

19 July 2020

Dear Society for Marine Mammalogy Leadership,

Please find enclosed a petition asking the Society to take a leadership role in eliminating the reliance on unpaid work in marine mammal science. The pipeline of unpaid positions in our field limits diversity and should no longer be part of the status quo. This petition has been signed by 727 people from many different specialties, nationalities, and career stages, and also includes signatures from people who opted not to pursue a career in marine mammal science due to this and other barriers to participation. Here, we provide some additional context for this petition and address some of the feedback we have received in response. We want to be clear that this cover letter does not necessarily reflect the views of and was not endorsed by the co-signers of the petition.

First, we commend the Society on recognizing the need to address diversity and inclusion in the field, through both the formation of the Ad Hoc Diversity and Inclusion Committee and outgoing President Ann Pabst's Letter to the Community Regarding Racial Injustice. We welcome efforts from incoming President Charles Littnan to reach out to the community for suggestions to improve the Society. However, these gestures must be supported by actions.

We propose to the Society that taking a leadership role in eliminating unpaid work is an achievable action that could change the field for the better. We are not arguing that this is the only or the most important action that the Society can take. For example, it is important to engage diverse young people in science at every stage of education. But why recruit people from underrepresented groups into the field only for them to be later excluded by systemic barriers including the expectation that they work months or years without pay? The transition between undergraduate and graduate education, which is where many unpaid positions are undertaken, has been identified as a "strategic point of loss" for underrepresented minorities (1,2). Therefore, we point to the elimination of unpaid positions as a targeted mechanism for increasing diversity in the field.

Our petition focused specifically on the role of unpaid positions in reinforcing the existing racial and socio-economic makeup of the Society. We also recognize that race, class, and gender intersect within STEM to exclude and/or hinder career progression of some groups more than others (3–5). We believe that action to reduce reliance on unpaid labor will not only increase diversity, but make the field more inclusive, innovative, and facilitate career progression for women and minorities who have historically and presently not been well-represented in supervisory and leadership positions (6–8).

We have received a lot of positive and constructive feedback to this petition. In addition to the responses publicly circulated on MARMAM, members of the community sent personal emails and commented on Twitter and Facebook posts. Objections to the petition have mostly fallen into two categories: first, people who have benefitted from unpaid positions and therefore believe them to

be positive and second, people who are concerned that some organizations will not be able to function if they are unable to rely on pay-to-play arrangements or unpaid workers.

We don't disagree that unpaid positions can be beneficial to some people. What we argue is that unpaid positions are not equally available to everyone and serve primarily to promote those who are already privileged. Personal accounts of positive outcomes from unpaid positions are a product of survivorship bias and should be considered in that context. People who have experienced negative outcomes from unpaid positions are less likely to remain in the field and therefore their personal accounts are not part of the current discussion (9). Research has shown a limited connection between unpaid work and future career success, with success associated with having personal connections (10). This further confirms that the pipeline of unpaid positions reinforces existing privilege.

We also agree that reducing reliance on unpaid labor is likely to be disruptive to existing funding structures. However, it is disingenuous to use potential harm to small organizations as a rationale for maintaining the status quo when many large, well-funded institutions with multimillion-dollar annual budgets also use unpaid workers. For example, we heard from a student who recently did a six-month unpaid internship on marine mammals at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, which has an annual operating budget of over 100 million USD (11). Many other large marine science and conservation organizations in the US -- including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the World Wildlife Fund -- also use unpaid workers (12–14). We use examples not to single out these institutions in particular, but to illustrate that the reliance on unpaid labor is not limited to small organizations struggling to conduct research on shoestring budgets.

Representatives of small organizations that rely on research grants have pointed out that a major obstacle to paying workers is the fact that many funding bodies (including the Society's Grants in Aid of Research (15)) do not allow funds to be used for salaries. This is unacceptable. Labor is a fundamental component of research and should be budgeted for in grant applications whenever needed. We advocate for the Society to change its policy on this matter immediately and consider applications that include funding for salaries. We hope that this petition and any resulting actions taken by the Society can be a catalyst for organizations to find ways to pay all workers and encourage people to lobby for change within their individual organizations and to funding bodies. For too long, we have considered paying some workers to be optional, and have structured our financial commitments accordingly. It's time to reprioritize and reallocate funding. Just as research cannot happen without access to certain equipment and supplies, it cannot happen without labor.

Determining how we eliminate the reliance on unpaid labor in practice will require community input, willingness to change, and real work. Here, we include some of the constructive suggestions we have received from the community in response to this petition.

- There is a need to describe the differences between volunteering, ecotourism, interning, and employment and the expectations associated with each. We recognize that different countries use different legal definitions of some of these terms and advocate that all

organizations comply with local law. However, community definitions may be a useful starting point to develop a shared understanding of and appropriate advertisement for these different types of opportunities. In the interest of starting this conversation, we suggest the following definitions:

- Volunteering takes place for a few hours a week or on an ad-hoc basis; the total time commitment is on the order of hours to days and does not preclude full-time employment. The work is typically not related to one's career and is not a required step for advancing one's career.
 - Ecotourism is a leisure activity for people interested in wildlife and conservation to experience the natural world and support research. Ecotourism is not typically related to one's career and is not expected to advance one's career. Pay-to-play opportunities (such as when "interns" pay a fee in order to participate) fall into this category.
 - Internships are short-term paid positions (weeks to months) and are understood to be entry-level positions where the intern both contributes labor and receives training, guidance, and mentoring. More work is accomplished because the intern is there than would be otherwise, and the work the intern undertakes is not menial. The goal of an internship is to introduce someone to a potential career path.
 - Employment would typically be a longer-term paid position (months to years), may or may not be menial, and may or may not include training and mentoring.
- Some have argued that providing room and board is adequate compensation for entry-level workers. While offering room and board is commendable and a step in the right direction, it is not sufficient. The problem with these arrangements is that they make assumptions about the family structure and financial stability of workers. We advocate that interns and employees be paid local minimum wage and provided with room and board if their work requires them to be away from home.
 - We also received feedback highlighting that it can be difficult to obtain work visas for different countries, but possible to travel and volunteer with organizations instead. This is related to the issue of payment versus compensation as discussed above. In these situations, reimbursement for travel and/or room and board may be acceptable in lieu of payment. However, it is important to consider this in the context of parachute science and promote the development of local capacity wherever possible (16).
 - A major component of positive internship experiences is good mentoring, and people have suggested that the development of best practices for mentoring ECRs in marine mammal science could improve the quality of internships in the field.
 - Similarly, we look forward to reading an upcoming article in the *Journal of Environmental Studies & Sciences* on guidelines for ethical internships and suggest that such guidelines be adopted or developed for internships in marine mammal science.

