

Bahamas marine mammal stranding network workshop

A MARINE mammal stranding network workshop was held at the Atlantis Resort to train Bahamians how to respond to dolphins and whales in distress.

The event was hosted by the Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Organisation (BMMRO), the Department of Marine Resources, and the Atlantis.

Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources Larry Cartwright officially opened the workshop on Saturday, stating "I believe the establishment of a marine mammal stranding network in the Bahamas will serve to promote the conservation of marine mammal species and their habitat by improving the rescue and humane care of stranded marine mammals, advancing stranding science, and increasing public awareness through education."

More than 60 participants attended the workshop, representing: Long Island,

Inagua, Abaco, Andros, Exuma, Grand Bahama, Bimini and New Providence.

Many participants were Department of Marine Resources staff, Bahamas National Trust park wardens, government and private veterinary doctors and staff from the Atlantis marine life facility and other captive facilities in the Bahamas.

Trained

Participants were trained as first responders for live stranding and as basic data collectors for dead stranded animals.

Twenty stranding kits were distributed to participants providing vital equipment for response and treatment.

Training was provided by Blair Mase and Drs Ruth Ewing and Julia Zaias from US NOAA Fisheries in Miami, Janet Whaley the US stranding co-ordinator, Dr Darlene Ketten from Woods Hole

Oceanographic Institute and Dr Beth Doescher, the senior Atlantis marine mammal veterinarian.

Charlotte Dunn, the president of BMMRO and the workshop organiser, said that she was extremely pleased with the level of interest the participants showed throughout the workshop, as well as the positive feedback, both of which will ensure an effective stranding network throughout the Bahamas that will work towards the conservation of marine mammals.

During the workshop, a hotline number was announced for reporting stranded, injured or dead marine mammals.

This number will be manned at all times.

Anyone who is a witness to, or has information about a marine mammal stranding event, was asked call the Marine Mammal Stranding Hotline immediately at (242) 544-5409.