



Informal Audit Report:

The situation of dolphins in **Adaland Dolphinpark**

prepared by
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Basic Information About the Performed Audit



Location:

ADALAND Dolphinpark, Kusadasi, Turkey

Time:

July 25, 2025, from 12:30 PM to 4:30 PM

Person:

The visit was conducted by Jakub Banasiak (FREE& SAFE Project, Poland) in an undercover capacity, posing as a regular tourist.

Scope of Activities:

This audit was conducted to assess the conditions at the Adaland Dolphinpark. The activities included:

- Reconnaissance of the dolphinarium prior to the "swim with dolphins" session.
- Observation of the 1:15 PM "swim with dolphins" session.
- Observation of the 2:00 PM dolphin and seal show.
- Observation of the post-show photo session.
- Observation of the 3:30 PM "swim with dolphins" session.
- Informal conversations with staff members.

Note: No dolphin-assisted therapy sessions were held on the day of the audit.

Adaland Dolphinpark Overview

Located in Kusadasi, Turkey, Adaland Dolphinpark is an attraction that offers visitors the opportunity to observe and interact with dolphins and seals. The park features dolphin and seal shows, as well as unique paid experiences like "swim with dolphins" sessions and photo opportunities.

The facility houses a number of dolphins and is promoted as a place for family entertainment and animal encounters. However, the park's operations raise concerns about the living conditions and welfare of the animals.

Dolphin-Assisted Therapy at Adaland Dolphinpark

Adaland Dolphinpark is a significant site for dolphin-assisted therapy (DAT), particularly for Polish families, due to its partnership with the Polish Dobra Wioska Foundation ("Good Village Foundation").

Since 2007, the foundation has organized therapeutic stays for children and young people with developmental disorders, including autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome. These programs are based on an original methodology developed by Dr. Oksana Dąbrowska, the foundation's president.

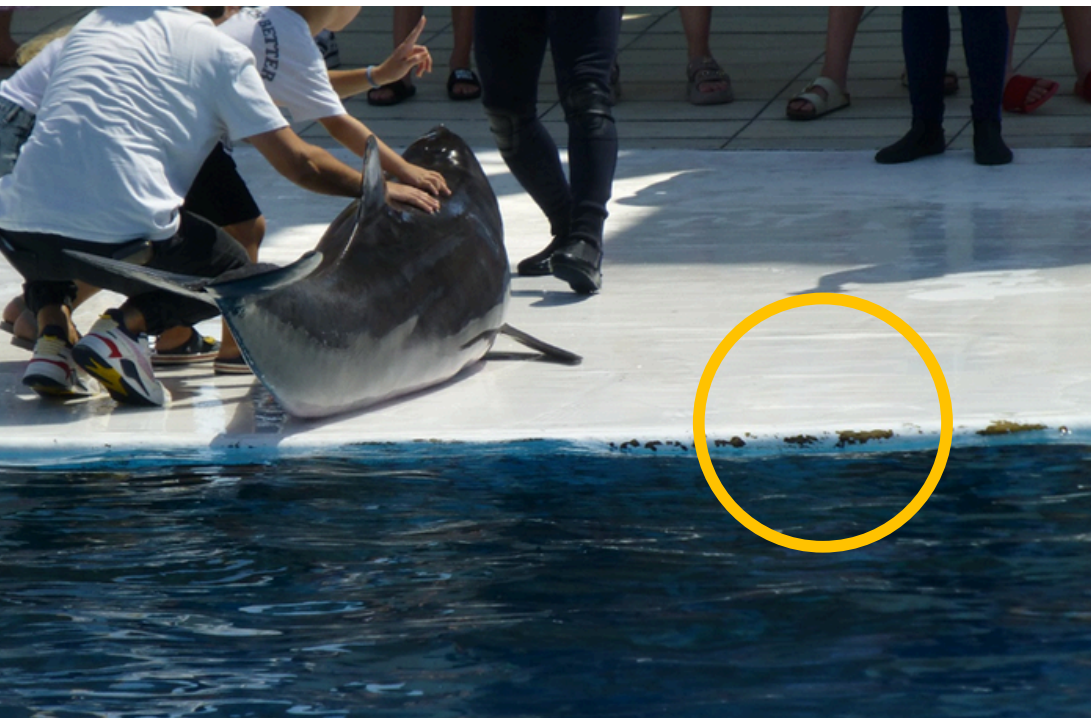
The Polish Dobra Wioska Foundation states that it only works with dolphinariums that meet international standards for dolphin welfare and that these partnerships are part of a broader scientific research program.