- People have advocated for increasing both attraction and retention of underrepresented minorities. In addition to making positions more attractive by offering adequate pay, efforts could include partnerships with HBCU and other minority-serving institutions and mentoring programs to help ECRs break into the field. Científico Latino has recently piloted such a program (<https://www.cientificolatino.com/gsmi>).
- Finally, there is considerable interest in creating a central fund for internships, particularly to place funded interns from underrepresented groups with small organizations and to build local capacity in developing countries. Models for this include Shatter the Ceiling (<http://www.shattertheceiling.co/>) and Minorities in Shark Science (<https://www.patreon.com/misselasm>).

There is no silver bullet to issues of equality, diversity, and inclusion. We targeted our letter at one specific problem that we thought the Society could address, and also recognize that unpaid positions are part of a larger system of racist and classist barriers to participation. Some of the loudest objections to our petition came from people whose careers have spanned 40 years—the same 40 years in which no progress has been made to increase diversity in STEM fields (17). However, the number of signatures and positive, constructive responses we have received in response to this petition demonstrate that a strong contingent of the community is ready to make serious changes. We hope the Society can help lead the way towards a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive (1,18) future for marine mammal science.

Sincerely,

Dr Eiren Jacobson, University of St Andrews
 Ms Chloe Malinka, Aarhus University
 Dr Margaret Siple, University of California, Santa Barbara

Bibliography

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10. Fournier AMV, Holford AJ, Bond AL, Leighton MA. Unpaid work and access to science professions. Rosenbloom JL, editor. *PLOS ONE*. 2019 Jun 19;14(6):e0217032.
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17. Bernard RE, Cooperdock EHG. No progress on diversity in 40 years. *Nat Geosci*. 2018 May;11(5):292–5.
18. Abernethy EF, Arismendi I, Boegehold AG, Colón-Gaud C, Cover MR, Larson EI, et al. Diverse, equitable, and inclusive scientific societies: Progress and opportunities in the Society for Freshwater Science. *Freshw Sci*. 2020 Jul 9;000–000.

Dear Society for Marine Mammalogy Leadership,

We are writing to request that the Society update its [Code of Professional Ethics](#) to reflect that all workers in the field of marine mammal science should be compensated for their labor. We further request that the category of “Internships (unpaid)” be removed from the [Marine Mammal Science Job Openings](#) and that the posting of unpaid positions on the Society’s website be disallowed.

In [A Recent Letter to the Community Regarding Racial Injustice](#), the President of the Society emphasized “our commitment to our membership and our global community at large . . . to actively create a diverse, inclusive and tolerant world.” Similarly, the Society’s [Ad Hoc Diversity and Inclusion Committee Terms of Reference](#) states that “the SMM is dedicated to enhancing diversity in its membership, leadership, and readership.”

Unpaid positions are a barrier to a diverse and inclusive Society and should no longer be part of the status quo of marine mammal science.

Fundamentally, unpaid positions are available to people who are able to work for free. In the US and abroad, the [racial wealth gap](#) means that such persons are disproportionately likely to be white. Unpaid positions are a common point of entry for people interested in careers in marine mammal science, so it should not come as a surprise that people of color are underrepresented in our field as well as [in other environmental sciences](#). These gaps [are not improving](#), which means we are not doing enough to combat structural racism in environmental sciences. Unpaid positions [amplify existing barriers to participation](#) for persons of low socioeconomic class. Ultimately, this harms not only those who are discriminated against, but limits diversity in the field and [stifles innovation](#).

In addition to being unethical, [unpaid positions are sometimes illegal](#) and do not afford workers the protections that paid workers have access to. For example, in the US, unpaid workers are not eligible for employer-provided health insurance or workers compensation if injured on the job, nor are they protected against discrimination or harassment.

The pipeline of unpaid positions reinforces the existing racial and socioeconomic makeup of marine mammal scientists. If the Society is committed to increasing diversity in marine mammal science, it will ask members to compensate all workers appropriately and refuse to advertise or encourage unpaid positions.

Further Reading:

Bernard, R.E., Cooperdock, E.H.G. (2018) No progress on diversity in 40 years. *Nature Geosci* 11, 292–295. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41561-018-0116-6>

Fournier AMV, Bond AL. (2015) Volunteer field technicians are bad for wildlife ecology. *Wildl Soc Bull*. 39: 819–821. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wsb.603>

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Whitaker, D.M. (2003) The Use of Full-Time Volunteers and Interns by Natural-Resource Professionals. *Conservation Biology*, 17: 330-333. doi:10.1046/j.1523-1739.2003.01503.x

Signed,

Table 1: Alphabetized list of 727 co-signatures

Minna Abassi	Serenity Dog Training and Behavior Associates
Salma Abdel-Raheem	The Whale Museum
Ms Selina Agbayani	University of British Columbia
Fadia Al Abbar	Wageningen university
Dr. Alana Alexander	University of Otago
Dr Jennifer Allen	Griffith University
Claudia allen	Swansea university
Dr. Simon Allen	University of Bristol
Miss Megan Allison	None/ postgrad
Gabriela Alongi	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Christine Bezic Alpeñes	N/A
Diana Alvarado	University of California
Ms. Abigail Ames	University of Washington
Rachel amos	previously participated in unpaid marine mammal science positions
Ms. Dale Anania	n/a
Dale Anania	The Marine Mammal Center
Dr. Frederick Archer	NOAA/NMFS/Southwest Fisheries Science Center and UCSD/Scripps Institution of Oceanography
Dr. Amanda Ardente	Ardente Veterinary Nutrition LLC
Caroline Armon	Oceans Initiative
Dr Holly Armstrong	University of Abertay Dundee; University of St Andrews
Dr Monica Arso Civil	Sea Mammal Research Unit, University of St Andrews
Mr. Karthik Ashok	Five Oceans Environmental
Ms Meghan Aulich	PhD candidate
Dr Julie Avery	University of Alaska Fairbanks

