



Tagging and tracking nesting female turtles

The second and third rounds of our turtle tagging and tracking program kicked off in November and January respectively. The focus of these field trips was to tag nesting females with flipper tags and satellite tracking beacons.

With the help of Cape Conservation Group volunteers and Exmouth locals, flipper tags were placed on eight turtles and satellite tags on another three turtles. Biological samples were collected from all tagged turtles for later analysis in the CSIRO laboratory.

CSIRO Scientist Mat Vanderklift said, "Due to the current El Nino climate cycle, finding turtles has been hard work this year. Without the help of the volunteers there is just no way we could have collected this amount of data. It's clear the support of the Exmouth community is going to be integral to the success of Ningaloo Outlook."

The data generated from these tags and samples will be invaluable as the research program progresses, revealing more and more information about the turtles' lives, diets and habitats.

Coming Soon

The first Ningaloo Outlook symposium will be held on 26 February 2016. The event will be held in Perth at the CSIRO auditorium, and community members are welcome to attend. The presentations will also be shared with the Exmouth community during the 2016 field research trips between May and July. These events will provide an excellent opportunity for Exmouth community members to meet the project team, our PhD Scholars and to hear about the discoveries made so far.

Laboratory Work

During the first few months of field work, CSIRO collected mountains of data through biological samples and tracking information. Data was collected from nearly 60 animals which have traversed over 4,000 kilometres of reef and sea, 15 hours of high definition underwater footage, and 11,980 hectares of reef surveys.

The team has been undertaking DNA and stable isotope analysis of the samples collected from sharks, turtles, and whale sharks. By using these techniques, scientists can determine how closely related the populations of these animals are, and identify their habitats and diet. This information provides extremely valuable input to the conservation management plans for threatened species, such as whale sharks.

The underwater footage of the deep reefs has provided scientists with insights about biodiversity and habitat hotspots to enable them to target these areas for further study in the next phase of the research program.

Key findings will be released during the first Ningaloo Outlook symposium in February.



Ningaloo Outlook, CSIRO and BHP Billiton's strategic marine research project, has just kicked off its second year.

The project includes:

- deep reef research;
- shallow reef research; and
- tagging and tracking turtles, reef sharks and whale sharks.

Three PhD scholarship students will contribute to the research program.

Updates on Ningaloo Outlook can be found at:

<https://twitter.com/bhpbilliton>

<http://www.bhpbilliton.com/home/society>

<https://twitter.com/CSIROnews>

<https://research.csiro.au/ningaloo/>



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BHP Billiton Marine Research PhD Scholarships Awarded

Ningaloo Outlook reached a major milestone in November with the selection of the BHP Billiton Marine Research PhD Scholarship recipients: Anna Cresswell, Jessica Stubbs, and Joe Turner.

Anna, Jessica and Joe will undertake their PhDs under the guidance of the University of Western Australia and CSIRO. Each PhD will focus on a different element of the reef's ecosystem, providing a significant boost to the scientific community's knowledge about Ningaloo.



Anna Cresswell

Anna brings an enduring love of the ocean and substantial field experience to the project having undertaken marine research in Samoa, Tonga, and numerous sites off Tasmania.

She joins the Ningaloo Outlook team after graduating from the University of Tasmania with a Bachelor of Science with majors in Applied Mathematics and Zoology and Honours in Marine Science.

Anna is no stranger to academic success with impeccable results and a performance in her undergraduate degree which saw her awarded three separate scholarships as well as being listed on the University of Tasmania Dean's Roll of Excellence four times.

Anna will undertake her PhD on Ningaloo's shallow reef habitats.

"I am very excited to do my PhD as part of the Ningaloo Outlook project. I think the support of the unique collaboration between BHP Billiton and CSIRO will be invaluable."



Joe Turner

Joe has come to the Ningaloo Outlook team from Cambridgeshire in the United Kingdom. Joe holds a Master of Science in Tropical Coastal Management and a Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Marine Zoology from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in the United Kingdom.

To complement Joe's scientific research success he has worked with two of the principal bodies for advising the Government of the United Kingdom on conservation and the natural environment, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and Natural England.

Joe is an accomplished scuba diver with extensive tropical water marine research experience, including projects in Indonesia, the Seychelles, the Philippines, and Western Australia's Montebello Islands.

"This opportunity is fantastic. The work done by CSIRO is world renowned, so I'm very much looking forward to working with them, and BHP Billiton's commitment to the environment is something more companies should aspire to. I'm really excited to get started!"



Jessica Stubbs

Jessica is Western Australia's home-grown hero for Ningaloo Outlook, joining the team from the University of Western Australia where she was awarded First Class Honours in a Bachelor of Science majoring in Marine Science and Zoology.

Jessica has a lifelong interest in marine turtles and reef ecosystems, having studied both in her undergraduate degree and while working as a scientist and research assistant.

Her passion for marine turtles is what inspired Jessica to undertake her dual major of Marine Science and Zoology, making her the ideal candidate to be taking on the marine turtle research theme.

Her expertise and enthusiasm will be an invaluable addition to the Ningaloo Outlook project.

"I am grateful for BHP Billiton's support of this project, which will give me the opportunity to work with CSIRO and make a real scientific contribution in an area of research which I am passionate about."

We congratulate Anna, Joe and Jessica on their selection and look forward to their impending discoveries and the opportunity to introduce them to the Exmouth community over the coming months.