

Florida Academy of Sciences

E news



FAS Office Edward A. Haddad, Executive Director : Julie Regier, Office Manager July/August 2006

From the Executive Director

In our last newsletter, I wrote some information about our membership drive and how important it is to all of us to bring new members into the Academy. At the last Academy Council Meeting, we reviewed membership goals for some of our schools.

Here are the goals for 5 of our larger schools:

INSTITUTE	ADD	NON STUDENTS	STUDENTS
FIT	17	9	39
UCF	46	11	14
BARRY U.	22	8	11
UFL	28	10	2
USF	17	8	2

This table shows how many members from the above schools we want to add to our Academy by the end of this year. They are categorized by non students (faculty and administration) and students (graduate and undergraduate). Please do YOUR part to help us reach these goals by encouraging your colleagues and fellow students to join FAS.

FAS Sponsors Harlem Children Society Students



On July 23, FAS sponsored a visit by six students from the Harlem Children Society to the Orlando Science Center. These are outstanding college and high school students who are studying science and hope to pursue careers in science. The students were spending 6 weeks in Florida on an internship at the Florida Space Institute. They were mentored there by FAS member Dr. John Brandenburg. Shown in the photo above at the far right is Dr. Leslie Lieberman, FAS delegate to AAAS. FAS Executive Director Haddad, is at the left in the photo.

From the President Elect

When was the last time you read about a whale or dolphin (cetacean) stranding in your local newspaper, heard about it on the radio or saw it on your local TV station? Live stranded (aka beachcast or beached) whales and dolphins are usually media events here in Florida, especially if the event is a mass stranding. But did you know that most of the 200-300 stranded whales and dolphins reported in Florida each year are found dead and represent an incredibly important resource for the study of the biology of these ocean inhabitants (26 species have been reported stranding in Florida) and to document how human activities may be affecting them.

Cetacean strandings are nothing new in Florida. There are numerous reports in the scientific literature and summaries were published by Joseph Curtis Moore in 1956, James N. Layne in 1965 and even I got into the act in 1990. During 2005 we received 292 stranding reports from Florida (736 for the entire southeastern U.S.). Of these, 201 were bottlenose dolphins, 67 (all but one from a mass stranding in the Keys) were rough-toothed dolphins (*Steno bredanensis*) and a few strandings of seven different species comprised the balance.

All marine mammals (whales, dolphins, seals, sea lions, sea otters, walrus, polar bears, manatees and dugongs*) in U.S. waters are protected by the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (www.mmc.gov/legislation). Specific management authority was delegated to the Department of Commerce (whales, dolphins, seals, sea lions) and the Department of the Interior (walrus, sea otter, manatee, dugong, polar bear). And, believe it or not, a federal permit is required to pick up the smelliest dead marine mammal on the beach. Cetacean stranding operations in Florida are managed under Letters of Authorization issued to cooperating institutions by the Southeast Regional Office of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (NOAA, Dept. of Commerce) in St. Petersburg, FL. Authorized individuals respond to both live and dead strandings, collect data and file appropriate reports. From 1977 through 2001 my students and I collated all cetacean stranding reports for the southeastern U.S. (NC to TX) and summaries can be found on the web (www.kogia.org/flstrand). In 2002 the NMFS instituted a national, online stranding database to enhance both timely and standardized reporting.

If you encounter a stranded whale or dolphin on a Florida beach call the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission at 800-404-3922. If the animal is alive do not attempt to push it back into the water. This can be extremely dangerous for both you and the animal. Wait for instructions from authorized stranding network members.

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*Dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) are the smallest members of the order Sirenia (which also includes the manatees and Steller's Sea Cow). Adults are generally less than 3 meters long. The name *dugong* originated from the Malay language *duyung* meaning lady of the sea or mermaid. Dugongs can grow to 3m in length. They inhabit shallow waters in the Indo-Pacific, and feed on sea grass. They also have a long life span and slow breeding rate, which results in being susceptible to threats.