

## Communication, cooperation and culture in the Shark Bay dolphins

<b>Date</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> Feb (Fri.)
<b>Time</b>	16:00 (UTC+8)
<b>Venue</b>	Zoom



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Three decades of research on Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins in Shark Bay, Western Australia, has revealed a complex structure of nested alliance formation, as well as culturally transmitted tool use, providing striking parallels in social complexity and behavioural richness to some human societies. In this seminar I will cover some of the key research findings over the last 30 years, with particular focus on male alliance formation. In Shark Bay, unrelated males form cooperative alliances that engage in coordinated efforts to compete with rival alliances over access to females. These strong alliance relationships can last for decades and are critical to each male's reproductive success. I will use long-term field data to show that acoustic and behavioural coordination are key components of dolphin alliance behaviour, and playback experiments to illustrate that allied male dolphins form abstract social concepts based on the previous cooperative investment of individuals. I propose that coordinated behaviour and cooperation-based concept formation evolved to promote social bonding and cooperation among allies, ultimately fostering in-group favouritism.



### About speaker:

**Dr. Stephanie King** completed her MRes and PhD on dolphin communication at the University of Andrews. Following her PhD, she worked for an environmental consultancy assessing the consequences of anthropogenic disturbance on marine mammal populations. In 2014, she returned to full-time research as a postdoc at the Dolphin Research Centre, USA. After securing a five-year Branco Weiss Fellowship in 2015, she joined the University of Western Australia as a Research Fellow and started dolphin communication research in Shark Bay. She now leads the Shark Bay Dolphin Research ([www.sharkbaydolphins.org](http://www.sharkbaydolphins.org)) with her collaborators, and in 2018 she was appointed as a Senior Lecturer in animal behaviour at the University of Bristol.