



Whale Watchers 2010 Volunteer Position Description

Project Title

Watching migrating whales: ensuring the sustainability of a growing whale-watch industry

Summary

Assist with fieldwork for a project assessing the current whale watching guidelines in Sydney, Australia.

Background

Whale watching has been promoted as a panacea in lieu of whale killing, yet whale watching may have its own negative impacts on recovering populations. The International Whaling Commission has identified this as of immediate concern. This project will assess tour boat interactions with whales during the migration period for migrating whales off Sydney. This will provide an empirical basis for revised protection measures for whales. In so doing, we will enhance the viability of the whale-watching industry off Sydney and elsewhere in Australia and maintain Australia's prominent position at the forefront of the protection of whales.

Research Assistants may be asked to assist with the following project components:

- Undertake the first empirically assessment of the utility and scientific basis for the *Australian National Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching* and develop future management recommendations
- Develop and implement a system that allows the collection and analysis of visual identification images of humpback whales in a consistent manner.
- Participate in marine education programs, particularly providing information on migrating humpback whales at shore based whale watching locations.

This project has received funding from the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage grants and is supported by the NSW whale watching industry, particularly Bass & Flinders Cruises and by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust.

Project Description

Shore Based Research Assistants will be asked to assist with one or more the following project tasks.

Whale Spotting

In order for the boat based whale research to be successful, it is necessary to identify humpback whale pods that may be able to be tracked. Whale Spotters will be required to be onshore spotting whale pods as they approach the entrance to Sydney Harbour.

Annual Whale Census

As part of this process, all whales passing North Head will recorded. This will build on work previously done by the Cape Solander Whale Migration Study to provide long term data on the migration of whales past the NSW coast.

Location of Position

Whale spotter and whale census volunteers will be based at North Head in Sydney Harbour National Park.

Skills Required

Training to undertake each of the tasks specified above will be provided by the Volunteer Supervisor however Whale Watchers Volunteers are expected to a strong background in marine or environmental science. You must be prepared to undertake fieldwork in all weather conditions.

Volunteer Hours

Volunteers are required to commit a minimum of one day per week to the project between Monday 21 June and Sunday 25 July and for the month of October. Outdoor work takes place between 9:00am and 3:30pm at North Head.

Applications

Applications for the Shore Based Research Assistant should be sent to Megan Kessler at Macquarie University. Applications forms are available at www.gse.mq.edu.au.

Send your application to:

Megan Kessler

Volunteer Supervisor / PhD Candidate

Marine Mammal Research Group

Macquarie University NSW 2109

Ph: 0418 420 608

Email: mkessler@gse.mq.edu.au (include the position title in the subject line)