Taylor Azizeh	Aarhus University
Cathy Bacon	HDR, Inc.
Janelle Badger	University of Alaska Fairbanks
Ms. Sara Badiali	Citizen
Ms. Kimberly Bagley	Marine mammal science
Talia Bailey	Marine naturalist
Nevé Baker	University of California Santa Cruz
Ms. Nicole Baker	University of Washington, Seattle
Michele Bane	Marine mammal biologist
Dr. Meghan Barboza	Southern Connecticut State University
Yvonne Barkley	University of Hawaii
Dawn Barlow	Marine Mammal Institute, Oregon State University
Dr Ashley Barratclough	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Heather Barrett	Moss Landing Marine Labs
Miss Katline Barrows	Student
Dr Carolyn Barton	MMO trainer
Dr. Brian Battaile	NA
Dr. Mark Baumgartner	Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution
Dr. Elizabeth Becker	Contractor, Southwest Fisheries Science Center
Brenda Becker	
Dr. Roxanne Beltran	UC Santa Cruz
Dr Kimberley Bennett	Abertay University
Michelle Berger	Shaw Institute
Ms Alexandria Bevan	San Francisco State University
Mr Shemar Blakeney	MSc Marine Biology at Bangor University
Ashley Blawas	PhD Student, Duke University
Brooke Blosser	College of Charleston
Miss Olivia Boeberitz	Michigan State University
Dr. Anna Boegehold	Oak Ridge Associated Universities

Ms Mary Kate Bolger	University College Cork
Eva-Maria Bønnelycke	University of St. Andrews
Dr Cormac Booth	University of St Andrews
Ashley Booth, PhD Student	Louisiana State University
Dr. Abraham Borker	University of California Santa Cruz
Dr Guilherme A. Bortolotto	Scottish Oceans Institute, University of St Andrews
Dr Charlotte Boyd	University of Washington
Dr. Amanda Bradford	Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries
Dr. Brian Branstetter	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Dr gill braulik	University of St Andrews
Riona Bray	Ecotourism guide
Arial Brewer	University of Washington & NOAA Marine Mammal Lab
Marisa Bright-DeLoatch	Advisory Board (WDC)
Kristy Brightwell	Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
Erin Brodie	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Miss Josephine Brown	University of St Andrews
Dr. Susannah Buchan	University of Concepcion / Centro COPAS Sur-Austral / Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Zonas Aridas
Miss Lucie Buckland	Marine Mammal Ecologist
Dr Juditha C. A. Burchsted	Salem State University
Jennifer Burns	Texas Tech University
Hallie Burrell	Recent Grad
Alec Burslem	SMRU, University of St Andrews
Ethan Bushey	Currently trying to join the world of marine mammalogists
Miss Andrea Cabrera	Private
David Cade, post-doctoral researcher	UC Santa Cruz
Tara Callahan MSc	University of the Basque Country
Ms Claire Carrington	Student

Dr John Carroll	Georgia Southern University
Alexandra Carroll	University of Maryland
Miss Tierney Carter	MSc Marine Mammal Science student
Dr Matt Carter	SMRU
Dr. Rachel Cartwright	Keiki Kohola Project
Mr. Richard Cartwright	USC
Dr. Francesco Caruso	Institute of Deep-sea Science and Engineering, Chinese Academy of Sciences
Jorie Carvalho	Undergraduate student
Miss Jessica Carvalho	University of Algarve
Erin Casellas	Soundwatch boater education program, The Whale Museum
Ms. Laura Cassetty	Wellesley College
Veronica Cendejas	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Lic. Ailen Chalcobsky	CESIMAR-CONICET; National University of Patagonia San Juan Bosco
Dr Cory Champagne	UW Bothell
Mrs. Tess Chapman	University of Hawaii at Manoa
Ms. Samantha Chaves	Prior internship holder
Samantha Chaves	Recent undergrad
Dr. Ellen Chenoweth	University of Alaska Fairbanks
Francesca Chipparoni	Indiana University Graduate
Dr. Ann Chiu	Veterinarian
Cher Chow	University of St Andrews
Dr. Emily Choy	McGill University
Dr. Renee D. Christensen	Private
Cynthia L Christman	University of Washington, Cooperative Institute for Climate, Ocean, and Ecosystem Studies
Karli Rice Chudeau, MA	PhD Candidate, UC Davis
Dr William R Cioffi	Southall Environmental Associates
Marie-Ève Clark	None
Dr Casey Clark	University of Washington

Emma Clarke	University of Cambridge
Dr Tommy Clay	University of Liverpool
Allison Clemons	Michigan State University
Ms. Shannon Coates	Marine Ecology and Telemetry Research
Laura May Collado	University of Vermont
Ms Melissa Collier	Georgetown University
Dr. Tracy Collier	Western Washington University
Miss Sarah Colosimo	Fish and Wildlife
Sean Comeau	PAM Operator and MMO
Heather Conkerton, MS	n/a
Rosemary Connelly	Connelly Designs
Dr. Melinda Connors	Stony Brook University
Ms. Ashley Cook	University of Miami
Ms Lauren Cooke	Conservation Educator
Ms. Lauren Cooley	Moss Landing Marine Laboratories
Veronica Coppolaro	University of Manitoba
Alex Coram	University of St Andrews
Ms. Dulce Cortez	California Sea Grant
Dr David Costalago	OceanMind
Mr. Mark Cotter	UMass Dartmouth
Jessica Coulon	PNMM, Mayotte, France
Dr. Jonathan Cowart	University of Florida
Dr Sam L Cox	University College Cork
Marjorie Cox	California Academy of Sciences
Ms Elise Coxhell	Ten Lives Cat Centre
Ms. Danielle Crain	Baylor University
Ms. Carrie Cramer	Student
Ms. Angela Crone	The Marine Mammal Center
Ms. Sophie Crouch	Postgraduate student

