



Media release

8 September, 2008

Capricorn Coast dolphins at risk

A study funded by the Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA) has found dolphins cruising along the Capricorn Coast may be in danger of disappearing from the region.

Activities occur across the nation every year in September to showcase and encourage greater community support for threatened species; a concept developed by the Threatened Species Network, a program of the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Australian Government.

FBA's Coastal and Marine Coordinator Shane Westley said it was the perfect opportunity to highlight the plight of the Pacific Humpback and Snubfin dolphins.

The dolphins are both listed as rare under the Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992.

"A four year study funded by FBA has confirmed there is a small and isolated population of around 50 Snubfin dolphins between the mouth of the Fitzroy extending to just above Yeppoon," Mr Westley said.

"While it's yet to be officially documented, it appears the species is not sighted again until north of Mackay and none are found south of the Fitzroy," he said.

"With such low numbers across such a small area, their chances of survival in this region are seriously impacted by issues such as inbreeding, habitat degradation, poor water quality and food availability."

Mr Westley said the study provided an excellent foundation for the development of a management plan to help improve the dolphins' chances, and hoped local agencies would assist in the process.

"We hope to work collaboratively with groups involved in managing our marine areas to get a plan up and running that could address things such as boating and fishing practices."

Daniele Cagnazzi, a PhD student with Southern Cross University Whale Research Centre, undertook the study, which involved collecting skin samples from both the Pacific Humpback and the Snubfin dolphins to help determine the genetic make-up of the populations.

He studied the distribution, social structure and abundance of the dolphins, which was made difficult by the elusive nature of the species and weather conditions in the Capricorn region.

For further information or interviews contact: Jody McDonald, Media and Communications Co-ordinator, 4999 2816, 0429 992 808, jody.mcdonald@fba.org.au.

Fitzroy Basin Association Inc.

PO Box 139, Rockhampton Qld 4700, Ph: (07) 4999 2800, Fax: (07) 4921 2860