Cleanliness and Order

Adaland staff ensured that no one was near the pools or in the audience outside of the show or dolphin swim sessions.

The area was kept tidy. No debris was observed that could have been blown into the dolphin pools by the wind. The facility appears well-maintained. However, several areas are in need of repair:

- Peeling and worn paint on the edge of the pool near the stage.



- Rust stains on the terracotta tiles near the bridge separating the main and smaller pools, indicating potential corrosion of the metal structural elements of the bridge and/or the barrier.

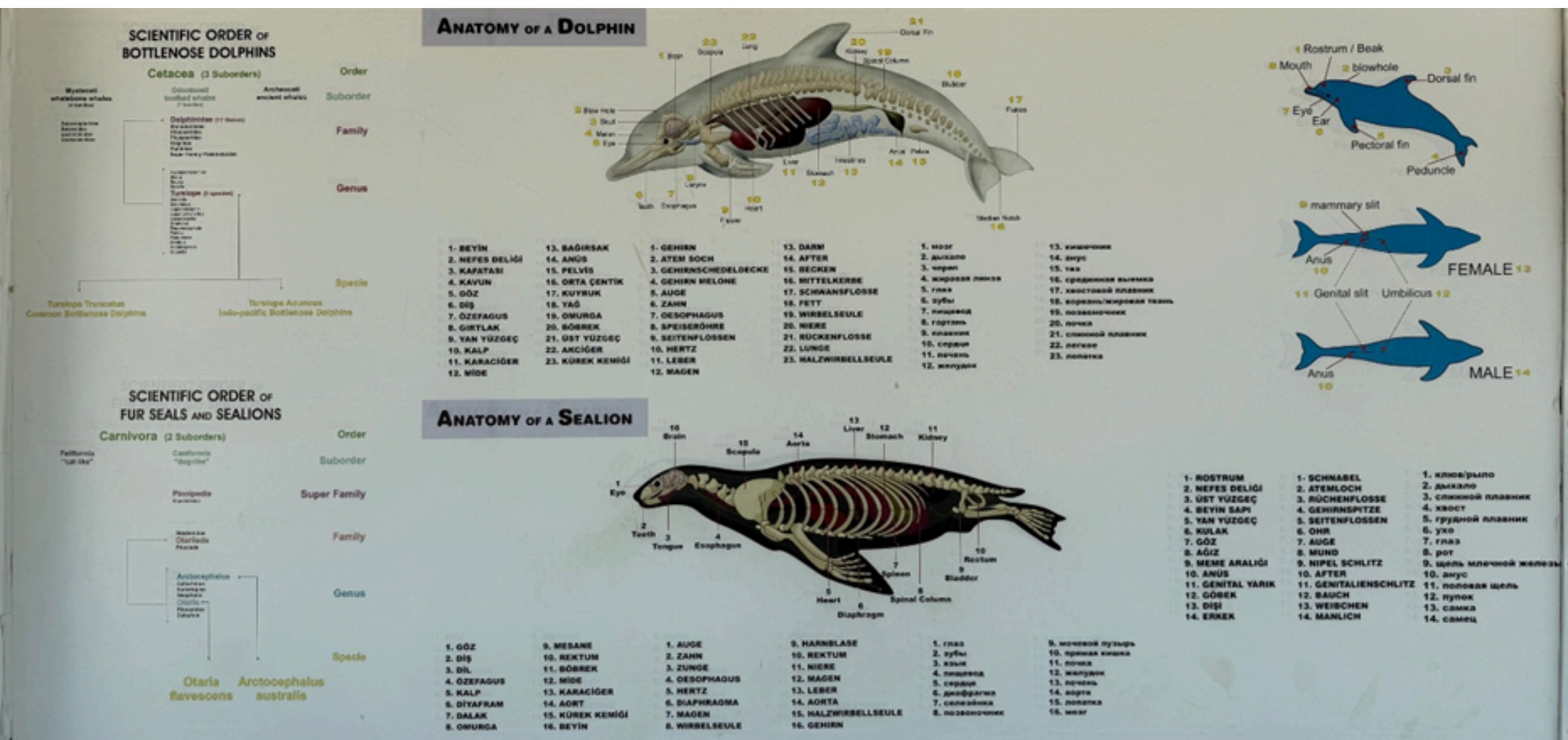


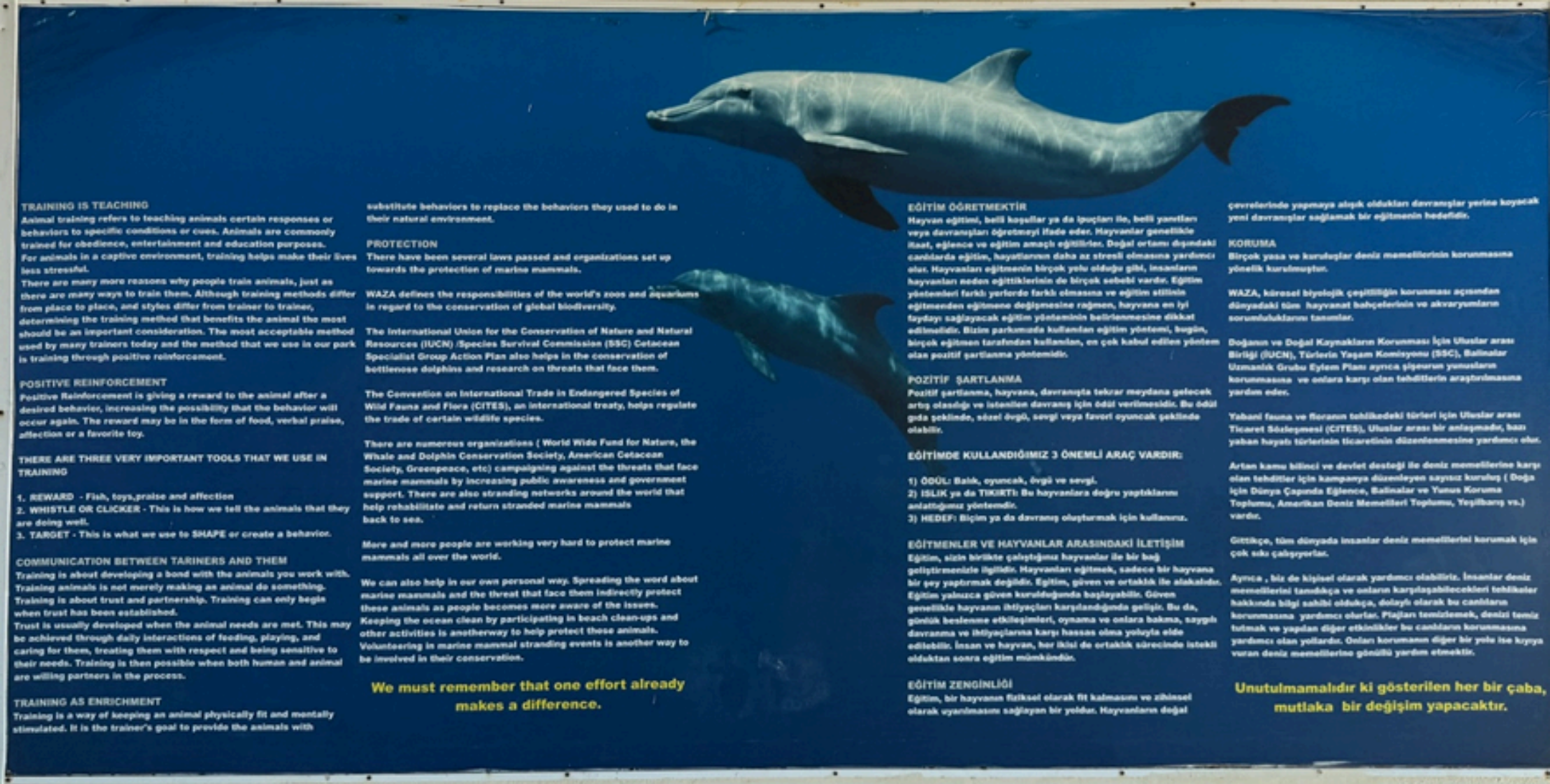


- Minor damage to the terracotta finish on the pool edges, including in areas where dolphins interact with the public.