Abigail Crowder	Colorado State University
Leah Crowe	Integrated Statistics
Dr Hannah Cubaynes	University of Cambridge/British Antarctic Survey
Laura Cupicha	Marine Biologist, previous unpaid intern
Leslie Curran	Marine Biologist
Dr. Alexandra Curtis	NOAA Southwest Fisheries Science Center
Max Czapanskiy	Stanford University
Dr. Erin D'Agnese	University of Tasmania - casual researcher
Katie D'Innocenzo	The Marine Mammal Center
Ms. Raina D'Orazio	DVM Student, Tufts University
MSc Vania Fonseca da Silva	Durham University
Daniela da Silva	UMGC
Dr Michael Dähne	Stiftung Deutsches Meeresmuseum
Ms. Rachael Dailey	Valencia College
Dr. Greta DalleLuche	None
Ms Larissa Dalpaz	PhD student
Risa Daniels	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Dr Erdem Danyer	veterinary control central research instute
Ms Aimee Kate Darias-O'Hara	University of St. Andrews
Dr. Simon A.F. Darroch	Vanderbilt University (Assistant Professor)
A/Prof. Krishna Das	University of Liège/FNRS
Ms. Megan Davies	University of Victoria
Brooke Davis	FAU Harbor Branch
Miss Kristiana Davis	CDFW
Marie-Kell de Cannart	Asociacion Tonina
Mafalda de Freitas	Student
Loes de Heus, MSc	Marine biologist
Kaylah de Jager	MARMAM
Aline Boutros de Mello	Environmental consultant (PAM Operator)

Dr Amber de Vere	Plumpton College & University of Lincoln
Ms Simone de Winter	Se
Ms. Sommer Dean	Conservation Biology Masters Student, University of Wollongong
Ms. Morgan Delgado	NA
Ms Cloe Delgado	Universitat de Barcelona
Ms. Ashlyn DeMilia	Student
Miss Charlotte Dempster	Keiki Kohola Project
Danielle Deonarine	Marine and freshwater biologist/whale watching naturalist
Dr. Stacy DeRuiter	Calvin University (Grand Rapids, MI, USA)
Mr. Noah DesRosiers	Private sector fed gov contractor
Christianna DeWind	University of St. Andrews
JACOPO DI CLEMENTE	Independent researcher
Prof. Giovanni Di Guardo	University of Teramo, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, 64100 Teramo, Italy
Carlo Di Natale	Plymouth University
Mrs. Dianna Dibble	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Sasha Dines	Stellenbosch University and SSRC
Miss Thaya Dinkel	University of Alicante
Ms. Brigid Dodge	Senior Marine Mammal Trainer
Laia Rojano-Doñate	Aarhus University
Ms. Andrea Dransfield	Independent
Laura Duffy	MS Marine Biology, Marine Ecologist & Env. Consultant
Jillian Duggan	Ocean Sonics
Ms. Jessica Dunajski	Dept of Parks and Recreation
Ms. Alison Dunlap	Michigan State University
Ms. Courtney Dunn	Marine mammal observer
Miss Kate Dunning	UiT
Dr Ian Durbach	University of Cape Town
Aviv Eckshtein	Marine biologist

Ana Eguiguren	Dalhousie University
Mr. Garðar Einarsson	Húsavík Whale Museum
Ms Carli Elligan	None
Ms Siri Elmegaard	Aarhus University
Erica Escajeda	University of Washington
Taylor Evans	Georgetown University
Joseph Fader	Duke University Marine Lab
James Fahlbusch	Stanford University
Ms. Amber Fandel	University of Maryland Chesapeake Biological Lab
Ben Farmer, MSc Candidate	Louisiana State University, Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences
Raphael Fennimore	SMM Northeast Student Leadership
Samantha Ferguson	Millersville university
Mrs. Elizabeth Ferguson	Ocean Science Analytics
Sara Fernández	Whale watching
Ms Oihane Fernandez-Betelu	University of Aberdeen
Laura Joan Feyrer	Dalhousie University
Russell Fielding	Coastal Carolina University
Ms Charlotte Findlay	Scottish Association for Marine Science and University of the Highlands and Islands
Dr. Spencer Fire	Florida Institute of Technology, Dept. of Ocean Engineering and Marine Sciences
Mrs Adriana Fitzgerald	Marine mammal observer
Ms Lisa Flack	Caring
Ms. Kiirsten Flynn	Cascadia Research Collective
Ian Flynn-Thomas	Research Associate
Heather Foley	Duke University
Miss Catarina Fonseca	n/a
Dr Andrew Foote	NTNU, Trondheim, Norway
Dr. Vivienne Foroughirad	Georgetown University
Dr Caterina Fortuna	Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research

Dr. Sarah Fortune	University of British Columbia
Ilias Foskolos	Aarhus University, Denmark
Dr Auriel Fournier	Illinois Natural History Survey
Amy Fowler	NMFS contractor
Dr. Melinda Fowler	Springfield College
Dr Shannon Fowler	University of Roehampton
Dr. Selene Fregosi	Oregon State University
Ms Kathryn Frey	Mote Marine Laboratory
Jade Fugini-Laws	The Marine Mammal Center
Ms. Elena Gadoutsis	LHIN
Mrs. Cara Gallagher	Aarhus University
Jordan Gallerizzo	None; just a concerned citizen!
Mr Lorenzo Galletta	Deakin University
Francisco Gamos-Escoto	MMO & PAMO
Dr Maria Garagouni	University College Cork
Ada García	Portland State University
Richard Garcia	Vet tech
MSc. Gabrielle Genty	Universidad de Los Andes
Alix Gibson	none
Ryan Gilbert	UHCL
Mr Prem Gill	University of Cambridge; British Antarctic Survey; WWF.
Mr.Kyle Gillen	Whale Enthusiast
Dr Anita Gilles	Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research (ITAW). University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Foundation
Dr. Amandine Gillet	Université de Liège
Executive Director Sheryl C Gilmore	Acadia Institute of Oceanography
MSc Guadalupe Giménez	PhD student
Dr Kalliopi Gkikopoulou	University of St Andrews
Maria Glarou	Aarhus University, Denmark

