

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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General information

Legal status

Stichting Nova Atlantis (Nova Atlantis Foundation) is a foundation (stichting) under Dutch law. It is registered in the trade register (Kamer van Koophandel) under no. 37101348 and RSIN 812720416. The foundation was established on 4 April 2002.

Address

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Objectives

Our goal is the conservation of the coastal and pelagic waters of the Azores. Recognition of these waters as Marine Protected Areas would be a major step towards that goal. We contribute by collecting and providing (long-term) data on marine mammal ecology to stakeholders, such as local authorities, the scientific community, environmental NGOs, and through lobbying. We focus on the cetacean species that are resident or frequent visitors of the Azores. Key species in our behavioural, ecological studies are the resident Risso's dolphins. Educating (biology) students through internships and raising general awareness through social media platforms, presentations at e.g. conferences, films and workshops are all conducive to our overall objective.

Board

During 2021 the board composition changed. Taco van der Harst and Karin Hartman stepped down per 27-10-2021. They were succeeded by Caroline van der Mark and Reinier Hietink per the same date. At 31 December 2021 the Board composition was as follows:

Liesbeth Feikema (chair)	since 23-02-2016
Caroline van der Mark	since 27-10-2021
Reinier Hietink	since 27-10-2021
Pieter van der Harst (secretary/treasurer)	since 23-02-2016

Remuneration policy

Nova Atlantis does not have any employees, and does not award any remuneration to its board members, interns, volunteers or anyone else.

Expenses incurred that are directly related to the activities of Nova Atlantis (such as fuel, maintenance and repair, taxes and insurance of the research vessels and car, internet access at the research station,

electricity, rental of whale-watch vessels, and necessary travel expenses) are reimbursed. See the section Financial information for more detail.

Activities in 2021

Research

In 2021 we started the observations on the 24th of May, and continued until the 25th of September, being in the field for 124 consecutive days. We spent 35% more hours in land- and ocean based surveys than in 2020 (when the fieldwork season was shorter due to Covid-19 restrictions). Nevertheless, the total number of animals spotted from land was significantly lower than in 2020, primarily because of a 50% drop in sightings of small species, who are usually seen in huge groups, and who make up 80% of the total count (2020: 88%). Remarkable trends were the further strong decrease of bottlenose dolphins, who are seldom seen nowadays in our research area, and a continued strong increase of the number of pilot whales and, to a lesser extent, sperm whales – both deep divers who, just like Risso’s dolphins, feed on squid.

As far as Risso’s dolphins are concerned, the higher effort at sea was reflected in a higher number of sightings, although the longer-term trend seems to indicate that the number of unique IDs spotted is decreasing. In other words: we often see the same groups and individuals with not a lot of variety. Especially the decrease in the number of nurseries (females with calves) and new-borns is worrying.

2021 Land	
Observation days	124
No. of crew	2-7
No. of hours	262
No. of surveys *	648
Surveys with Q7 **	231
Total species	16
Sightings cetacean pods	1,357
Total Animals	31,975

2021 Ocean	
No. of surveys	106
Surveys with species	106
Average duration	2:15:07
No. of hours	238
Total km	2,131
No. of species	13
Total Groups	306
Total Animals	4,754

* A survey lasts for at least 20 minutes

** Q7 indicates days with limited observation conditions like rain, mist, or a sea state above Douglas state 4

Our relationship with local *viziers* (who scan the ocean from lookouts on land with strong binoculars to guide the whale-watch boats to groups of whales or dolphins) continued to be constructive and mutually beneficial.

We supervised three master students who all completed their master theses in 2021 with high to excellent grades, based on the research performed at Nova Atlantis, ranging from intra-group dynamics within male

groups, based on drone videos; long-term trends in the presence of male, sub-adult and nursery groups of Risso's dolphins; and the spatial and temporal distribution of cetacean species in our research area.

Outside the fieldwork season we spent a lot of time and energy in structuring and cleaning up long-term data, and running statistical analyses. This was part of an effort to produce manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed journals, which we expect to materialize in 2022.

Other activities

We renewed our website during 2021, and made it more dynamic by linking to our Facebook feed, and by including several short films. We are very grateful to Else Nuyten, who had managed our website for many years for free until 2021.

