

16 May 2010: A Day for the Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic Sea

On 16 May 2010 the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise was celebrated in several countries around the Baltic Sea to mark this special day for the small whale. Some highlights are outlined below.



Poland: In Gdynia, the Hel Marine Station of the Institute of Oceanography of Gdansk arranged a special information stand and an exhibition next to the sculpture of a Harbour Porpoise. People attending the exhibition received leaflets, postcards, stickers and tins of sprats from porpoise-friendly fisheries. These tins are the result of a project that started last year to

actively protect harbour porpoises from being caught in nets by using pingers as temporary acoustic barriers to keep the porpoises out of an area with high risk of bycatch. For the youngest visitors a contest for the best colouring picture of Harbour porpoises was organized.



Lithuania: The Lithuanian Sea Museum organized an educational program for adults and children about the most endangered species of animals living the Baltic Sea. In this United Nations Year of Biodiversity, the Museum informed about the critical situation of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise and also the Baltic Grey seals. The highlight of the celebration was the forming of a Harbour Porpoise shape on the beach by participants that had to be dressed differently to represent the biodiversity of the Baltic Sea. More than 1500 people from over 15 cities gathered to form the shape, which was then photographed from a plane.



Sweden: Havets Hus showed an exhibition about the Harbour Porpoise with a scaled model of the animal as well as about other small whales and also seals. People were encouraged to report all sightings of whales, alive or dead, to The Swedish Museum of Natural History.



Another Swedish celebration took place at the Natures Center of Kullaberg. Malin Andersson and David Börjesson – both marine biologists – informed visitors with presentations about their work on the harbour porpoise and ASCOBANS. A guided excursion to Kullens lighthouse for porpoise watching and a whale watching tour close to the feeding ground of the

animals was the highlight of the day.

Germany: The ASCOBANS Secretariat held an exhibition at the SEA LIFE Center in Königswinter to raise awareness of the threats this small whale, the only species regularly occurring in German waters, faces in particular in the Baltic Sea region. Information material was distributed to the visitors of the aquarium, including specialised material on small cetaceans for children.



A more comprehensive report on activities during the 2010 celebration of the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise will be published in the 2011 edition of the Handbook for Exhibitors (available online at <http://www.ascobans.org/index0504.html>).