Dr. Kerstin Glaus	Marine Biologist
Dr. Chandra Goetsch	Biodiversity Research Institute
Dr Kimberly Goetz	Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries
Ms Tiffany Goh	University of St Andrews
Jeremy Goldbogen	Stanford University
Dr. Tracey Goldstein	One Health Institute, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of California Davis
Director of Medicine, Forrest Gomez	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Kahlia Gonzales	Member
Miss Abigail Goulding	APEM Ltd
Stuti Govil	student
Dr. Shannon Gowans	Eckerd College
Ms. Claudia Grasso	VA Boston; Boston University School of Public Health
Dr James Grecian	Sea Mammal Research Unit, University of St Andrews
Amy Green	Center for Coastal Studies
Mackenzie Griffin	Savannah State University
Emily T. Griffiths	Aarhus University - Institute of Bioscience
Ms. Emily Grose	Recent Graduate
Mr Tom Grove	University of Edinburgh
Dr. Pina Gruden	Research Corporation of University of Hawaii
Dr. Shane Guan	The Catholic University of America
Dr. Regina Guazzo	Naval Information Warfare Center Pacific
PhD Blanca Morales Guerrero	Unemployed
Ms Marie Guilpin	Université du Québec à Rimouski - ISMER
Miss Makayla Guinn	Baylor University
Mr Matt Gummery	Marine Stewardship Council
Jessie Gunderman	Undergraduate marine biology student
Miss Gemma Haggard	Uni of Exeter
Emily Hague	SMRU Consulting

Barbie Halaska	The Marine Mammal Center
Mr Sverrir Daniel Halldorsson	MFRI Iceland
Dr. William Halliday	Wildlife Conservation Society Canada
Eliette Hamard	Student Aix-Marseille Université
Mr Chris Hammell	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Terra Marcella Hoon Hanks	Marine Biologist
Alexandra Hanlon	Marine biology student
Ms. Chloe Hansum	Dordt University
Prof Rob Harcourt	Macquarie University, NSW, Australia
Ms. Ryan Hardin	B.S. Marine Biology
Ms. Ryan Hardin	B.S. Marine Biology
Diane Hardy	The Marine Mammal Center
Miss Jaz Harker	Bangor University
Katie Harrington	n/a
Alex Harris	SMRU Ltd. North America
Mike Harris	Calif. Dept of Fish and Wildlife
Jacob Harris	Moss Landing Marine Labs
Dr. Heather Harris	Cal Poly/The Marine Mammal Center
Anne Harshbarger	PhD Student, Duke University
Michelle Hartwick	University of San Francisco
Mr Gary Haskins	Icelandic Orca Project
Ms. Denise Hassinger, MSc.	Marine biologist
Dr Gordon Hastie	University of St Andrews
Dr. Donna Hauser	University of Alaska Fairbanks
Samara Haver	Oregon State University
Andrea Havron	University of Washington
Alayna Hawkins	Graduate Student at the University of Maine
Craig Hayslip	Oregon State University Marine Mammal Institute
Ms Julia Haywood	University of Exeter

Joe Heiney-Gonzalez	Montgomery County Govt., Maryland; retired Social Worker
Dr Sonja Heinrich	University of St Andrews
Dr. Elizabeth Henderson	US Navy
Mr Wei Khang Heng	University of Malaya, Malaysia
Allison Henry	Northeast Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries
Gabriela Hernández	University of Puerto Rico; University of St. Andrews
Mr. Keith Hernandez	Louisiana State University
Kathryne Herold-Daniels	Student
Taylor Hersh	Dalhousie University
Eleanor Heywood, Research Technician	Stony Brook University School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences
Mr Leigh Hickmott	University of St Andrews/OpenOceanConsulting
Hannah Hicks	College Student
Lisa Hildebrand	Marine Mammal Institute, OSU
Mrs. Marie Hill	Joint Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Research
Dr. Ellen Hines	Estuary & Ocean Science Center, San Francisco State University
Bethany Hinton	PhD Candidate, Massey University
Dr. Jan Hodder	University of Oregon
Ms. Gussie Hollers	University of St Andrews
Ms Audrey Holloway	San Juan County Marine Mammal Stranding Responder
Rachel Holser	University of California, Santa Cruz
Prof Sascha Hooker	University of St Andrews
Katherine Huotari	Bio-Waves Inc
Sharon Hsu	Moss Landing Marine Laboratories
Dr. Luis Huckstadt	University of California Santa Cruz
Ms Sherilyn Hurdle	None
Weston Hustace	The Marine Mammal Center
Miss Allison Hutchins	Yuma Regional Medical Center

Sarah Hutchinson	Marine Science Graduate Student
Michelle Imlau	University College Dublin, Ireland
Dr Kate Indeck	University of Queensland
Stephanie Ioredó	Oregon state university
Ladd Irvine	Oregon State University Marine Mammal Inst.
Jackie Isbell	TMMC Necropsy Lab Assitant and previous unpaid intern
Isha	.
Mrs storm isles	Lecturer
Dr. Takashi Iwata	Ocean Policy Research Institute, Sasakawa Peace Foundation
Dr Jen Jackson	British Antarctic Survey
Ellen Jacobs	Georgetown University
Ann-Marie Jacoby	Duke University
Dr Tiphaine Jeanniard-du-Dot	Centre d'Etudes Biologiques de Chize, CNRS
Mr Tom Jenks	University of St. Andrews
Ms. Elizabeth Jensen	The Texas Zoo
Dr Paul Jepson	Institute of Zoology (ZSL), UK
Dr Devin Johnson	NOAA Fisheries
Lindsey Jones	Allied Whale, College of the Atlantic
Ms. Elizabeth Jones	None
Ms. Amanda Jones	Member
Brittany Jones	NMMF
Jennifer Kane	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Ulrich Karlowski	Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz
Dr. Caitlin Karniski	Springer Nature
Shelby Kasberger, B.S.	TAMU-CC, ACS
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, MSc.	Antioch University New England
Dr Ailbhe Kavanagh	Marine Institute
Kaycee	Member of WMMS
Theresa Keates	University of California Santa Cruz