Effective 9 November 2021 Nova Atlantis was designated by the fiscal authorities in the Netherlands as an 'ANBI'¹ – a quality mark for Public Benefit Organizations. One of the consequences of this registration is that any donations to Nova Atlantis are tax deductible in the Netherlands.

We received an impressive amount of donations, partly through our membership of Globe Guards. Part of these donations is earmarked for an investment in a new research vessel. We are very grateful for these donations, and we are equally thankful for the effort made by our interns and volunteers in 2021. The financial stimulus, the data collected and the new insights gained during our fieldwork in 2021 motivate us to continue our research with even greater vigor and to publish new results. That is the most important contribution that we can make to the conservation of the unique habitat in the waters around the Azores.

Publications

In 2021 the following (co-)authored publication was published:

Dinis A, Molina C, Tobeña M, Sambolino A, **Hartman K**, Fernandez M, Magalhães S, dos Santos RP, Ritter F, Martín V, Aguilar de Soto N, Alves F. (2021). Large scale movements of common bottlenose dolphins in the Atlantic: dolphins with an international courtyard. PeerJ9: e11069 <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.11069>

¹ ANBI is the acronym of Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling – Public Benefit Organization

Policy Plan 2022

Introduction

Worldwide there are around 90 species of whales and dolphins, of which the Blue whale is the biggest and the Vaquita porpoise the smallest. In the Azores, a volcanic archipelago in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, Nova Atlantis performs scientific research of whales and dolphins off the south coast of Pico Island. These waters are a unique and rich marine ecosystem in Europe, where more than 25 different species of whales and dolphins have been observed.

Objectives – implementation

Our ultimate goal is the conservation of this ecosystem and all the marine species that live there. A major step in that direction would be the establishment of a Marine Protected Area. This is a long-term goal, which would require agreement at the political level between different stakeholders such as the fishing industry, the tourism sector and nature conservationists. Nova Atlantis is only a small player in this field. However, our scientific research project is unique in its long-term focus, covering 22 consecutive years during which we have collected data in a structured manner on the presence and behaviour of up to 20 species of whales and dolphins around Pico Island. Many of these species are long living animals, whose patterns and behaviours can only be understood if they are followed over a long term. Therefore, scientific publications based on hard data from long-term research projects such as ours are crucial for convincing political stakeholders and local conservation management of the necessity to protect this part of the Atlantic Ocean.

Activities

We work under research licenses granted by the *Direção Regional dos Assuntos do Mar* of the government in the Autonomous Region of the Azores, which are granted for one year. Our research concerns the ecology of several key species, of which the Risso's dolphin (*Grampus griseus*) is the most important. In the past two decades we have gained detailed insights into the social structure, residency patterns and reproduction strategies / mating season of different species. For nature conservation in the EU it is important to demonstrate that an area can be classified as a 'critical habitat': an area used by a population for daily survival – foraging, resting, mating and nursing. Nova Atlantis promotes awareness of the vulnerable ecosystems in the open ocean by publishing our findings in scientific journals, sharing our data with local stakeholders and policy makers, participation in international conferences, educating young biology students in the field, frequent updates in social media platforms, giving presentations and by distributing our documentary 'Scars', which has won awards in different international nature conservation film festivals.

Our fieldwork season generally runs from May to October, when the conditions for going to sea are mostly favorable. During our fieldwork, we scan the ocean from our research station (at an altitude of some 50 meters), using strong binoculars to detect whale or dolphin species. We perform these scans in a structured manner several times a day, and record the date and time, weather- and sea conditions as well as the species observed, their numbers, position and behavior. The observers on land guide our boat to the groups

at sea. At sea we record the same data in more detail (e.g. GPS position), and in addition also perform photo-identification of as many animals in the group as possible, record the names of individuals spotted, and, depending on the circumstances, we also film underwater using a GoPro camera on a pole, employ a drone to film the animals from the air, and/or record underwater sounds with one or more hydrophones. All the data captured are recorded in spreadsheets for further analysis, which typically takes place between October and May, and which forms the basis for publications in scientific journals. During our fieldwork season, we offer internships to biology students, who, together with volunteers, play an important role in both the land and sea observation activities, as well as in the input and analysis of data.

