

Congratulations—it's a ... dolphin



Nick Gaines

by Roselynn Lang

There was jubilation at Yanchep's Atlantis Marine Park recently when two of their dolphins gave birth to healthy offspring. The births, the first by captive dolphins in W.A., opened doors to important studies on dolphin reproduction, said proud Atlantis vet, Dr Nick Gales.

Murdoch University's Veterinary Department used ultra-sound to monitor the development of the unborn babies, and a behavioural scientist from Curtin University studied the effect of the births on the dolphin community.

The first dolphin, Rani, gave birth in early January.

"She had missed three feeding sessions in a row," said Andrew Hutchison, who kept vigil for six weeks to capture the birth on film.

"She showed absolutely no interest in people or the other dolphins; she just hung in the water as though in another world. Her contractions started at midnight.

"Early on January the 4th, we were woken by the excited yells of the trainer on watch.

Rani was swimming briskly around the pool. A tiny little tail was visible underneath hers.

"After 45 minutes, Rani expelled the baby and swam away from it. We all held our breath," he said.

The baby dolphin swam straight to the surface, took its first breath and gave a high-pitched squeal.

Motherhood was a new experience for Rani, but within a few minutes she was guiding the baby around the pool. Soon both were swimming in unison, the little one's surfacing technique not yet perfected and quite comical.

Another dolphin was born a few weeks later. The babies, both believed to be female, are strong and healthy. A third dolphin is expected to give birth soon, but another dolphin, Lulu, miscarried.

The births should contribute to greater understanding of dolphin reproduction and behaviour in the wild, and possibly help to unlock some of the mysteries surrounding these fascinating creatures.



Nick Galois

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EDITORIAL

A prerequisite for the successful management of land and wildlife is an understanding of the processes that drive ecosystems, and managers who can manipulate these processes.

In Western Australia, we are fortunate that we have a wealth of talent in different government agencies, tertiary institutions and private companies who can provide these research and management skills.

Of course, obtaining a perfect understanding of ecosystems and ways to manage them brings to mind the frog who wants to reach a creek, but can only jump half the distance every time.

But it is not the complexities of understanding or managing ecosystems which provide the greatest difficulty.

Social and political factors are far more difficult to accommodate.

All the scientific and managerial skills in the world are worth nothing if the community and, often more importantly, selected constituencies within the community do not support the management strategies.

Unfortunately, there is often an inverse relationship between a scientist's or manager's skills in his profession and his capacity to handle social and political factors in the community. This is not surprising, since most scientists and managers have received little training in basic communication skills, let alone community politics.

CALM is attempting to address this problem in a variety of ways. But the people who should know the most about how to obtain community support for public land management strategies are the public. *Landscape* readers are an important and influential constituency. If you have thoughts on this issue we would like to hear from you.



What a sterling idea! A new management plan for CALM's South Coast Region - page 28.



Are insects gradually eating away our jarrah forests? Turn to page 18.



What lies beneath the waters of Marmion Marine Park? See page 25.

COVER



A rose by any other name... Does its name detract from the beauty of the common eggfly (Hypolimnastis bolina)? Photograph - Jiri Lochman

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