Miss Emma Keen	Looking for new role
Alyssa Kelley	Animal behavior MSc graduate
Courtney Kelley	B.S. Marine Biology graduate
Ms Emily Kelly	Center for Coastal Studies
Dr. Mandy Keogh	NMFS
Dr Jo Kershaw	University of St Andrews
Mr. Gary Kett	University College Cork
Lisa Elena Kettermer	UiT - The Arctic University of Norway
Dr. Joel A. Kimber	Self employed (previously Centre for Marine & Coastal Studies & Cranfield University)
Michelle Klein	Independent Contractor (MMO/PAM)
Ms. Logan Kline	Graduate Student, University of Maine Ecology & Environmental Science
Mrs Kimberley Kliska	Australian Antarctic Division
Mrs. Kaitlin knight	None
Mr. Daniel Kosiba	University of Iceland
Madison Kosma	Alaska Sea Grant Fellow
Dr/Prof Kit M. Kovacs	Norwegian Polar Institute
Mrs. Katie Kowarski	Dalhousie University
Miss Michaela Kratofil	Cascadia Research Collective
Ms Allyson Kristan	LSU Department of Oceanography & Coastal Sciences
Merve Kurt	Middle East Technical University Institute of Marine Sciences
Loïc L	Marine Mammal Ecologist
Mx Claire Lacey	University of St Andrews
Jan Lakemeyer	Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research (ITAW) University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Foundation
Ms Cristín Lambert	University of St Andrews
Dr. Luca Lamoni	Aarhus University
Christina Langford	University of California Santa Cruz
Ms Izzy Langley	University of St. Andrews

Miss Karen Langley	Whale and Dolphin Conservation
Samuel Langlois	University of the Highlands and Islands
Mr. Gregory Larsen	Duke University Marine Lab
Ms. Morgane Lauf	Ocean Associates Inc.
Amelie Laute	Kiel University
Emma Levy	Humboldt State University
Ms. Holly Lewis	NA
Charlotte Lewis	-
Ms. Amanda Liebau	University of New England - Marine Biology and Education
Mother of marine mammal scientist, Mary Liebau	Mother of marine mammal scientist
Sylvia Lima	None
Barbara Linnehan, DVM	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Dr Carolina Loch	University of Otago
Mr David Lockwood	None
Kelsey Loflin	N/A
Ms. Gina Lonati	University of New Brunswick Saint John
Josh M London, PhD	NOAA Fisheries
Mr. Vu Long	Center for Biodiversity conservation and Endangered Species
Emma Longden	N/A
Dr. Alexandria Loureiro	International Association of Geophysical Contractors
Cian Luck	University College Cork
Prof David Lusseau	University of Aberdeen
Katie Luxa	Marine Mammal Laboratory/NOAA Fisheries
Dr. Heidi Lyn	University of South Alabama
Samantha Lynch	M.S. graduate, Jacksonville University Marine Science Research Institute
Jamie Macaulay	Aarhus University
Bruna Bergman Machado	Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina
Meredith MacQueeney	Eckerd College

Meredith MacQueeney	Eckerd College
Professor Peter T. Madsen	Aarhus University
Lindsay Magill	Think Wild
Ms Chloe Malinka	Aarhus University, Denmark
Ms Vidhi Manghnani	Veterinary student
Professor Janet Mann	Georgetown University
Ms Suzanne Manugian	Bureau of Reclamation
Dr María Constanza Marchesi	Centro para el Estudio de los Sistemas Marinos (CCT CONICET - CENPAT), Argentina
Dr. Karen Martien	Southwest Fisheries Science Center
Nadya C Ramirez Martinez	St Andrews University & University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover; Germany
Ross Martinson	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Ms Natalie Mastick	University of Washington
Dr. Leanna Matthews	Sound Science Research Collective
Noelle Mauricio	Dominican University of California
Lauren McCaslin	None
Dr. Abby M. McClain	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Mr. John McClung	Self-employed wildlife biologist
Mr. Dane McDermott	Monterey Bay Whale Watch
Mx Alex McDonald	Student
Molly McEntee	Georgetown University
Kristen McGovern	Texas A&M University (previously)
Megan McGrath	Freelance
Brigid McKenna	Center for Coastal Studies
Samantha McLendon	Duke University
Ms Fiona McNie	Natural England
Ms Kate McPherson	Clearwater Marine Aquarium Research Institute
Jennifer Meegan	NMMF
Yashwant Meghare	University of Rhode Island.

Yashwant Meghare	University of Rhode Island.
Ms. Sonya Meier	Symbiota Environmental Solutions Ltd.
Dr. Karlina Merkens	NOAA/NMFS/PIFSC & Lynker Technologies
Greg Merrill	Duke University Marine Lab
Mr. Roosevelt Mesa	Environmental Contractor
Suzanna Mickey	Coker University
Mandy Migura, MSc	Broad Conservation LLC, owner
Susan Miles	Student
Dr David L Miller	Centre for Research into Ecological & Environmental Modelling and School of Mathematics & Statistics, University of St Andrews
Kelly Miller, RVT	The Marine Mammal Center
Ms Helen Mitcheson	Unaffiliated
Miss Aleksandrina Mitseva	Aarhus University
Sally Mizroch	NOAA Fisheries (retired) and Blue Sea Research
Miss Areeba Moiz	WWF-Pakistan
Martina Montali	Member of Community
Erin Moreland	Marine Mammal Lab, Alaska Fisheries Science Center
Dr. Marcia Moreno-Baez	University of New England
Jeanine Morey	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Mrs. Kat Morin	International Master of Science in Marine Biological Resources (IMBRSea)
Ms Eilidh Morrison	University of St Andrews (undergraduate)
Dr. Sophie Mounet	Doctor of veterinary medicine
Mr Xavier Mouy	University of Victoria
Mx	Sea Mammal Research Unit
Dominik Nachtsheim	Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research, University of Veterinary Medicine
Dr. Rebecca Nagel	University of Bielefeld, Germany
Katharine Nalven, MS	Defenders of Wildlife

Chelsi Napoli	None
Mrs. Jessica Nash	University of South Alabama Marine Science Graduate Student
Elizabeth Nasharr	Student
Benjamin Nelson	Ph.D. candidate, University of British Columbia, Marine Mammal Research Unit
Ms Regan Nelson	Natural Resources Defense Council
Miguel Neves	DFO Canada
Dr Leslie New	Washington State University Vancouver
Ms. Lisa Neyman, MSc.	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Ms Sara Niksic	University of St Andrews
Paul Njomo	N/A
Ms Natalie Nolan	none
Ms. Robyn Norman	Undergraduate student at Oregon State University
Dr. Stephanie Norman	Marine-Med
Tenaya Norris, Research Ecologist	The Marine Mammal Center
Mr. Nan Nourn	Michigan State University
Brittany Novick - Clinical Diagnostic Coordinator	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Dr. Sophie Nuber	University of St. Andrews
Ms. Angélica Nunes	University of Florida
Ms Laetitia Nunny	Wild Animal Welfare
Dr. Cecilia O'Leary	NOAA NMFS
Éadin O'Mahony	University of St Andrews
Dr Joe Onoufriou	University of the Highlands and Islands
Aubrie Onoufriou	University of St Andrews
Dr. Rachael Orben	Oregon State University
Ksenia Orekhova, DVM	University of Padova
Orla	Postgraduate student
Anna N Osiecka	Dalarna University

