

# 1 HECTOMETER FOR THE HECTOR'S DOLPHIN



In just over a week I will try to break the unassisted freediving world record with an attempt at 100 meters - *one hectometer*. The dive will be dedicated to the Hector's Dolphin. It is the littlest dolphin in the world, and the only one that is endemic to New Zealand, but the species is threatened with extinction, and a bill being considered by the NZ Minister of Fisheries could determine its fate..

Hector's Dolphins are found only in New Zealand, and only in shallow coastal waters, less than 100 meters deep, putting them at the mercy of gill-net fishing that takes place in those waters. Their population has been reduced by 75% in the last 30 years, and the Maui Dolphin subspecies is teetering on the verge of extinction, with only 100 individuals left.

Despite urgently requiring more protection, the government is actually considering decreasing their sanctuary by reducing the range of coastal waters in which fishing methods that entangle dolphins (gill-nets and trawling) are banned. A decision on this bill, which would be a death warrant to the species, is due to be made by the Minister of Fisheries, Phil Heatley, and Minister of Conservation, Kate Wilkinson, in the next two weeks.

*In a country that prides itself on being at the spearhead of conservation and ecology, and fighting the good fight against international whaling, it would be tragic and embarrassing if New Zealand was unable to take care of the one species of dolphin that belongs to us alone.*

Please, if you have a spare moment, write to the Ministers at the following addresses to discourage them from reducing protection of the Hector's Dolphin - even one sentence will make a difference.

Phil Heatley, Minister of Fisheries: [p.heatley@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:p.heatley@ministers.govt.nz)

Wilkinson, Minister of Conservation: [k.wilkinson@ministers.govt.nz](mailto:k.wilkinson@ministers.govt.nz)

We've set it up so that viewers can support my record attempt by bidding on the individual meters of the 100-metre dive rope, earning memorabilia from the event (go to the VB frontpage to find out more). Provided all meters are sold then 10% of funds raised will be donated to the New Zealand Whale and Dolphin Trust. During press interviews I will be working to increase awareness of the plight of this iconic sea-mammal, and I hope this encourages fisheries and government to make the right decisions to safeguard them against extinction.



When I was an infant, my family sold our house in England to buy a boat and sail from Spain across the Atlantic, Caribbean and Pacific Ocean to New Zealand. Like Hawaiian children, I learnt to swim and walk at the same time, and by the age of 8 I was competing with my older brother Sam to see who could bring back a stone from the deepest depth - we both reached 15 meters. I didn't discover freediving was a sport until eight years ago, when I traveled back to the Caribbean and became hooked, spending hours underwater every day descending the huge coral walls or lying in sunny sand gardens watching the tropical fish.

When I was born in 1980 the world record in 'No Limits' freediving, (down with a sled, up with a lift bag) was 100m, held by Jacques Mayol, who was the subject of Luc Besson's epic film "The Big Blue." Now 30 years old, I find myself about to attempt the same depth in the purest form of the sport,

where I won't be able to use any propulsive aids, not even fins.  
Jacques had a special affinity with dolphins, which is shared by almost everyone who has had the privilege of being in their company in their natural environment. I am lucky enough to have spent time aboard the Dolphin Expeditions liveaboard, in Bimini, Bahamas, swimming with the lively

Atlantic Spotted Dolphins.

Though I will never come near to their grace in the water, I hope that my efforts in freediving will help the cause of their threatened cousins, the Hector's Dolphins back, in my homeland of New Zealand.

*photo credits:*

*Hector dolphin: Steve Dawson, NZ Whale & Dolphin Trust*

*William & dolphin: Jillian Rutledge, Dolphin Expeditions*

That is so beautiful and so amazing and we wish you well!

*by Sharon G. Williams on 2010-12-01 21:49:41*

Good luck for little Hector. I've just send and email...rnrnThank you William for what you are doing, and good luck for you too!!!

*by Maite Malcorra on 2010-12-02 11:43:39*

good on you! im 16 and at the begining of 2010 i raised \$20k for the Hectors dolphins, and i think it is really great that you too are doing something, your bringing vital publicity to the plight of our hectors! thank you! ☐ good luck with your dive!

