

Dolphin Spotter

A Land-Based Citizen Science Project

Spotting Station Instruction Manual

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Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction.....	<u>3</u>
About Dolphin Spotter.....	<u>3</u>
Getting Started.....	<u>4</u>
Section 2: Setting up Your Camera.....	<u>5</u>
Tutorial Video: Spotting Station Set-up.....	<u>5</u>
Register Your Spotting Station.....	<u>6</u>
Section 3: Submitting Sightings.....	<u>7</u>
How to Download Photos for Submission.....	<u>7</u>
Submitting Sightings.....	<u>8</u>
Section 4: More Information.....	<u>9</u>
Interactive Map.....	<u>9</u>
Important Information.....	<u>10</u>
Contact Information & More Resources.....	<u>11</u>

About Dolphin Spotter

Photo identification is a non-invasive, opportunistic technique that is used to collect information about wild dolphin populations. Photos submitted by Dolphin Spotters will complement the research being conducted by the FAU Harbor Branch Marine Mammal Stranding and Population Assessment team. With thousands of miles along Florida's coastline, land-based citizen scientists can capture areas that our traditional surveys don't reach, while providing valuable insights on the day-to-day habitat use and behaviors of our resident dolphin populations. Together these efforts play a critical role in understanding Florida's dolphins and conserving this important species.

Dolphin Spotter launched in 2022 invites members of the public to submit dolphin photos taken from phones and personal cameras.



This new program addition uses trail cameras as Spotting Stations in order to continuously monitor dolphins that travel close to waterfront properties.



Getting Started

Below is a shopping list for everything you will need to set-up your Spotting Station.

Bushnell Core DS-4K No Glow Trail Camera - \$199.99

- Purchase from [Bushnell](#), [Cabela's](#), or [Amazon](#).

32 GB SD Card - \$12.99

- Purchase from [Amazon](#)

AA Lithium Energizer Batteries (at least 6) - \$23.87

- Purchase from [Amazon](#)

Trail Camera Security Box - \$34.99

- Purchase from [Bushnell](#)

Padlock - \$8.69

- Purchase from [Amazon](#)

***Trail Camera Mount (Option 1) - \$19.99**

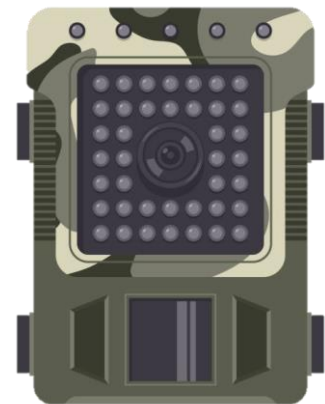
- Purchase from [Amazon](#)

***Trail Camera Mount (Option 2) - \$19.99**

- Purchase from [Amazon](#)

***Trail Camera Mount (Option 3) - \$15.96**

- Purchase from [Amazon](#)



[Note: This manual will discuss settings and installation processes that are specific to the items listed here, so if you purchase a different trail camera you will need to refer to the manufacturer's manual]

*Items marked with an asterisk are optional purchases. Option 1 is the preferred mounting method for a dock or tree, option 2 works for tree mounting, and option 3 would work for clamping to PVC or something similar. Some options may not always be available, but similar items can be used.

Tutorial Video

Spotting Station Set-up

Once you have purchased all your materials needed for the spotting station, follow along with the tutorial video below. This video will walk you step by step on how to set up your camera menu and the installation process of your Spotting Station.

Tutorial Video Link: <https://youtu.be/FBwO7B2YPco>



After you have completely installed your Spotting Station, please fill out the registration form to host an official Spotting Station.

Spotting Station Registration

Once your trail camera is setup, you can register your Spotting Station to the program by clicking [here](#).

The registration form contains an overview video that provides more information about the Spotting Stations.

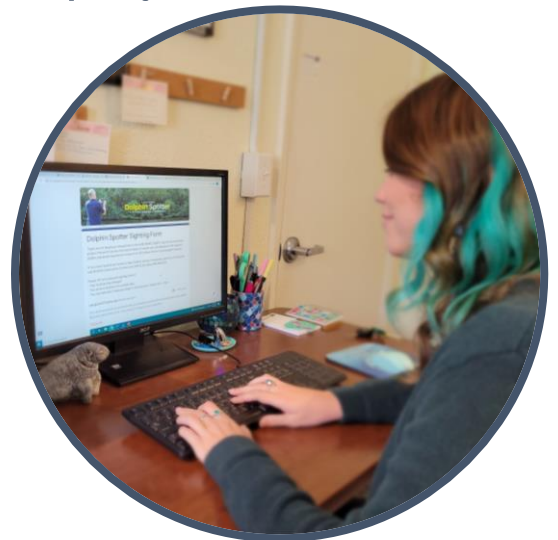
The second part of the form gathers more information about you and where the Spotting Station will be located. You will also need to upload a photo of your setup once it's been fully installed. We are looking forward to seeing the unique ways you install your cameras!

