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## Dolphin researcher in Cedar Key seeks data from general public



**These photos are examples of what Dr. Stefanie K. Gazda is seeking from residents and visitors to the Cedar Key, or Waccasassa Bay/Withlacoochee Bay areas.**

*Photos taken under NMFS scientific research permit number 14450.*

*Photos Provided By Dr. Gazda Via Cedar Key Public Library Manager Molly Jubitz*

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By Jeff M. Hardison © July 14, 2018 at 8:28 a.m.

**CEDAR KEY** -- Cedar Key Public Library Manager Molly Jubitz passed on a note via email Friday morning (July 13) to show a scientist's request for help in documenting dolphin behavior in that neighborhood.

Stefanie K. Gazda, Ph.D., is the head of Cedar Key Dolphin Project. The group she leads is having a robust field research season right now, Jubitz noted.

Dr. Gazda is an associate lecturer of biology University of Massachusetts Boston, College of Science and Mathematics, according to UMB. Her students give her good reviews as a professor as well, according to social media input regarding students grading professors.

She also has presented programs for the general public on several occasions over the past many years at the Cedar Key Public Library.

Dr. Gazda began researching Cedar Key bottlenose dolphins in 2001 for her master's thesis. She came to the Cedar Key area to study bottlenose dolphins' foraging behavior. Her research uncovered aspects of dolphin behavior.

She began calling her research the Cedar Key Dolphin Project in 2010.

Dr. Gazda and her team of researchers are inviting residents and visitors to the Cedar Key area to contribute to the field this season by providing descriptions of sightings of the driver-barrier behavior exhibited by local dolphins.

Driver-barrier feeding behavior in bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) is when they jump into the air and capture a mullet as it jumps from the water too.

In part of an abstract from an article published in *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, in February of 2005, which was authored by Gazda, Richard Connor of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, Robert K. Edgar and Frank Cox, it was noted that "Individual role specialization during group hunting is extremely rare in mammals."

In her note to Jubitz, Dr. Gazda asked the library manager to pass on to the Friends of the Cedar Key Public Library, her request for assistance from people to document driver-barrier feeding, which is a precise form of hunting by this type of marine mammal.

Seeing barrier feeding is extremely rare, Dr. Gazda noted as she seeks to recruit assistance in the collection of data relating to the natural world by members of the general public.

Dr. Gazda asks the general public, when a person specifically sees dolphins catching mullet in the air, in the area of Cedar Key, or Waccasassa Bay/Withlacoochee Bay between now and Aug. 20, to send the researchers a message via email at [ckdolphinsproject@gmail.com](mailto:ckdolphinsproject@gmail.com).

"Let us know when and where you saw it," Dr. Gazda noted. "A couple pictures or a short video could also be really helpful. This is your chance to participate science and help us achieve our research goals this summer!"