Bottlenose Dolphin Photo-ID Internship/Research Assistant Position for Summer 2015

The Outer Banks Center for Dolphin Research (OBXCDR)/Nags Head Dolphin Watch is currently accepting applications for the 2015 summer season. One internship position is available. The research season is May 5 – October 10. Successful applicants must be able to commit for the entire season.

The Outer Banks Center for Dolphin Research is a 501 c(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of bottlenose dolphins in the Outer Banks, NC. Our program’s goal is to gain an understanding of the population dynamics, movement patterns, and behavioral ecology of coastal bottlenose dolphins in the sounds and coastal waters near the Outer Banks. The OBXCDR currently conducts a photo-identification monitoring study of bottlenose dolphins in Roanoke, Croatan, Albemarle, Pamlico and Currituck Sounds. Data is collected via dedicated small boat surveys as well as opportunistically from a local dolphin watch. This study is a continuation of the long-term study initiated by the Nags Head Dolphin Watch in 1997. Information from the long-term monitoring study will provide a basis for initiation of studies involving habitat utilization, social associations, and anthropogenic effects on the dolphins as well as aid in efforts to examine bottlenose dolphin movement patterns along the U.S. Atlantic coast. Interns will gain experience in field data collection, photo-identification of dolphins in the lab, and environmental education. For more information about the OBXCDR, please visit: obxdolphins.org.

The internship position will consist of bottlenose dolphin photo-identification, opportunistic/dedicated field research, and environmental education. Responsibilities include:

* Photo-identification of dolphins in the lab: This includes photo sorting, grading, and matching, sighting data entry, and assisting in maintenance of the long-term OBX photo-id catalog using the MS Access database FinBase. Additional time will also be spent matching the OBX catalog to the Mid-Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin Catalog (MABDC). The MABDC is a long-term collaborative effort to gain a greater understanding of the stock structure and movement patterns of bottlenose dolphins along the U.S. Atlantic coast. (40% of time)
* Mate/naturalist duties aboard the Nags Head Dolphin Watch: This involves the implementation of educational programs, including public speaking aboard the tours (using a microphone and one-on-one) to educate others about local dolphin biology and marine conservation, as well as additional mate duties. The mate/naturalist will also collect opportunistic photo-identification data aboard the dolphin tours (photographing dorsal fins, measuring environmental parameters, and recording sighting data on datasheet), organize opportunistic data for inclusion in the photo-identification catalog, and assist in general maintenance of field equipment.  For additional information about the Nags Head Dolphin Watch, go to [www.nagsheaddolphinwatch.com](http://www.nagsheaddolphinwatch.com) (50% of time)
* Boat-based photo-identification: The intern will assist with boat-based photo-identification surveys to examine seasonal abundances, site fidelity, and prevalence of skin lesions of bottlenose dolphins in Roanoke Sound.  Responsibilities include operating a small vessel during transect surveys and sightings, assisting with photo-identification, collecting environmental, location, and behavioral data for dolphin groups, and general maintenance of field equipment. (10% of time)

This internship requires a minimum commitment of 36 hours per week, consisting of ecotours, lab photo-identification, and dedicated surveys. The intern will carry out mate/naturalist duties and opportunistic photo-identification aboard the Nags Head Dolphin Watch for 3-4 days per week throughout the field season while 1-2 days per week will be spent conducting photo-identification in the lab. Abundance surveys will be conducted once per month (May, June, August, and September) and 2-3 times a month during July and October.

Salary:  This internship is a paid position. Applicants will receive an hourly salary for the naturalist position on the dolphin watch. Tips aboard the dolphin tours are expected, but not guaranteed.

Housing:  Although housing is not provided, we will assist you in finding housing accommodations in the Outer Banks. Interns are responsible for their own transportation to and from the Outer Banks as well as to and from the field site.

The successful applicant would ideally have the following qualifications:

* Minimum of 18 years of age and currently or recently enrolled in a college-level program in marine biology, biology, zoology, or related field
* Strong interest in the marine environment and conservation
* Ability to swim
* Basic computer proficiency in MS Office Access and MS Office Picture Manager
* Enthusiasm, attention to detail, responsible, focused, and dedicated
* Works well in a team environment as well as individually
* Experience in boating and marine field data collection
* Experience in photo-identification preferred but not required
* First AID/CPR certification preferred but not required

NOTE: The United States Coast Guard requires all passenger vessels to be drug free work environments. In order to work aboard the dolphin ecotours, the intern will be required to pass a pre-employment drug test and to participate in random drug testing during the period of the research season.

Application Process:

Please submit cover letter, resume, and contact information for 3 references via email to:obxcdr@hotmail.com.  Use “Dolphin photo-id internship” in the subject line of the email. All applications will be reviewed in the order they are received as part of a rolling application process until a candidate is selected.

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Obxdolphins.org