*by Aescleah on 2010-12-03 00:24:11*

We reproduce this excellent letter here from the CEO of the company who provide us with GloRopern rnrnThe NZ Hector's DolphinrnrnDear Sir, and or Madame,rnrn rnrnl am writing to you from the United States. Though I am not a citizen of your country, I have been to your wonderful land. I have dived your beautiful waters (Poor Knights to be specific.) I know you have a difficult balance to strike between ecology and economy. But when reasoned in the long term I hope that you can at least see the wisdom in the preservation of a marine mammal species native to your land alone, the Hector Dolphin.rnrn rnrnExpanding the fishing further into the waters already nearer your coast threatens the very extinction of this marine mammal, already under maximum duress. To do so lightly I think would be to your own peril as a people.rnrn rnrnWe are all connected to the ocean, more so than I ever thought. This summer I watched first hand a large portion of the Gulf of Mexico die at my feet following the BP Oil spill disaster. I can't tell you in words how devastating it was to watch, to feel it first hand. But I ask you, to imagine that you are there, watching the very last known Hector Dolphin die at your feet. The very last one on this earth, and you find that it was because of your decision to allow the further encroachment of fishing into their habitat. Ask yourself, can you live with that?rnrn rnrnPlease, I beg you, I implore you, to not stress this marine species into extinction, as we all must make sacrifices for the greater good. To knowingly end this species probability of survival is not for the greater good. It is after all your land, and your affair, but we all collectively must be responsible for this creation we've been blessed to abide in. To pass it on, in some small way, better than we found it.rnrn rnrnDid you know that there is research that shows that adding Photo Luminescent products to nets reduces the by catch of non targeted species by 90%? You can find out more about this very important research being done by NOAA Kewalo Research Facility in Honolulu Hawaii.rnrn rnrnDo not condemn this species to death row by allowing the encroachment of fishing deeper into their habitat. They are already on the brink of extinction, take a stand for their sake. You hold the fate the species in your hands. Not only New Zealanders, but the world is asking that you do the right thing.rnrn rnrnThe last great words of a dying nation.rnrn rnrnBut we've always done it this way."rnrn rnrnWith Kind and Sincere Regards,rnrn rnrnDavid L. Mc ManisrnrnCEO Genesis Light Line LLC.

*by from David Mc Manis on 2010-12-03 07:10:25*

Dear Sir, and or Madame, I am writing to you from the Philippines. Though I am not a citizen of your country, I have been to your wonderful land. I have dived your beautiful waters (Poor Knights to be specific.) I know you have a difficult balance to strike between ecology and economy. But when reasoned in the long term I hope that you can at least see the wisdom in the preservation of a marine mammal species native to your land alone, the Hector Dolphin. Expanding the fishing further into the waters already nearer your coast threatens the very extinction of this marine mammal, already under maximum duress. To do so lightly I think would be to your own peril as a people. We are all connected to the ocean, more so than I ever thought. This summer I watched first hand a large portion of the Gulf of Mexico die at my feet following the BP Oil spill disaster. I can't tell you in words how devastating it was to watch, to feel it first hand. But I ask you, to imagine that you are there, watching the very last known Hector Dolphin die at your feet. The very last one on this earth, and you find that it was because of your decision to allow the further encroachment of fishing into their habitat. Ask yourself, can you live with that? Please, I beg you, I implore you, to not stress this marine species into extinction, as we all must make sacrifices for the greater good. To knowingly end this species probability of survival is not for the greater good. It is after all your land, and your affair, but we all collectively must be responsible for this creation we've been blessed to abide in. To pass it on, in some small way, better than we found it. Did you know that there is research that shows that adding Photo Luminescent products to nets reduces the by catch of non targeted species by 90%? You can find out more about this very important research being done by NOAA Kewalo Research Facility in Honolulu Hawaii. Do not condemn this species to death row by allowing the encroachment of fishing deeper into their habitat. They are already on the brink of extinction, take a stand for their sake. You hold the fate the species in your hands. Not only New Zealanders, but the world is asking that you do the right thing. The last great words of a dying

nation. "But we've always done it this way." With Kind and Sincere Regards, Chris Paul Durano, Radiologic Technologist, Philippines.

*by chris paul durano on 2010-12-03 08:15:39*

I've sent a brief email to the Ministry Of Fisheries and Aquaculture, and they sent a reply confirming that is was forwarded to the minister.

*by Aleksandar Jovanovic on 2010-12-11 04:50:03*

Congratulations William, from Biological Sciences at Auckland University.

*by Liam on 2010-12-13 21:23:10*

Well done William- saw the news on TV in NZ last night- what an achievement. If my company can help your endeavours in anyway please contact me in Milford Auckland.

*by Diggory Brooke on 2010-12-14 15:58:24*

I too sent my email to the New Zealand legislators in whose hand the fate of Hector's Dolphins are. rnrnThanks William for doing this important work - I hope the higher-ups in Paris say yes to doing a show about your important work in conservation and in sport. rnrnBest, rnrn- (Guy) Lawrence Buckingham, New Orleans

*by Lawrence Buckingham on 2010-12-30 14:55:45*

Hi William,rnIt was lovely to be able to spend new years with you, Britta and your family.rnCongratulations again for breaking the 100m - what a truly fantastic achievement.rnGood on you for increasing awareness of the plight of the Hector's and Maui's too. Best wishes for the future.

*by Kath on 2011-01-04 14:33:08*

Thanks for the information.

*by josheph on 2011-03-14 03:32:09*