our Lumbatik range, please take a look at the Merchandise section of this newsletter.



The Blue Classroom - Marine Mammals in Langkawi



Photo credit: NatureClassroom



Photo credit: Nature Classroom

The MareCet team, together with Nature Classroom and the Night Spotting Project, ran a short 3D2N educational excursion in Langkawi Island on 26 to 28 October 2019 for groups of parents and children. A total of 22 participants including 11 kids and teenagers aged between 4 to 16, and 11 adults joined the excursion. MareCet took the participants out to sea in search of dolphins, but unfortunately none were to be found on that day (though our team sighted about 50 dolphins three days later!).

We shared information about marine mammal and the Langkawi Geopark onboard, and the participants helped collect marine debris at sea. We also delivered short indoor lecture about marine mammals and surprised everyone with a showing of different dolphin skulls! Apart from marine mammals, the participants also had the chance to learn and discover nocturnal mammals with the Night Spotting Project and intertidal creatures with Nature Classroom. Through this programme, the young participants learned knowledge and gained hands-on experience with local field researchers about the study of the marine and nocturnal mammals in Langkawi and challenges faced by both the researchers and the wildlife.

We hope that this will plant a seed in their mind and that they will eventually grow to become someone who is thoughtful for our environment. It was a successful first time excursion for us in Langkawi and we hope to run more of this programme in 2020 to allow participants to explore and appreciate the natural beauty of Langkawi!

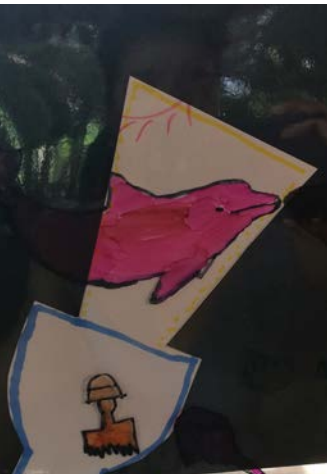
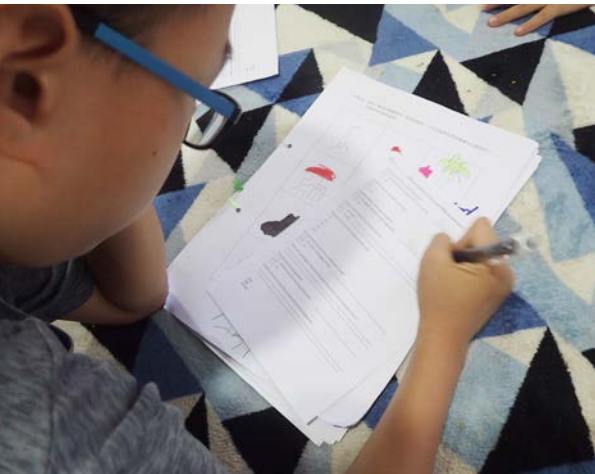


Photo credit: NatureClassroom



Photo credit: Nature Classroom

MARINE EXCURSION



How about a day out with dolphins and dolphin researchers?

In 2019, MareCet conducted three Matang edutours on 27 April, 24 August, and 8 September.

A total of 65 participants spent the day with MareCet's dolphin researchers to observe Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins in the wild and learn about the ecology of dolphins and other wildlife in the Matang Mangrove Forest Reserve. While most of the dolphin individuals sighted during Matang edutours were our regularly sighted individuals such as Two Dots, Marshmallow, Sprinkle and Freckles, there were also some individuals that had not been sighted for a long time, which made Vivian our Matang team leader, very happy!

We look forward to continue monitoring the dolphin population in Matang in 2020 via these trips. Dates are now available for 2020 edutours, do visit our Facebook page or scroll down this newsletter to find out more!

A day trip to the Matang Mangroves (Perak) with the MareCet Team in search of dolphins and experience how dolphin research is conducted at our project site!

 MareCet

A day out with dolphins & dolphin researchers

Kuala Sepetang, Perak

Trip package is inclusive of boat trip & roundtrip transportation (Kuala Lumpur - K.Sepetang). Participant must be 18 years old and above (10-17 year olds are allowed but must be accompanied by parents or adult guardians). LIMITED spaces available.