Renee Owens	Executive Director, Wild Zone Conservation League
Jess Ozog	Michigan State University
Ms Kate Pagan	Professional marine mammal observer
Erica Page	American Cetacean Society Orange County
Steven Paine	Former Marine Naturalist
MSc Renan Paitach	PhD Candidate, Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil.
Prof Daniel Palacios	Marine Mammal Institute, Oregon State University
Logan Pallin	UC Santa Cruz
Laura Palmer	University of St Andrews
Dr. Kaitlin Palmer	SMRU Consulting
Misss Laura Palmer	University of St Andrews
Dr. Kaitlin Palmer	SMRU Consulting
Miss Emily Palmer	Massey University, New Zealand
Dr. Elena Papale	National Research Council, Italy
Ms. Kirby Parnell	University of Hawaii Manoa, Marine Mammal Research Program
Dawn Parry	PhD Student
Erin Parsons	Marine Biologist, previous unpaid intern
Ms. Coral Pasi	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Chenoa Payne	N/a
Chenoa Payne	N/a
Dr. Linnea Pearson	California Polytechnic State University
Mr Michael Pedersen	Aarhus University
Haley Pedersen	University of Zurich
Nicole Pegg	Integrated Statistics for NOAA Fisheries
Dr. Carlos Mauricio Peredo	University of Michigan
MSc. Luiza Becker Pereira	Federal University of Santa Catarina (Brazil)
Emily Perks	MSc marine environmental protection student
Felix Petersma	Centre for Research into Ecological and Environmental Modelling, School of

	Mathematics and Statistics, University of St Andrews
Ivet Petkova	Oceanography and Marine Sciences, Department of Environmental Sciences, University of the Aegean
Carolin Philipp	ITAW, University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover
Dr Theoni Photopoulou	Scottish Oceans Institute, University of St Andrews
Kate Pielmeier	M.Phil. College of the Atlantic, Allied Whale
Miss Nikola Piesinger	N/A
Mrs. Danielle Pinder	Recent Grad
Mrs Lara Pogson-Manning	University of Queensland
Emily Pomeroy	Save Our Shores
Rachel Pool	Universitat de Valencia
Guillermo Porriños	Independent fisheries consultant (currently consulting for FFI)
Natalie Posdaljian	Scripps Institution of Oceanography
Ms. Kelsey Potlock	USFWS
Miss Sandra Powell	MSc student looking for work
Romina Preciado	EDMAKTUB
Ms. Alyssa Quackenbush	I am a recent graduate pursuing a marine mammal science career.
Miss Susanna Quer	None
Brian Quigley	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Dr Njara Rabearisoa	IRD MARBEC, France
Dr. Rachel Racicot	Senckenberg Museum of Natural History and Vanderbilt University
Ms. Brennan Radulski	Purdue University
Amber Ramos	National marine mammal foundation and University of Edinburgh
Camila Soares Ramos	Universidade Metodista de São Paulo
Shannon Rankin	Southwest Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries
Janneke Ransijn	University of St Andrews
Sarah Rappaport	University of Maine

Katie Rapson	University of St Andrews
Ms. Jamie Raupp	Michigan State University
Alexander Rayburn	Marine Biologist
Wendy Raymond	Humboldt State University, B.S. Oceanography
Anja Reckendorf	Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research, University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Foundation
Reece	Marine Biology MSc student
Dr Luke Rendell	University of St Andrews
Ms. Emily Rhodes	Catalina Island Marine Institute
Dr Gaëtan RICHARD	ENSTA Bretagne (Lab-STICC – UMR CNRS 6285)
Mr Diego Rita	University of Barcelona
Ms Julie Rivers	US Navy
Ms Hyejoo Ro	UW
Dr. Frances Robertson	San Juan County Marine Program
Dr Kelly Robinson	University of St Andrews
Ms Elizabeth Robinson	University of Bristol
Dr. Stacie Robinson	governmental agency
Mv Luiza Rocato	Universidade Metodista de São Paulo
Simon Rohner	Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research, University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover, Foundation
Mario Rollo	Sao Paulo State University (UNESP)
Ms Bianca Romeu	Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil
Dr Giulia Roncon	University of Tasmania
Miss Erica Roncon	University of Greenwich
Ms. Brigit Rooney	None
Dr Holly Root-Gutteridge	University of Lincoln
Dr. Naomi A. Rose	Animal Welfare Institute
Dr. Kyle Ross DVM MPH DACVPM	Independent Contractor
Shelby Rosten	University of Vermont

Samantha Roth	University of New Hampshire
James Roubal, MMA	National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
Gerard Ryan	University of Melbourne
Miss Kathleen Ryan	University of Notre Dame
Mr Alex Sacco	University of Central Florida
Ms Meredith Sackett	University of St Andrews
Jasspreet Sahib	None
Esther Santamaria	Student
Mr. Zaahir Santhanam	Student
Bianca Santos	PhD Student, Stanford University
Carly Sarbacker	Member
Carly Sarbacker	Member
Mrs. Jocelyn Sasso (Tallmon)	N/A
Mr Richard Saunders	Bristol Zoological Society
Boone Saunders	The Marine Mammal Center
Dr. Tobias Schaffeld	Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research, University of Veterinary Medicine, Foundation, Hannover, Germany
Emily Schaller	marine tourism
Luca Schick	Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research, University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover
Ms Anna Schleimer	University of St Andrews
Jon Schneiderman	Seasonal Field Technician
Megan Schouweiler	none
Dr. Lori Schwacke	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Ms. Alyssa Scott	The Whale Museum
Mrs. Jessica Seevers	N/A
Dr. Kerri Seger	AOS
Marisa Seibert	EcoAnalysts
Dipl. Biologist Joern Selling	firmm.org

