

SWiMMS

what it does...

By Catherine Brassaud

SWiMMS – the Singapore Wild Marine Mammal Survey project – a scientific programme that is held at the Dolphin Study Group, is part of the new Tropical Marine Science Institute (TMSI) at the National University of Singapore. This project, when it first started in May 1996, focused on the general distribution of dolphins and dugongs in Singapore and the regional waters. For that purpose, a sighting form was distributed to the public oriented toward the marine environment. This paper enabled people to report all the simple information related to their observations of marine mammals such as the date, the time, the location, the species, numbers, basic behaviours, etc. We received more than one hundred sighting forms and till today, we are still receiving from many of you. Have a look at our website (<http://dsg.sbs.nus.edu.sg>), and you will see our map of Singapore with your numerous observations plotted in! Take some time to look at these, check the different dolphin species and seize the opportunity to print out our *new* sighting form.

So, what has SWiMMS been up to since its inception. Today, SWiMMS takes on a more detailed study of the distribution of our marine mammals in Singapore waters with photoidentification and stranding programmes. Thus, if you find a stranded cetacean (dolphin or dugong), dead or alive, please let us know as soon as you can by calling us at Tel: 774 9913.

Apart from reporting your sightings of marine mammals (both stranded and swimming), there is another way you could be involved in SWiMMS and that is by being a volunteer in our survey efforts. Our team goes out to sea about twice a week to prospect Singapore waters and define the most favourable areas for our dolphins and dugongs. As a member of the team, you would acquire skills in marine biology as well as in surveying methods. This may involve a little hard work but the rewards (encounters with wild marine mammals) are worthwhile. So, if you are available, why not take part in our weekly survey, although it may be difficult to follow our work schedule.

If you are interested to join the team or simply want more details relating to the identification or biology of these marine mammals, please contact me at Tel: 774 9913, Fax: 774 9654 or via e-mail at c.brassaud@dsg.sbs.nus.edu.sg or visit our web site at WWW:<http://dsg.sbs.nus.edu.sg>.

editor's note :

Catherine Brassaud is a French biologist with the Dolphin Study Group (DSG) of the Tropical Marine Science Institute (TMSI) at the National University of Singapore. Her job is to monitor dolphin and dugong populations in Singapore waters as part of the DSG's research project called SWiMMS (Singapore Wild Marine Mammal Survey).