The third section of the form contains some acknowledgements and attestations that you must agree to follow while participating in the project.

Once you have submitted the registration form, an email will be sent with instructions on how to submit your photos. *Save this email to refer to the project code.

The app will allow up to three images to be submitted at one time, so be sure to choose the best photos for each sighting.

*Be sure to check your spam/junk folders, as the email can get sorted into those folders.



Downloading Camera Photos

It is recommended that you download photos from your Spotting Station every two weeks (or less, depending on weather). Before removing the SD card, be sure to turn off your trail camera, then push and release to remove the SD card. If you have a second SD card, you can replace it with that while going through the one you just removed.

Plug your SD card into your computer (you may need an SD card reader accessory depending on your setup). Sort through the images taken and save only photos with dolphins for submissions.

Once processed and saved on your computer, be sure to delete the images so you have plenty of space on your SD card.

You can now insert the SD card back into the camera and turn it on to continue taking images.

Refer to the next page for steps on how to submit photos through the WatchSpotter app.



WatchSpotter App

Once you have downloaded your photos, you are ready to submit any that captured dolphins. To download the app to submit sightings, return to the email that was sent after registration for details. You will need to add another spot if sightings were on separate days or if the time between two sightings is longer than one hour, which helps our researchers record individual observations.

Example of trail camera image of dolphins:

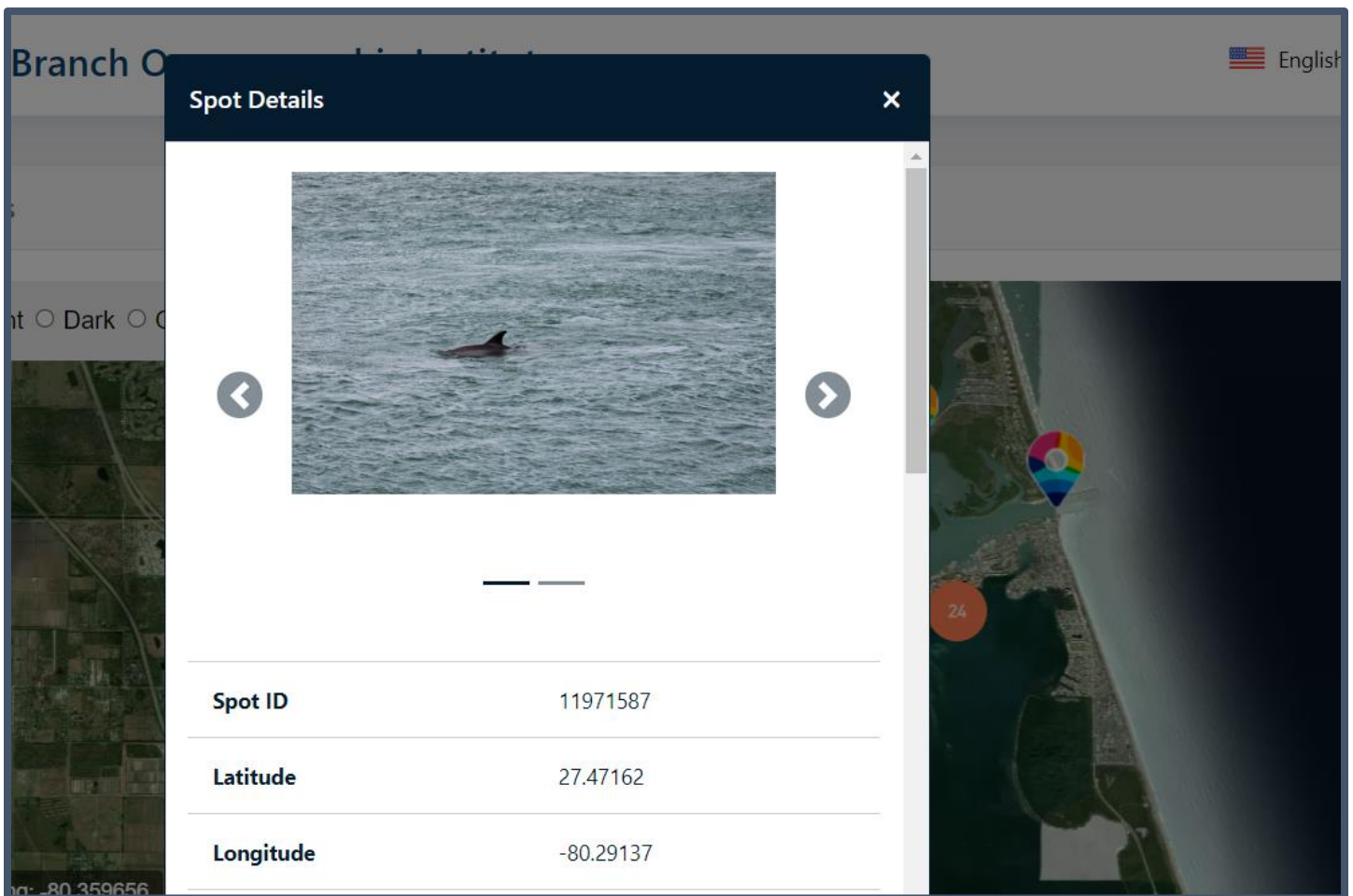


Have patience, you may only get 2,000 photos of trees blowing in the wind before you get that awesome dolphin photo. However, you might get some cool photos of other wildlife like sharks, manatees, and birds!



Interactive Map

As sightings are submitted, they will be placed on the WatchSpotter interactive map that can be found on the Dolphin Spotter [webpage](#). Images can be submitted directly on the map, through the app on your mobile device, or by clicking [here](#). Check the map to see where people are sighting dolphins throughout Florida and to see your submissions!



The screenshot shows the WatchSpotter app interface. A 'Spot Details' modal window is open, displaying a photo of a dolphin in the water. Below the photo, the following data is shown:

Spot ID	11971587
Latitude	27.47162
Longitude	-80.29137

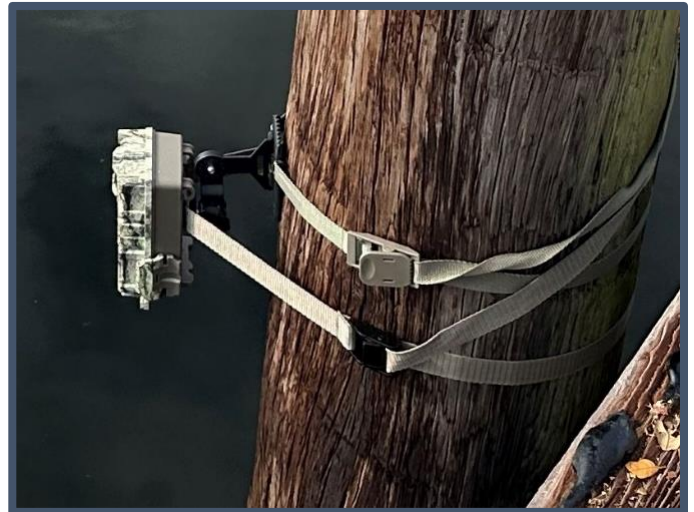
The background shows a map with a colorful location pin and a red circle with the number '24'. The top right corner of the app shows a language selector set to 'English'.

Important Information

Be sure to remember the following:

***Accurate date/time set on the trail camera**

Our researchers use the timestamp on each sighting to gain valuable insights on dolphin movement patterns. An image submitted with the incorrect timestamp would not be useful to our team, and one goal of this project is to contribute to research.



***Place the trail camera as close to the water line as possible** (if camera gets wet, rinse with fresh water to prevent saltwater corrosion).

If you place the camera just above the high tide line, you will not have to worry about it getting submerged, and it will be close enough to capture images of dorsal fins as they pass the camera. Routinely rinse off your camera and supplies using fresh water. Salt water will start to deteriorate the materials the longer they are exposed.

Questions? Contact Us

If you have any questions while setting up your camera or while participating, don't hesitate to reach out. You can call 772-242-2293 or email Samantha McGuire at smcguire2015@fau.edu.

For more information on how you can participate as a Dolphin Spotter by using your phone or personal camera, visit our [website](#) and register today!



If your group, club, or organization would like to schedule a Dolphin Spotter presentation to learn more about the program and how you can get involved, please fill out a Speakers Bureau form [here](#).

For more information visit www.fau.edu/hboi/citizen-science.

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