Email us at outreach.marecet@gmail.com or Whatsapp to 011 1577 6802 to book a spot or for further enquiries.

**subject to MareCet team's availability and tide suitability*

MARINE EXCURSION

Pulau SIBU



The MareCet team went on a 3D2N nature excursion with staff from the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) to Pulau Sibu, Johor on 14 to 16 September 2019.

We spent the first evening strolling down the kampung (village) and immersed in the tranquillity of the surroundings and the beautiful sunset. We visited Reen, who produces her own virgin coconut oil (VCO) on the island, for a demonstration of VCO-making, from breaking open the coconuts to extracting the coconut milk and refining the filtrate. We also came across the residential population of flying foxes roosting on trees!



On the second day morning, we sailed out to look for the endangered dugongs. A dugong surfaced for a split second in a distance, but unfortunately it was too fast and many participants did not manage to catch a glimpse of this elusive animal before it dived back into the blue. We then headed to Pulau Kukus for a dip in the water and snorkel around. Back on land, we shared with the participants about our dugong research and conservation work in Johor and carried out a cleanup along the remote part of the beach.

This excursion provides a different experience for participants to go off the beaten path to a less-explored destination for its pristine nature and wildlife, guided by real-life local marine biologists and conservationists.

If your group is interested to sign up for our Pulau Sibu Nature Excursion or enquire further, kindly contact us at outreach.marecet@gmail.com or +6011 1577 6802.



OTHER 2019 ACTIVITIES

Ocean Hero Conservation Run

MareCet is pleased to have been one of the Conservation Partners in the Ocean Hero Conservation Run 2019 co-organized by Sunsuria Berhad and Blossomly Global!

The run was aimed at raising public awareness on the importance of conservation of marine life and promote ocean sustainability, in line with the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals - Goal 14 Life Below Water.

The Ocean Hero Conservation Run was held on 2 March 2019 at Sunsuria City, Sepang, Selangor. There were more than 1,500 participants, including kids and adults joined the 5 km marathon to support and celebrate the ocean and raise funds for local conservation NGOs, working on protecting marine mammals, terrapins and turtles, and minimizing waste in our daily lives.



Photo Credit: Blossomly Global



‘Blue Planet Green Future’ Event, British High Commission KL

When the Prince came to town, MareCet was invited to participate in the ‘Blue Planet Green Future’ Event on 10 September 2019 at Quill City Mall, Kuala Lumpur!

The event was co-hosted by the British High Commission-Kuala Lumpur and the then Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change (MESTECC) to raise awareness on the perils of plastic pollution and encourage behaviour change among students and the public.

The event was graced by HRH Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, YAM Tengku Zatashah and the then YB Yeo Bee Yin, Minister of MESTECC.

We had set up our Ocean Maze and conducted a series of marine educational workshops focusing on marine mammals and marine plastic pollution to share knowledge about our work and marine mammals in Malaysia, as well as the threats of marine plastic pollution facing our ocean today.

Our Dr P was given the opportunity to brief HRH Prince Edward about the Ocean Maze and MareCet’s conservation efforts.



THANK YOU

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.



WCN

Wildlife Conservation Network



GOOD TIMES FROM A GOOD PLACE



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR 2019 DONORS:

Glenda & Henry Corning
Bev Spector & Ken Lipson
Caroline Ten Have
Michael DiLeo
Terri Potts
Jan Winick Heerman
Nina Geneson
A. Locke
Sandra Farkas
Andrea Ewald and
Stephan Meyer-Ewald
Katie Mettler
Edward Swart
Anne Montgomery
Wendy Su
Neil Griffiths
Nurhamizah Hamidon
Priscilla Tang
Rajesh Jackson
Ram Kumar
Richard Rowley
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Veenah Gunasegaran
Vine Tan
Wei Chong Teng
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Phillip Long
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Alyaa See
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Dennis Ooi
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Hasbullah Hasni
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Jannis Lam
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Jia Yi Chin
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Jit Kok
Joel Chan Kai Chin
Juzer Noman
Kevin O'Flaherty
Keymar Wake
Khairul Azizan Saw Abdullah
Kong Jer Jong
Lee Gang Yen
Lee Johnson
Leila Um
Linsey Hughes
Aziff Ariffin
Lyd Arshad
Mary Suma Cardosa
Megan Lawson
Misbah Ismail
N y
Nabilah Rahim
Nasha Raina Abdul Rahim
Nawal Nor Said
Rebecca Stievater



Most Volunteered Person: Arvind Karunakaran



Volunteering with MareCet has given me something that I did not expect. From the first day I started volunteering with MareCet about 6 years ago, it has introduced me to lovely positive souls who keep the energy up even though they are going through all the hurdles they face in making a better future for marine life.