Miss Mairi Semple	University of St Andrews
Dr. Arturo Serrano	Universidad Veracruzana
Ms. Jacquelyn Shaff	University of Washington
Ms Annkathrin Sharp	
Ms. Deborah Sharpe	Contractor (currently unaffiliated)
Dr. Stephanie D. Shaw	Department of Environment and Science
Jeanne Shearer	Duke University Marine Lab
Miss Sabiya Sheikh	None
Simon Sheppard	n/a (ex-SMRU)
Dr. Michelle Shero	Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution
Dr. C Shuert	Post-doc
Jessica Schulte	Department of State
Sabena Siddiqui	University of Hawaii, American Cetacean Society
Miss Mariana Silva	Sea Aquarium
Dr. Peter Simard	Eckerd College
Dr Claire Simeone	Sea Change Health
Mrs. Margaret Simmons	Relative
Anne Simonis	NOAA National Marine Fisheries
Dr. Margaret Siple	University of California, Santa Barbara
Dr. Ana Širović	Texas A&M University Galveston
Mr James Slingsby	University of the Highlands and Islands
Ms Karen Sonnichsen	Aalborg University
Pernille Meyer Sorensen	University of Bristol
Ana Maria Sosa	M.P.A. & B.S. Marine Biology
Prof. Renata Sousa-Lima	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte
Dr Carol Sparling	University of St Andrews
Todd Speakman	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Ms. Kaylin Spence	University of North Carolina Wilmington
Mrs Ilaria Spiga	none

Dr. Angela Sremba	Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory/Oregon State University Marine Mammal Institute
Mridula Srinivasan	NA
Dr. Joy Stanistreet	NSERC Postdoctoral Fellow
Melissa Steinberg	B.S. Marine Science
Ms. Lisa Steiner	Whale Watch Azores
Dr. Sheanna Steingass	Oregon State University
Julia Stepanuk	PhD Candidate - Stony Brook University
Tara Stevens	University of Rhode Island
Ms Laura Stidsholt	laura.stidsholt@bios.au.dk
Dr. Alison Stimpert	Moss Landing Marine Laboratories
Michael Stocker	Ocean Conservation Research
Alyssa Stoller	University of Edinburgh
Alyssa Stoller	University of Edinburgh
Kelsey Stone	American Cetacean Society Board Member
Luke Storrie	PhD student, University of Manitoba / Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Kayla Strate	Birch Aquarium
Dr. Sarah McKay Strobel	UC Santa Cruz
MSc Florence Sullivan	
Biologist, Katie Sweeney	NOAA
Haley Sxe	n/a
Mr. Seth Sykora-Bodie	Duke University
Alec Sypert	University of Alabama
Angela R. Szesciorka	Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego
Dr. Ryan Takeshita	National Marine Mammal Foundation
Dr. Sara B. Tavares	NSERC/DFO
Kerry Teague	Citizen
Dr Jonas Teilmann	Aarhus University, Denmark

PhD. Marisa Tejedor	Oriental Canary Islands Strandings Cetaceans Network - Biological Scientist Research Director
Ms. Sarah Teman	San Juan County Marine Mammal Stranding Network
Ms Maeva Terrapon	University of St Andrews
Ms. Elizabeth Terry	NBNERR
Dr. Austen C. Thomas	Smith-Root Inc.
Assistant Professor, Lesley Thorne	Stony Brook University
Jacqueline Bort Thornton	U.S. Government
Miss Autumn Thorpe	University of Miami - Graduate Student
Dr. Michael Tift	University of North Carolina Wilmington
Nicole Todd	PhD student, University College Cork
Ms Pernille Tønnesen	Aarhus University
Jacalyn Toth	Stockton University
Dr. Marisa Trego	Integrated Statistics Inc.
Dr. Emily J. Trumbull	The Marine Mammal Center
Nicole Brandt Turner	National Park Service
Dr. Amy Van Cise	Cascadia Research Collective
Mrs Ashley van Gestel	Open University
Dr. Abbo van Neer	Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research, Germany
Aimee Van Tatenhove	Utah State University
Ellie Vartic	Texas A&M Galveston
Mrs Norma Vazquez-Romero	Masters in Marine Science
Jess Veo	Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Deborah Vicari	LJMU
Dr Gísli A. Víkingsson	Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, Reykjavík, Iceland.
Research Assistant Joclyn Villegas	Graduate
Richard L Wallace	Ursinus College
Dr. Megan Wallen	Wayne State University

Ms Sheri VanBilliard Walpert	University of Glasgow, Graduate Student
Dr. Joseph Warren	Stony Brook University
Dr. Paul Webb	Roger Williams University
Mr Thomas Webber	University of St Andrews
Ms. Holly Weinstein	Independent Marine Conservationist
Mr. Michael Weiss	University of Exeter and Center for Whale Research
Ms. Madison Welch	University of North Carolina Wilmington, BSc
Annabel Westell	Environment and Climate Change Canada
Audrey White	Duke University, MEM
Dr. Emily R. Whitmer	The Marine Mammal Center
Ms Katherine Whyte	University of St Andrews
Dr. Kaja Wierucka	University of Hong Kong
Ms Rosie Williams	Institute of Zoology (ZSL)
Qiyamah Williams	Northeastern University
Mr Michael Williamson	King's College London / Institute of Zoology
Ms Brittany Wilson	University of North Carolina Wilmington
Tonya Wimmer	Marine Animal Response Society
Mr. Stephen Winsor	California Department of Fish & Wildlife; CSU Fresno
Jillian Wisse	Duke University
Brittany Wittig	BS Marine Biology Texas A&M Galveston
Miss Gabriela Wolf-gonzalez	University of Maine
Miss Doris Woo	WWF-Hong Kong
Samuel Woodman	Southwest Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries
Dana L Wright	Duke University
Dr. Andrew Wright	George Mason University
Dr. Alexandra Wright	University of St Andrews
Chen-Yi Wu	PhD Student, Duke University
Dr. Elyse Wurster	NOAA/NMFS/Southwest Fisheries Science Center

Dr Hao Ye	University of Florida
Miss Jordann Young	University of California Santa Cruz
Colleen Young	CA Dept of Fish and Wildlife
Associate Scientist Monica Zani	New England Aquarium
Julia Zeh	Syracuse University
Ms. Sophie Zhu	UC Davis
Dr. Michael Ziccardi	UC Davis One Health Institute
Heather Ziel	AFSC, NOAA
Dr. Daniel Zitterbart	Woods Hole Oceanographic Institutions