Educational Information

Educational materials were limited to a few signs located near the cafe at the entrance of the main part of dolphinarium. These signs lacked information about the bottlenose dolphins housed at the facility, including their biology or the threats they face in the wild. The content focused instead on the anatomical structure of dolphins and seals and the facility's approach to animal training. A brief mention regarding dolphin conservation was included, suggesting to tourists that the dolphinarium contributes to the protection of these animals.





Dolphin Living Conditions



The dolphins at ADALAND Dolphinpark are housed in small pools that significantly restrict their locomotive needs.



At the time of the audit, five dolphins were present:

- Three dolphins were in the main, kidney-shaped pool (Pool 1), which measured approximately 30m at its longest point, 15m at its widest, and 10m at its narrowest. Signs indicate a depth of 6m.
- Two dolphins (a female and her calf) were in a separate, oval-shaped pool (Pool 2), approximately 18m long and 13m wide. An analysis of photos from the Adaland Facebook page suggests this pool's depth is between 120-150 cm, but this was not verified during the audit.
- A third, smaller pool (Pool 3) was located behind Pool 2, measuring approximately 10m long and 3.5m wide. Its purpose is unknown, though it is connected to Pool 2 and may serve as an isolation tank. This pool lacks any form of sun shading.

Note: Pool dimensions were estimated using Google Earth.





The smaller pool (Pool 2) is typically used for dolphin-assisted therapy. During these sessions, the mother works with the patient while the calf swims alongside. The calf is not separated from the mother during therapy sessions, as confirmed by photos and videos found on social media.

While both main pools were partially covered by sun shades, they only provided partial protection from the sun (approximately half of the pool surface, depending on the sun's position). On the day of the audit, the air temperature exceeded 40°C.

During the audit time the mother and calf spent most of their time at the surface, primarily in the unshaded area near the barrier separating their pool from the main pool. This significant sun exposure poses a risk of overheating and sunburn for the dolphins. Given the regional climate, the current level of shading is deemed insufficient. A dolphin trainer confirmed that the water temperature in the pools was also considered too high for the dolphins.

No structural elements within or on the edges of the pools were observed that could cause injury to the dolphins.



Dolphin Behavior

Prior to the shows and swim sessions, two dolphins from the main pool spontaneously ascended onto the stage, lying there for several seconds without any commands from trainers. On some occasions, they did this to retrieve a ball, while at other times, there was no apparent reason.

After the shows and swim sessions, once the trainers had left the pool area (after 4:00 PM), the dolphins either floated motionless or swam slowly around the main pool.



"Swim with Dolphins" Activities



During both "swim with dolphins" sessions, two dolphins interacted with tourists in the water, while a third dolphin in the same main pool engaged in separate exercises with a different trainer.

Participants were thoroughly instructed on how to behave, but trainers did not intervene when tourists held the dolphins by the tips of their pectoral fins instead of at the base, as instructed.

