



FIN WHALE PROJECT

Study of whales in Catalan waters
An initiative of EDMAKTUB Association

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS PROGRAM (RAP)

7 days dedicated to the field study of cetaceans in the
Coast of Barcelona (Spain)

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www.edmaktub.com



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Introduction

Acquiring experience on the field research on cetaceans is not an easy task. Marine mammals are difficult to study in the field, because of their routines and habitats. These immense mammals inhabit very large areas. Their time periods beneath water are vast compared to the scarce time they are above, inhaling large amounts of oxygen before they swim back into the ocean again. On the other hand, there are few scientific groups dedicated to the study of these animals and even less that share their knowledge and techniques.

EDMAKTUB Association specializes in the research of cetaceans. Since 2011 it develops a scientific study focused on whales that feed on the Catalan coast at spring time, between February and June. It is the Fin Whale Project: a study on Fin Whales (*Balenoptera physalus*). The oceanographic conditions make its presence possible in the Coast of Garraf (Barcelona). Through the development of this project, our main focuses and goals are to spread knowledge about whales (and other species of cetaceans) in society. Also, we want to raise awareness on the importance of the conservation of the marine environment, and to improve the regulations and protocols of the activities that affect these animals.

As far as research is concerned, the Fin Whale Project focuses on the study, monitoring and identification of individuals among the fin whale species. We carry out photo-identification, we study their feeding and behavioral habits, migratory routes, as well as the oceanographic characteristics of the environment that they reside in, among others.

More information can be found in our website: <http://www.edmaktub.org/en/fin-whale-project/>



2017 was especially abundant in number of sightings and



the participants had the opportunity to enjoy learning.

Objectives

With this Research Assistants Program we propose you to participate for seven days in our research, with the opportunity to learn and practice different techniques used to study cetaceans (especially whales) in the field, such as:

- sighting methodology (MMO practices),
- collecting behavioral data (e.g. dive time, group size ...),
- photo-identification techniques,
- collecting environmental data,
- use of an hydrophone (passive acoustic monitoring PAM),
- fecal sampling techniques (conducted to obtain information on whale feeding habits),
- use of drones to capture aerial images,
- use of other research equipment,
- basic navigation techniques

Participants Profile

No specific expertise or experience is required as EDMAKTUB's research team will provide the necessary information and training.

However, the most profitable use of this program will be made by graduates in biology, oceanography, veterinary science or other areas related to the sea and cetaceans, for whom this theoretical and practical program has been specially designed.



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Schedule

During the seven days of the program, you can stay with the rest of EDMAKTUB's scientific team and share with us not only marine research techniques but also everyday life.

We are located in Vilanova i la Geltrú, very close to the port where the research vessel is docked. Vilanova i la Geltrú is a coastal town located 50 km south of Barcelona.

Below is the plan for the week:

Day 1 (Saturday): Reception, organization and general information. Upon your arrival, we will give a training session to present you the details of the Fin Whale Project. During this day we will define and distribute the tasks that will be done during the week.

Day 2 to 6: Fieldwork and training sessions.

Whenever weather conditions permit, we will make daily outings of observation on board our catamaran, the Maktub. We will set off early in the morning and spend most of the day navigating and collecting data. On board, we will perform rotating shifts, collecting information, not only about fin whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*), but also about bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*), striped dolphins (*Stenella coeruleoalba*), and Risso's Dolphin (*Grampus griseus*), as well as a great variety of species of seabirds that inhabit the area. Research assistants will work and participate actively in life on board the catamaran, and will be able to learn basic navigation techniques, but the main objective will be to learn and practice the different research methodologies mentioned above.

Whether on board or back in the harbor, there will be different presentations focusing on biology, ecology, research and conservation techniques.

Day 7 (Friday): Farewell, baggage collection and cleaning.



Dates for 2019

Participants as well as Research Assistants will stay with us from Saturday to Friday. A maximum of 3 attendees per week are accepted.

The marine investigation of 2019 will run from March to end of May and the following weeks are the available for Research Assistants to join:

- 1) 9-15 March
- 2) 16-22 March
- 3) 23- 29 March
- 4) 30 March - 5 April
- 5) 6 -12 April
- 6) 27 April - 3 May
- 7) 4 -10 May
- 8) 11 -17 May
- 9) 18 -24 May

Terms of participation

- The minimum age for participation is 18 years.
- The languages that will be spoken during the program are Spanish, Catalan and English.
- Participants should be willing to share the space and the tasks of the household, cooperating with each other and sharing the daily tasks: shopping, preparation of meals, as well as cleaning, etc.
- The planned schedule may vary depending on weather conditions
- One of the days of the program will be freely available to attendees, who can dedicate it to know the touristic and environmental attractions of Vilanova i la Geltrú or Barcelona.

Donation

To participate in the program, we request a donation of **800€** covering accommodation, maintenance, research material, theoretical and practical training and participation in the research missions.

Application

If you want to participate, please, complete and send the form that is in the following link indicating your dates of preference. <https://goo.gl/forms/wQksp9o2R3fGUSHP2>
We will confirm your participation according to the availability of the dates and after receiving the proof of a payment of a 20% of the fee.

More information

If you want to request more information or have any questions related to our Research Assistants Program (RAP) you can contact us through the email info@edmaktub.org indicating as subject **RAP2019**.