

**Developing a network of tourism operations
involved in conservation monitoring and wildlife
research**

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Wildlife Tourism Australia
Workshop 2013

Research and conservation monitoring wildlife tourism network

There is a vision of a network of

- Australian wildlife tourism operators, ecolodges, ecotourists, and others
- all contributing to effective scientific study, conservation, and management

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Aim of this presentation

- Describe the opportunity of such a network
- Sew the seeds of the network with the workshop attendees
- Describe WTA's current progress towards this network
- Ask for feedback from attendees about ideas, opportunities, limitations, etc.

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Why?

Tourism operators frequently venture into regions of natural habitat and see wildlife (marine, terrestrial or freshwater) involved in all kinds of behaviour and often in a variety of locations.

There is therefore much scope for them to be involved in conservation-related research via tourism. This includes;

- simple records of presence/absence which can be added to a general database of distribution and show patterns of
 - change from season to season, year to year or ultimately decade to decade, through to
- more complex records of animal behaviour and ecological interactions.

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Present situation and opportunity

A number of tour operators are already involved in various levels of research, but often only vaguely aware of each others' existence, if at all.

Therefore, this workshop is seeking ways to develop a cooperative network of operators interested in;

- adding to our discovery of wildlife behaviour and ecology or
- information more deliberately directed towards what is needed for conservation management (e.g. migrations, population changes or feeding behaviour of rare and threatened species)
- The usefulness of wildlife tourism operators to the scientific research community
- Added attractiveness to and satisfaction for tourists

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Last year, it was decided that a network of operators involved in research could benefit from connecting with one another

- To discuss ideas, collaborate, complement one another's work, or avoid duplication.

Subsequently, WTA has started a new website with the assistance of our new webmaster Robyn Stark,

<http://www.wildliferesearchnetwork.org/>

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<http://www.wildliferesearchnetwork.org/>

This website includes details of wildlife research throughout Australia which involves;

- Tourism, either by operators with scientific background conducting research themselves, or operators, eco-lodges and wildlife parks respectively
 - Offering free or discounted transport, accommodation or access to academic researchers.
 - Involves tourists as volunteers in the science or as close observers to the science
- Links to books, identification keys and useful equipment, as well as background information on 'citizen science,' 'voluntourism' and other related topics, and will soon introduce interactive forums.



WILDLIFE RESEARCH NETWORK

Wildlife Tourism Australia

- Home
- About the Network
- Research Projects**
- Research Toolbox
- Contact

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Examples of research which involves input by tour operators, tourists and others associated with tourism, which assist in accumulating knowledge of wildlife ecology or natural history or in monitoring for conservation management.

Conservation Management & Monitoring

Monitoring and general surveys with a view to developing or refining plans for conservation management

Natural History Observations

Observations of wildlife behaviour or other notes of interest that are not destined for scientific publication or standardised monitoring

Other

Wildlife Ecology, Behaviour & Other Scientific Research

Scientific research on wildlife ecology, behaviour, reproduction biology etc.

Wildlife Tourism Research

Research involving various aspects of wildlife tourism

Bird Baths in Suburban Australia

Organisation: Griffith University

Cassowaries - Missions Beach - n Qld

Organisation: Mission Beach Cassowaries

Dolphin Research - Mandurah

Organisation: Murdoch University and Mandurah Cruises

Fluker Post Community Based Environmental Monitoring

Organisation: Victoria University

Koala Monitoring in the You Yangs - VIC

Organisation: Echidna Walkabout Tours

Mahogany Glider Habitat

Organisation: Conservation Volunteers

Bird Monitoring - Australia

Organisation: Birdlife Australia

Conservation and Ecology of Forty-spotted Pardalotes

Organisation: Australian National University

East Coast Odyssey

Organisation: Wildiaries

Gluepot Reserve - Wildlife Monitoring in SA

Organisation: Gluepot Reserve, BirdLife Australia

Lyrebird Monitoring at Kinglake National Park - VIC

Organisation: Conservation Volunteers Australia

Malleefowl and Kangaroo Monitoring - VIC

Organisation: Conservation Volunteers

Research Network Search Add Entry

Project Name ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 0-9

DOLPHIN RESEARCH - MANDURAH

Organisation: Murdoch University and Mandurah Cruises
Contact Person: James Raeside
Email: 30415853@student.murdoch.edu.au
Address: Murdoch University, South Street, Murdoch, 6150
State: WA
Country: Australia

Major Questions and Info: Research for James' thesis, is on the behavioural ecology of Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins in the Peel-Harvey Estuary.

This project is to create an identification catalogue naming the resident dolphins and to complete a thesis on Mandurah's dolphin population.

The presence of skin lesions has been used to assess the health of a dolphin population and in this project the general health of the dolphin population in the Peel Harvey estuary will be investigated by documenting the occurrence of skin lesions.

Species and Habitats: Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin
Region: Peel-Harvey Estuary, Mandurah, Western Australia

Located in: [Conservation Management & Monitoring](#)



Research and conservation monitoring wildlife tourism network

Workshop session on developing this network

3.30 to 4.15 today

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- Can tour operators and tourists provide real value to scientific research and conservation monitoring?
- What are best case examples of this?
- What can tour operators, wildlife parks and eco-accommodation usefully offer to wildlife researchers?
- Is there be a danger of exploitation by researchers (including post-graduate students) and how do we safeguard against this?
- What kinds of guidelines should we develop for operators to ensure the science is good enough to gain the support of academics?

Research and conservation monitoring wildlife tourism network

- What are some of the tasks that could be usefully done by people with no scientific background or knowledge of local wildlife?
- Are there some higher-level tasks that more experienced volunteers could assist with?
- What kinds of safeguards should we have in place to check for accuracy of data collected?
- What kind of acknowledgment should be given to volunteer assistants?
- What information systems are needed to capture, store, and share this information?

Using GIS to help with wildlife tourism and biodiversity conservation

This session is a discussion about the usefulness of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for wildlife tourism managers.

A GIS is a system designed to capture, store, manipulate, analyse, manage, and present all types of geographical data for informing decision making

Understand the GIS process, and know what kinds of information is best contributed and utilised, and the limits to its effectiveness.

Priorities for wildlife tourism related GIS will be identified, and effective options for addressing those priorities will be developed.

Questions to be addressed include;

- What are the main conflicts between tourism and biodiversity conservation?
- What do we need to find out in order to make informed decisions as to where to allow various kinds of activities and structures?
- How can GIS assist this information-gathering?
- How much 'ground-truthing' is needed for different purposes?
- How can GIS most effectively be used for deciding which particular areas should be preserved as national parks or other conservation areas and which are more suited to active forms of recreation or accommodation?