



DOLPHIN AND WHALE RESEARCH CENTRE CLOSE UP

The DWRC is an internationally recognised marine mammal research institute located in the spectacular Plettenberg Bay; a breeding ground for dolphins and whales.

CONSERVATION IN ACTION

How does this project make a difference?

By volunteering alongside two marine conservation organisations you will directly support two primary missions: to gather information on all marine mammals inhabiting the Western Indian Ocean, and to create, in partnership with the community, a conservation model in Plettenberg Bay to sustain marine and coastal resources through improved management, research and education.

This is also a great opportunity for students wanting to contribute to marine mammal research as the centre works alongside the goals and aims of the World Conservation Union and Species Survival Commission. Each study adheres to a specific criteria and dedicated use of results and through the integration of research results, the DWRC has, and is, generating long-term status assessments of Africa's marine mammal (both coastal and pelagic) assets used to aid and encourage the authorities of African states to conserve and manage their marine mammal and coastal resources.

Through a network of scientists and post-graduate students, the more than 30 research programmes undertaken by the centre have contributed to over 200 publications to scientific research.

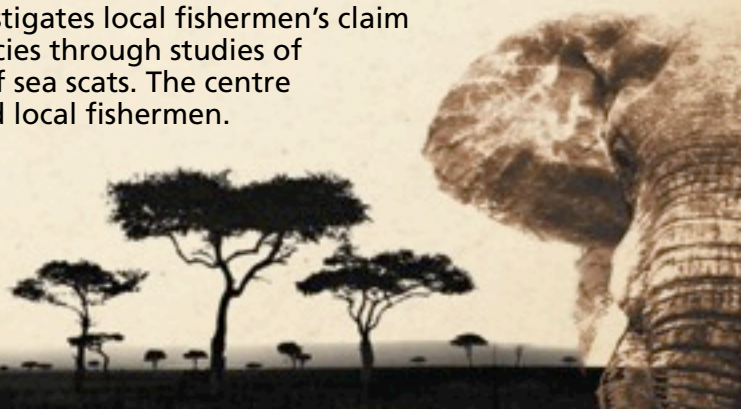
How do I, the volunteer, make a difference?

As a marine conservation volunteer, your funds will support the research programmes and raise community awareness. You will assist in boat and land based survey projects where the data collected by you and your team is used to help ensure the long term survival of marine mammals inhabiting the Western Indian Ocean.

CORE ACTIVITIES

Marine Research - Volunteers team up with tourist operators to collect data for marine mammal studies such as:

- Resident Bottlenose and humpback dolphin research. Mapping individuals using photo identification research techniques to assess population size, movement patterns, individual and group associations, home range and habitat preference.
- Seasonal Southern Right and Humpback whale studies during their annual visit from May to January.
- Resident Byrde whale population size and dynamics including genetic relatedness.
- Cape Fur Seals research project scientifically investigates local fishermen's claim of seal-induced reduction of their target fish species through studies of seal feeding behaviour and diet by lab analysis of sea scats. The centre works closely with Cape Nature Conservation and local fishermen.





Conservation Activities

- Land based surveys involve hikes on the Robberg peninsula and rock pool studies.
- River excursions for water analysis
- Lectures on evolution, cetacean physiology and anatomy, biodiversity, moon phases, tides, wind and the ocean.
- Planting of indigenous trees and removal of alien species to rehabilitate land and minimise our carbon footprint
- Maintenance of small aquariums at the centre

Through **community initiatives** the centre aims to pass their knowledge of conservation on via:

- Community projects to educate local children about marine wildlife and assist with beach clean ups. Community work includes education programmes and craft sessions with preschool children teaching the basics of conservation.

SKILLS GAINED

Marine mammal identification and behaviour, sample/data analysis, photo identification research techniques, coastal survey techniques, aquarium husbandry, teaching

WILDLIFE EXPERIENCE

Plettenberg Bay is fast becoming the whale and dolphin capital of the Garden Route. Commonly seen cetaceans include the common dolphin, humpback dolphin, bottlenose dolphin, byrde's whale, southern right whale and humpback whale as well as eastern cape fur seals.

LOCATION

Plettenberg Bay is the jewel of The Garden Route, located on the south coast of South Africa.



FACILITIES

Accommodation: Volunteers stay in the Orca Foundation house situated in Plettenberg Bay and minutes from the beach. The accommodation has shared bedroom and bathroom facilities and is within close proximity to a nearby shopping centre which has various shops, cinemas, restaurants and bars.

Meal Arrangements: All meals are provided for you at the house. Packed lunch may be required for some activities but you will be informed of that ahead of time. Evening meals are prepared most nights but volunteers are also welcome to eat out or have a barbeque (braai) on the roof terrace.





Working hours: Working times are flexible and depend on current activities and volunteer interest, but are usually from 08:00hrs to 17:00hrs. No work takes place on SA public holidays.

Extras: There are host of activities to keep you entertained. You can choose from bungy jumping, skydiving, scuba diving, a cheetah sanctuary, monkeyland, and the elephant sanctuary to name a few. DWRC has arranged for the volunteers to get free entry to most the places they visit. Rental cars are also available for hire for weekend activities.

Contact with home: SA time is GMT +2 hours. Internet access is available at the centre in addition to the many internet cafes in the town.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Airport: We meet all our volunteers personally at Johannesburg airport directly off the plane.

Road Safety: All drivers have Public Driving Permits and only new, air conditioned vehicles are used for transfers.

First Aid & Emergency: First aid kit with team, and member of the team is first aid trained.

Medical: Doctors and hospital in Plettenberg Bay.

IS THIS PROJECT RIGHT FOR ME?

You do not need previous experience or specific skills to join this project but you have to have a serious interest in marine wildlife. The seas off the coast can be very rough, so you might struggle if you have a tendency to become sea-sick. Facilities at the volunteer accommodation are simple but comfortable and you are close to Plettenberg Bay which has a good range of shops and internet cafes, so if it is important for you to have regular access to internet or a few creature comforts this is a good project for you.

BOOKING INFORMATION

What's Included? Return international flights from London Heathrow (optional), transfers (domestic flight from Johannesburg to George), food and accommodation, 24 hour support from our ground manager, ACE T-Shirt, financial contributions to the project

What's not included? Travel insurance, spending money

When can I join? This projects runs all year round except over Christmas, but the main whale season is from April - November, so this is the best time to join if you are hoping to participate in seasonal whale research.

How can I join? You can apply online at www.conservationafrica.net/apply or simply fill out an application form in one of our brochures and post it back to us.