As I hail from a totally different professional background, this has created an opportunity for me to learn a lot of knowledge on marine animals with hands-on experiences. I hope MareCet's efforts for marine life will continue to grow, and I wish to contribute more.



THANK YOU to EVERYONE who has helped support us through purchase of MareCet merchandise

AND OUR VOLUNTEERS:

Phan Minh Tâm
Goh Kai Shin
Chua Qin Ling
Jennifer Wah Pei Lui
Samantha Anak Ambie
Carolyn Jane Grant
Joel Ashervin Zachariah
Ku Farisah bt Ku Mohammad Sani
Lim Chuan Hui
Selam Solomon Gebreselassie
Milan Maniar
Sofia Abd Hamid
Adi Iliya
Eliz Azhar
Arvind Karunakaran
Wong Si Peng
Chua Li Pei
Tan Wen Yun
Elicia Wee Yee Suan

Jonathan Chow Hoong Khun
Sheryl Loh Wan Xing
Chiang Kai Lun
Chong Jia Yi
Mughiila Ellangovan
Sharifah Dinah Al Idrus
Prashanna
Noor Amalina Bt Bokri
Anna Ye Wen Ling
Ivan Lim Wei Jiat
Kee Alfian
Scott David Hastie
Nurhani Najwa binti Zainalabidin
Annabelle Fong Yan Lok
Nurul Aminah Ilias
Goh Kai Zhi
Joseph Zachary Chong
Siva Prakash
Sharon Tan



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

Check out some of our latest merchandise on the shelf! All proceeds from the purchase goes towards supporting our efforts in marine mammal research and marine conservation.



The ConserWeavetion Collection

These **mengkuang** (sea pandanus leaves) products are handmade locally by the womenfolk on Tuba Island, Langkawi, Malaysia. The mengkuang used for the woven products are harvested and processed on Tuba Island during the hot and dry season, while the weaving of the mengkuang takes place during the wet season. The purchase of these products not only supports our efforts in marine mammal conservation, but also helps to sustain the local livelihood and tradition on Tuba Island, as well as supporting the local artisans in Langkawi Island.



The Lumbatik Collection

These bags are lovingly made locally with Malaysian batik fabric. 'Lumbatik' is an original designed batik fabric by MareCet. The name 'Lumbatik' is derived from the combination of the words **lumba-lumba** (meaning dolphin in the Malay language) and batik. The batik design is inspired by the dolphin species that we study - the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin, and traditional motifs in Peninsular Malaysia where we work. Lumbatik is made in Kuala Perlis, a coastal area on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, where we study and conserve the dolphins. The purchase of these bags not only support our marine mammal conservation efforts in Malaysia, as well as local artisan.



The DOODLE Collection

These products are handmade by the local women in Sibu Island, Johor, Malaysia. The place is where we have been conducting research and conservation efforts on the endangered dugongs since 2014. The doodle design of the fabric features four of the marine mammal species that we study - Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, Irrawaddy dolphins, dugongs and Bryde's whales. By purchasing these products, you are supporting our conservation efforts for marine mammals and the island womenfolk livelihood development and empowerment in Malaysia.



PLUSH TOY Collection

These plush toys are inspired by the marine mammal species which we study in Malaysia - the Irrawaddy dolphin and dugong. The plush toys are made by underprivileged women in Malaysia at fair trade price. The purchase of these plush toys supports both MareCet's conservation efforts for marine mammals and the livelihood of the local women. Our cuddly marine mammal plush toy makes a unique gift for babies, kids and even adults!



**“IF WE ARE TO GO ON LIVING TOGETHER ON THIS EARTH,
WE MUST ALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR IT”
- KOFI ANNAN**