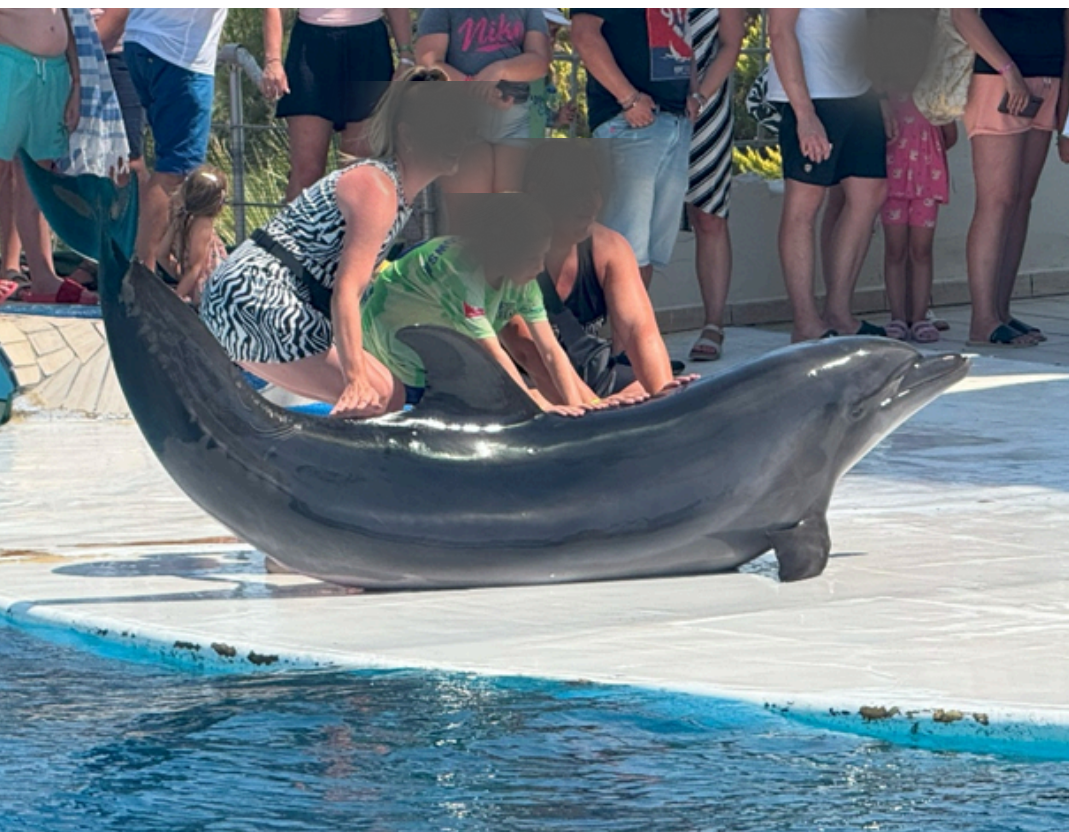


During one session, a dolphin not participating in the tourist interaction was observed repeatedly practicing a single, monotonous trick—balancing a ball on its snout—for several minutes. The dolphin performed poorly, received little positive reinforcement, and was visibly ignored by its trainer.

Photo Sessions

A photographer was present during the "swim with dolphins" sessions to take commercial photos of the participants.

After the show, interested individuals could pay for a photo with a dolphin on the pool edge, too. Two of the three dolphins took turns posing for these sessions, rotating every few minutes. Due to the high number of tourists, one dolphin was observed lying on the pool edge, out of the water, for over two minutes at a time in full sun. Posing in this unnatural position places significant pressure on the animal's internal organs due to its body weight.



During these photo sessions, tourists were allowed to touch the dolphins without being required to wash or sanitize their hands before or after the interaction.

Show Acrobatics



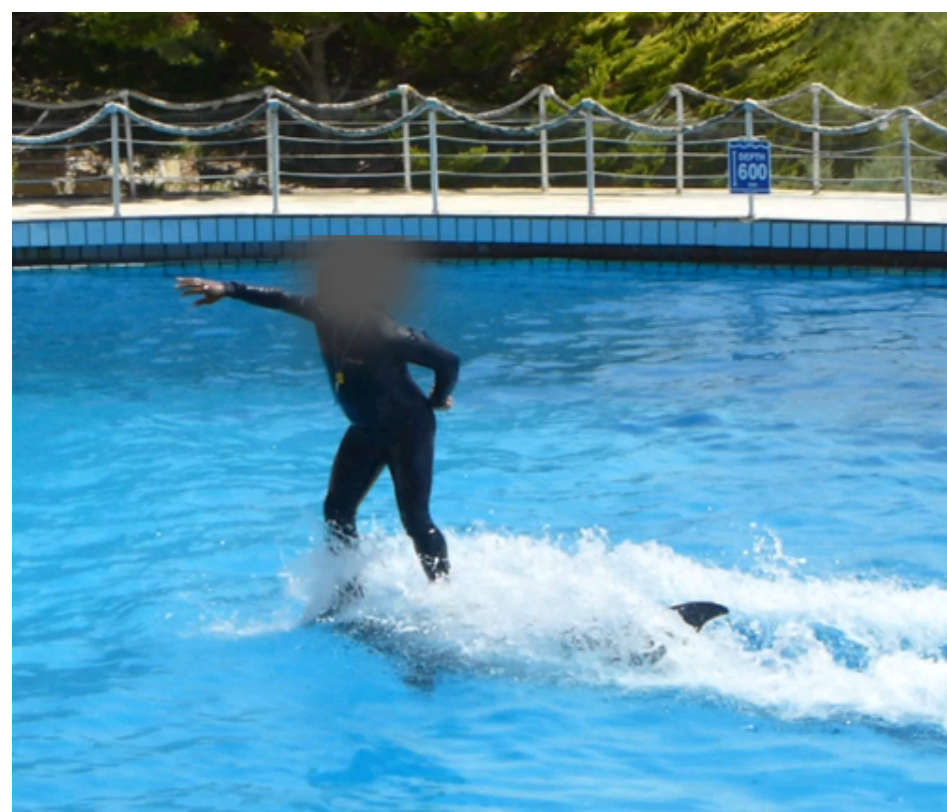
The show followed a pre-planned sequence of acrobatic maneuvers, detailed on a board near the trainers' station.