Funding

Nova Atlantis has two main funding sources: donations and internship fees. Donations are primarily obtained through our membership of Globe Guards, a platform of small foundations active in nature conservation across the world. The annual Nature Day auction organized by Globe Guards and hosted by Burgers' Zoo, is a major source of donations for Nova Atlantis. Apart from that, we receive incidental donations (e.g. via our website). Internship fees are fees paid by interns to help cover the costs of fieldwork.

Nova Atlantis aims to generate sufficient funding to cover its expenses (which are almost completely related to the cost of fieldwork). Historically, funding has been sufficient to cover running costs, as is clear from the following 5-year overview:

Income and expenses	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Donations	€ 46,874	€ 4,167	€ 6,000	€ 6,676	€ 5,288
Internship fees	€ 2,000	€ 4,776	€ 3,750	€ 2,250	€ 3,375
Other income	€ 184	€ 278	€ 310	€ 150	€ 1,875
Total income	€ 49,058	€ 9,221	€ 10,060	€ 9,076	€ 10,538
Expenses	€ 10,660	€ 7,773	€ 9,466	€ 5,251	€ 7,893
Allocation to special-purpose reserve	€ 30,000	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
Total expenses	€ 40,660	€ 7,773	€ 9,466	€ 5,251	€ 7,893
Net result	€ 8,398	€ 1,448	€ 594	€ 3,825	€ 2,645

In 2021 we saw a huge increase in donations. The main factor was a big incidental donation, the majority of which is destined for the purchase of a new RIB to replace the 5.1m 'Easy' which has been showing growing signs of wear and tear. Apart from that, donations generated through Globe Guards were also much higher than on average: in 2021 an additional digital auction was organized to catch up after the cancellation of the regular auction in October 2020 due to Covid-19. Internship fees were lower in 2021: due to the uncertainties around travel restrictions early in the year, we received fewer applications for internships. This could be compensated by more volunteers, who did not pay any fees however.

The fluctuations in expenses are mainly caused by maintenance and repairs. This expense item concerns a car and two research vessels. The car is a 26-year old pick-up truck (Toyota Hilux). The research vessels are

a 6.7 m fiberglass boat ('Moleiro') which has not been in operation since 2014 when both the hull and the engine were damaged, and the secondhand 'Easy' mentioned above, which has been in operation since 2015. In the past years, we have made expenses on painting and repairing the hull and fixing the engine of the Moleiro, which is expected to be back in operation as from 2022.

Our aim is to maintain a bank balance which is sufficient to cover the expected expenses for the next year. The development of our funding and liquidity position over the last five years is shown in the following table:

Balance sheet	31/12/2021	31/12/2020	31/12/2019	31/12/2018	31/12/2017
Bank	€ 55,064	€ 13,102	€ 10,839	€ 9,987	€ 5,316
Total assets	€ 55,064	€ 13,102	€ 10,839	€ 9,987	€ 5,316
Current account directors	€ 8,928	€ 5,365	€ 4,549	€ 4,291	€ 3,445
Total liabilities	€ 8,928	€ 5,365	€ 4,549	€ 4,291	€ 3,445
Equity	€ 46,136	€ 7,738	€ 6,290	€ 5,696	€ 1,870
Total liabilities and equity	€ 55,064	€ 13,102	€ 10,839	€ 9,987	€ 5,316

Future activities

We aim to continue our research at Pico, which has been running for 22 consecutive years now. In addition, there are new activities that will require funding, and a number of necessary investments regarding our equipment:

