

Hudson River Estuary
Bottlenose dolphin, *Tursiops truncatus*
1997, 2008

Dolphin History from the *Hudson River Almanac*

1997

2/20 - Tappan Zee, HRM 27: John and Tim Long submitted photos of two bottlenose dolphins - one adult, one immature - taken in the vicinity of the Tappan Zee Bridge on February 20. The pair seemed to be engaged in typical healthy dolphin behavior: synchronized breaching, arching, and reentering in tandem. The photos were examined by Erik Kiviat of Hudsonia Ltd. and Dennis Thoney of the Aquarium for Wildlife Conservation at Coney Island in Brooklyn. They concluded that these were indeed bottlenose dolphins. However, the timing of the visit was in question. We wondered if they could have been in the Hudson River in late February, when the water temperature was 35°F. David Steadman, of the Florida Museum of Natural History, an expert on marine mammal life history believes that it is possible for bottlenose dolphins to be in the Hudson River in February so long as the area of the river in which they were observed was ice-free. (It was.)

- Tom Lake

5/24 - Kingston Point, HRM 92.5: At 5:00 PM, some boaters in the Kingston Point area told Larry Friedman of having just seen “one or more dolphins” in the river.

- Erik Kiviat

5/24 - Tivoli Bay South, HRM 99: Jay Greenblatt reported “seeing a dolphin” just off Tivoli Bay South in about 30' of water. The animal came within 15-20 yards of him and appeared to be greater than six-foot in length.

- Erik Kiviat

5/25 - Turkey Point, HRM 98.5: An effort to rescue a dolphin ended at 10:00 AM, when a 340 lb., 8 foot-long, female bottlenose dolphin was captured in a net along the Hudson River at Turkey Point. The rescue was led by Debra Spangler and Robert DiGiovanni from The Riverhead Foundation , and Kate McClain from the Aquarium for Wildlife Conservation. The effort included NYSDEC Enforcement officers, Ulster County Sheriff's Department, Taconic Regional Office of the New York State OPRHP, Kingston Fire Department Marine Fire Rescue, Ulster Police Department Road Patrol, the Kingston Police Department and the New York City Police Highway Patrol Unit #1. The dolphin had apparently become tangled in monofilament fishing line; it was reportedly seen bobbing, diving and swimming in circles for several days before the rescue. Rescuers loaded the dolphin into a water tank to be transported to the Aquarium for Wildlife Conservation at Coney Island in Brooklyn. We wondered if this could have been one of bottlenose dolphins identified from photos taken by Tim Long in late February (1997) in the Tappan Zee at Hudson River mile 27.

- **Tom Lake**

5/26 Addendum: Sadly, the dolphin died within 24 hours of its arrival at the Aquarium for Wildlife Conservation at Coney Island in Brooklyn. Blood parameters (low white count, etc.) indicated that it had been very stressed. The monofilament had become imbedded deep into the tissue of its head and flippers, and had likely caused a severe case of septicemia. Two rusty fish hooks were recovered from the stomach of the dolphin.

- **Kimberly Durham, Dennis Thoney**

2008

11/3 - Peekskill, HRM 44: Officer Nicholas Franco of the City of Peekskill Police Department, and his colleagues, spotted a bottlenose dolphin swimming in Peekskill Bay.

- **Tom Lake**

11/3 - Peekskill, HRM 44: As the Metro North commuter train passed the mouth of Annsville Creek, I spotted many small fish breaking the surface out in the river. It seemed to me that there was a large concentration of menhaden (salt water herring) in the northeast pocket of the Peekskill Bay. I continued looking out the window and spotted what I thought was a very large carp finishing off a "porpoise" maneuver, rolling up to the surface and then submerging head first in that upright, forward rolling movement I've seen carp do – just like a porpoise, or a dolphin.

- **Bill Greene**

The **bottlenose dolphin** (*Tursiops truncatus*) is a common caricature (see Flipper, Miami Dolphins NFL football team). They are a marine mammal commonly seen “porpoising” along ocean beaches of the mid-Atlantic from late spring through early fall. Dolphins, however, are rare in the estuary.

- **Tom Lake**

11/5 - Town of Lloyd, HRM 75.5: Town of Lloyd Police reported that a bottlenose dolphin, we assume same one as was sighted in Peekskill two days ago, was stuck in Mariner's Harbor.

- **Lisa Masi**

11/6 - Town of Lloyd, HRM 75.5: Near midday, the Town of Lloyd Police reported that the dolphin had freed itself and was last seen swimming down river.

- **Lisa Masi**

11/9 - Ulster County, HRM 90: The dolphin last spotted at river mile 75 three days ago might not have went down river. There was a reported dolphin sighting this morning from 15 miles upriver.

- **Kris McShane**

11/10 - Kingston, HRM 90: We received another unconfirmed dolphin report, this time of two dolphins in the river near Kingston.

- **Kathy Hattala**

11/24 - Rhinecliff, HRM 92: John Carlson beached his kayak at dusk in a small cove north of Rhinecliff two days ago and discovered the carcass of an 8-10 foot-long dolphin “awkwardly balanced” on a rock right at the water's edge.

- **Kathy Hattala**

11/26 - Rhinecliff, HRM 92: We receive the report from John Carlson of his dolphin discovery. We assume it is the same one we have been following in the Hudson since 11/4. New moon tides this week have been strong and we hope it is still there when we go to look and perhaps retrieve the animal tomorrow.

- **Tom Lake**

11/27 - Rhinecliff, HRM 92: I spent all morning, from dawn to noon, low tide to high, checking the shoreline several miles north and south of the train station in Rhinecliff, including the cove where John Carlsen spotted the dead dolphin three days ago. I found no evidence. It was low tide at the time of discovery, and subsequent flood tides might have lifted it off the beach.

- Tom Lake

11/27 - GPS Coordinates, small cove north of Rhinecliff:

N 41.44:582

W 73.56:952

12/4 - Highland, HRM 76: It seems that we have a second dolphin swimming around in the Hudson River. (See 11/10 - Kingston, HRM 90: Another unconfirmed dolphin report, this time of two dolphins in the river near Kingston.) This sighting was reported by Jim Ash, a tug boat operator, at around 2:00 PM. The description of the animal fits a common dolphin but no photos were available. This animal was described as 6-7 feet-long, dark-colored, with a curved dark-colored dorsal fin.

- Kim Durham

12/4 - GPS Coordinates, second dolphin in the river:

N 41.45.2

W 73.56.5

Other Hudson River Estuary Marine Mammals and Dates of Occurrence

Harbor seal, *Phoca vitulina* (relatively common)

Harp seal, *Phoca groenlandica* (1996)

Hooded seal, *Cystophora cristata* (1996)

Gray seal, *Halichoerus grypus* (2004)

Harbor porpoise, *Phocoena phocoena* (1995, 1997, 1999, 2005)

The Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation

For more information, go to: <http://www.riverheadfoundation.org/>

To report a sighting of a healthy, sick, alive or dead marine mammal or sea turtle, contact The Riverhead Foundation at their emergency 24-hour Stranding Hotline phone number: **(631) 369-9829**.

Tom Lake 2008

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