



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?

The centre, officially launched in 1990, evolved from the need to expand our knowledge of the Western Indian Ocean, and in particular southern African, coastal and pelagic marine mammals, in light of escalating coastal development and degradation.

The centre works alongside the goals and aims of the World Conservation Union and Species Survival Commission with each study adhering to a specific criteria and dedicated use of results. 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. 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.

By teaching disadvantaged children to read English and educating locals about marine wildlife, your contribution to society will help raise awareness and inspire the future generation to conserve and protect their marine environment. This is particularly valuable in view of continuing coastal zone degradation and world ocean climate changes.

CORE ACTIVITIES

Join Vic and his team, learn field and lab based analysis techniques, and assist in boat and land based survey projects including:

- Bottlenose and humpback dolphin dorsal fin identification using photo-identification techniques. Mapping individuals to assess population size, movement patterns, individual and group associations, home range and habitat preference.
- Humpback whale studies during their annual migration from May to November. Southern hemisphere humpback whales were hunted extensively until the mid-20th century and their numbers were drastically reduced. Individuals are photographically identified, their songs are recorded, and biopsies are taken for DNA analysis to research familial relationships, their migratory paths and group dynamics.
- Byrde whale population size and dynamics including genetic relatedness are Studied.





- Cape Fur Seals on the Robberg peninsula were hunted for their fur and the population was eradicated by 1908. Reappearance occurred in the 1990's with numbers now exceeding 3000 in the breeding season. This 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.
- Land based surveys involve hikes on the Robberg peninsula, snorkelling and rock pool studies.
- Lectures on evolution, cetacean physiology and anatomy, biodiversity, moon phases, tides, wind and the ocean.
- Through community initiatives the centre aims to observe, conserve and educate to pass their knowledge on. As a volunteer you can help children at a previously disadvantaged primary school learn how to read English and teach science to a local High School.

SKILLS GAINED

Marine mammal identification and behaviour, lab analysis techniques, fin profile identification

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 the resident eastern cape fur seal.

LOCATION

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



FACILITIES

Accommodation: Volunteers stay in accommodation next to Dr Vic Cockroft's house in Harkeville, 9 km outside of Plettenberg Bay. There are two rooms, which accommodate 2-3 volunteers each, both have an en suite bathroom. There are kitchen facilities and a work area.

Meal Arrangements: Dinner is cooked for volunteers Monday-Saturday and a menu is presented on arrival to chose from. Volunteers self-cater for breakfast and lunch, as well as Sunday meals.





Working hours: Volunteers work Monday to Friday (08:30-16:30 Mon - Thurs and 12.30 finish on Friday). Volunteers have every weekend off unless needed for research trips and/or strandings. With prior arrangement with the co-ordinator, extra time off can be arranged. No work takes place on SA public holidays.

Extras: Volunteers may visit local tourist attractions, of which there are quite a few in the area. There is a monkey zoo, a cheetah centre, the elephant centre and lots of curios and crafts. DWRC has arranged for the volunteers to get free entry to all the places they visit.

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), dinners 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, breakfast & lunch

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 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.