- We plan to expand our research with passive acoustic monitoring. Sound is an important communication medium underwater, and for intelligent species such as whales and dolphins, recording and analysing their vocalisations can greatly enhance our understanding of their behaviour and social structure. Total investments in suitable equipment are estimated at € 15,000. For this activity, it is essential that the bigger research vessel 'Moleiro' is back in operation, since the smaller vessel 'Easy' is not big enough to store the required equipment.
- The research vessel 'Easy', which was acquired second-hand in 2015, has suffered from six years of uninterrupted exposure to sun, rain, wind and salt, and is up for renewal. Thanks to an earmarked donation, we can proceed with finding a successor of the 'Easy' in 2022.
- Our 26-year old pick-up truck is up for replacement. We will investigate the possibility of buying a suitable second-hand pick-up truck that is powerful enough to tow the 'Moleiro'.
- Our boats and car suffer from being continuously exposed to sun, wind, salt and rain. We are always looking for a space to store the boats and the car during the winter, subject to funding.
- An analysis of long-term trends in our data seems to indicate that the number of resident Risso's dolphins, especially nurseries with mothers and calves, but also groups of sub-adults, is decreasing. At the same time, other deep-diving species such as sperm whales and especially pilot whales are increasing in numbers. We intend to gain more insights in distribution patterns of Risso's dolphins

and pilot whales by applying satellite tags on a small number of selected individuals, subject to obtaining a license for this activity and securing sufficient funding.

Financial information

Financial policy

Nova Atlantis is a foundation without employees, and does not award any remuneration to anyone involved with the foundation. All the work is done by volunteers. Funding consists of donations and fees paid by interns to cover the costs of fieldwork. The donations generated by the annual auction organised by Globe Guards during the 'Dag van de Natuur' ('*Nature Day*') are an important source of funding. Apart from that, Nova Atlantis receives incidental donations from other sources. The research station, the research vessels, the pick-up truck and most of the research equipment are made available for free by Karin Hartman. This is partly due to the complications of putting property, boats or cars in the name of a foundation, and partly because historically the foundation did not dispose of sufficient funding to purchase all the equipment (e.g. binoculars, photo cameras, lenses, drones) itself. If funding is sufficient, Nova Atlantis purchases research equipment on its own account (in the past e.g. a GoPro camera, a video camera, hard disks). Expenses made by Nova Atlantis are predominantly directly related to the objectives of the foundation. Indirect expenses concern bank charges, and the annual contribution to Globe Guards.

Accounting principle

Income and expenses and changes in assets or liabilities are recorded in the year in which they lead to an inflow or outflow on our bank account.

Balance sheet

Amounts in €	31/12/2021	31/12/2020	Note
Bank	55,064	13,102	1
Equipment	0	0	2
Total assets	55,064	13,102	
Current account director	8,928	5,365	3
Total liabilities	8,928	5,365	
Equity	46,136	7,738	4
Total liabilities and equity	55,064	13,102	

Income and expenses

Income and expenses	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Donations	€ 46,874	€ 4,167	€ 6,000	€ 6,676	€ 5,288
Internship fees	€ 2,000	€ 4,776	€ 3,750	€ 2,250	€ 3,375
Other income	€ 184	€ 278	€ 310	€ 150	€ 1,875
Total income	€ 49,058	€ 9,221	€ 10,060	€ 9,076	€ 10,538
Maintenance and repairs	€ 4,416	€ 2,758	€ 3,089	€ 169	€ 3,304
Fuel and oil	€ 1,683	€ 1,152	€ 1,718	€ 1,773	€ 1,596
Taxes and insurance boats	€ 66	€ 227	€ 182	€ 102	€ 190
Taxes and insurance car	€ 197	€ 199	€ 143	€ 102	€ 179
Equipment < € 1.000	€ 165	€ 469	€ 1,042	€ 561	-
Depreciation equipment > € 1.000	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	-
Electricity	€ 252	€ 268	€ 337	€ 223	€ 200
Telecom and internet	€ 698	€ 669	€ 563	€ 676	€ 663
Office expenses	€ 173	€ 42	€ 4	€ 112	€ 49
Contribution Globe Guards	€ 250	€ 250	€ 250	€ 250	€ 250
Travel expenses	€ 2,237	€ 1,636	€ 1,666	€ 1,180	€ 969
Publication costs	€ 229	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
Other expenses	€ 171	€ -	€ 413	€ -	€ 301
Allocation to special-purpose reserve	€ 30,000	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
Bank charges	€ 124	€ 105	€ 60	€ 103	€ 192
Total expenses	€ 40,660	€ 7,773	€ 9,466	€ 5,251	€ 7,893
Net result	€ 8,398	€ 1,448	€ 594	€ 3,825	€ 2,645

Notes

General: as a result of rounding, some totals may not be equal to the sum of the underlying amounts.