The dolphins were prompted to perform several unnatural behaviors, including:

- Tail walking in a vertical position.
- Spinning a hula hoop on their snout.
- Slapping the water's surface with their tail fin.
- Splashing the audience with water from the pool.
- Balancing a ball on their snout.
- Making various sounds on command.

They also performed a variety of jumps, both solo and in pairs and trios.

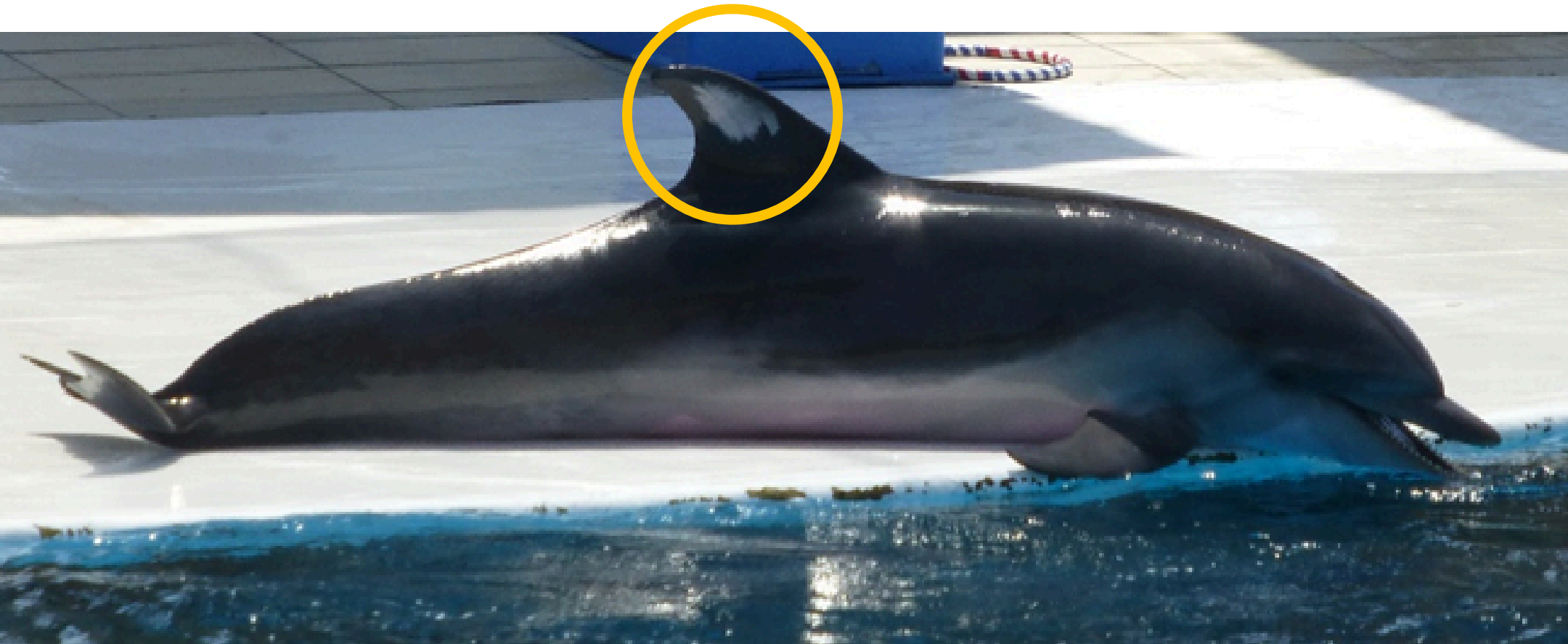
The jumps over and through a hoop placed on the water's surface were performed very close to the concrete pool edge, creating a risk of the animals hitting the concrete.