1. Nova Atlantis holds a bank account with bunq BV. Our policy is to maintain a balance at the bank account that is at least sufficient to make the expenses foreseen for the next year.
2. Equipment concerns investments in excess of € 1,000. During 2021 and 2020 no equipment was purchased by Nova Atlantis that met this criterium.

3. This primarily concerns the debt to K. Hartman, resulting from expenses on account of Nova Atlantis paid by her in private (most notably electricity, and telecom & internet expenses). Up to 2020 the available funding was insufficient to repay this debt, taking into account the minimum desired bank balance described under note 1. In 2021 the item also included a debt to P. van der Harst, as a result of expenses (mostly travel) paid by him in private. In 2022 these debts will be repaid, insofar as such repayment will not lead to a bank balance below the minimum threshold of next years' expenses.

4. The breakdown of equity is as follows:

Amounts in €	31/12/2021	31/12/2020
Paid-in capital	1,000	1,000
Special-purpose reserve	30,000	0
Retained earnings	6,738	5,290
Net income	8,398	1,448
Total equity	46,136	7,738

The donation earmarked for the purchase of a new research vessel has been allocated to a special-purpose reserve.

5. The breakdown of donations is as follows:

Amounts in €	2021	2020
Via Globe Guards	9,429	918
Incidental donations	37,445	3,250
Total income	46,874	4,167

As stated above, the donations via Globe Guards strongly increased as a result of an extra digital auction early in the year, to catch up for the cancellation of the regular auction in October 2020. Incidental donations were at an unprecedented level, mostly due to a big donation earmarked for a new research vessel.

6. Internship fees are paid by interns to help cover the costs of fieldwork. In 2021, the internship fees were paid by three interns, covering four months (2020: four interns and 9.5 months).

7. Other income consisted of distribution fees earned with the documentary film 'Scars'. (2020: same).
8. The breakdown of Maintenance and repairs is as follows:

Amounts in €	2021	2020
Pick-up truck	550	785
RV Easy	335	613
RV Moleiro	3,531	2,145
Total income	4,416	3,542

Nova Atlantis uses a 26-year old pick-up truck (Toyota Hilux) that requires regular maintenance and repairs. There are two research vessels: since 2015, the RV 'Easy' (a 5.10 m RIB) has been in operation. The older 6.70 m fiberglass vessel 'Moleiro' has not been in operation since 2014. It is our intention to bring the Moleiro back into operation again in 2022. The expenses made for the Moleiro in 2021 concerned the revision of the engine and the painting of the hull.

9. Fuel and oil concerns gasoline and oil for the RV 'Easy' and diesel for the pick-up truck. The increase in 2021 compared to 2020 is related to the higher fieldwork effort in 2021, given that the 2020 fieldwork season was shortened due to Covid-19 restrictions.
10. Equipment < € 1,000 concerns purchases of items with purchase prices of less than € 1,000. In 2021 this concerned an external hard disk (2020: a multi-track recorder and hydrophone for passive acoustic monitoring).
11. Electricity concerns the electricity bills of the research station.
12. Telecom and internet concern the costs of internet access at the research station.
13. Travel expenses concerns expenses incurred by K. Hartman and P. van der Harst for one return trip per person from Amsterdam to Pico.
14. Other expenses concerned the cost of a Covid-test that was reimbursed to a volunteer, flowers for the person who had maintained our old website for free up to 2021, and harbour fees in Lajes do



Pico where we left our research vessel when the swell was too high for us to use the harbour in Santa Cruz das Ribeiras.

15. The allocation to the special-purpose reserve concerns a donation earmarked for the purchase of a new research vessel.

Off-balance sheet obligations

There were no off-balance sheet obligations at year end 2021 and 2020.

Proportion of donations spent directly on the objectives

All of the expenses incurred are in support of the objectives (see page 3). Expenses that could be viewed as 'indirect' – i.e. not directly related to research – are the contribution to Globe Guards and bank charges. Together, these represented 0.8% of donations (2020: 8.5%), and also 0.8% of donations + internship fees (2020: 4.0%).