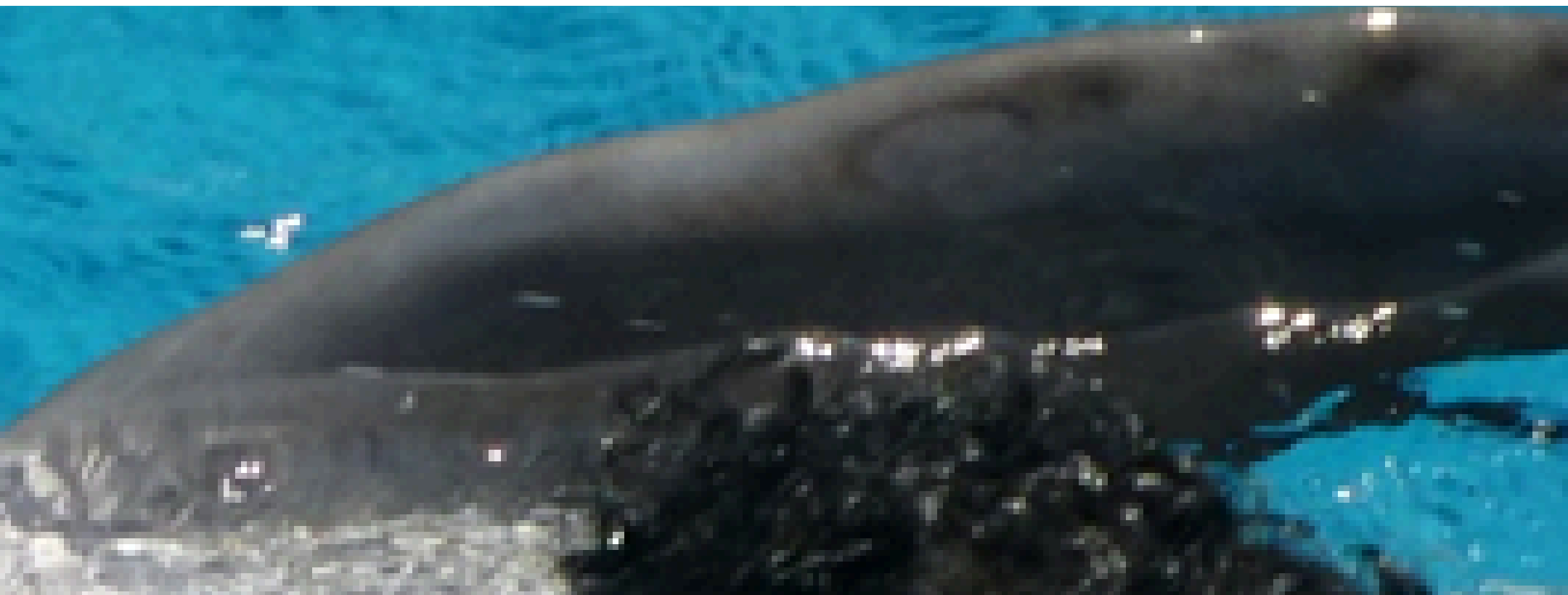
One trainer performed a surfing on the dolphin's back twice.

Additional Observations

One dolphin has a visible skin lesion on the right side of its dorsal fin. According to a staff member, the lesion has been present for a long time, and various medications have been administered with little success. The condition reportedly does not affect the animal's overall health.



Another dolphin showed signs of healed wounds or skin lesions on its pectoral fins.



Similar marks on the fins of another dolphin—this time on the outside of the pectoral fin.



One dolphin also had a concerning dental condition: the teeth appeared filed down. There were no visible signs of infection or exposed pulp, and the "wear" was perfectly uniform across both the upper and lower jaws.





Some trainers were observed engaging in very close interactions with individual dolphins. These close interactions from both trainers and tourists—including hugging, kissing, and embracing during swims and photo sessions—could facilitate the transmission of human-to-animal and animal-to-human pathogens.



In the smaller pool, the mother was constantly with her calf. During the observation, the mother likely nursed her calf twice. Observation and photo documentation were difficult due to a no-photography rule regarding the calf. Both nursing events occurred at the water's surface in the unshaded, highly sunlit area near the barrier separating their pool from the main one.



The calf's mother has visible skin lesions on the tip of her snout.

