



Humpbacks & High-Rises “Whale Tails” 2012

Season Summary

Let's start with some numbers showing HHR efforts and success in 2012. This year HHR hosted a staggering 35 volunteers over 5 month collecting data on 245 whales over 100 survey days supported by two whale watch operators. We have therefore slightly increased our survey efforts in 2013. We have collected between 40 and 50 individual fluke pictures and an additional 500 photographs of whales (behavior, scaring, peduncle). We have collected more than 40 movement tracks and collected water density profiles on 5 occasions.

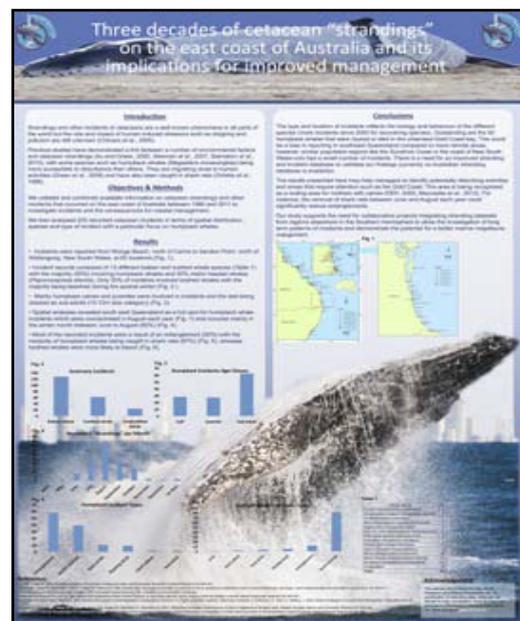
We also had a number of dedicated contributors: the two interns from Canada and France as well as two students working on HHR targeted projects over a period of 3 month each.

Media

HHR significantly increased its media coverage. We have been featured in a number of articles including the Gold Coast Sun, Gold Coast Bulletin, GRIND Magazine, Epoch Times and The Student Advisor. We have also received news coverage with [NDTV News](#).

We generated over 150 posts on marine mammal related topics on our [Facebook blog](#) and we are getting close to 400 Likes aiming to hit 500 with the beginning of the whale season in 2013.

A poster about marine mammal strandings in Queensland was presented at the Estuarine Coastal and Shelf Science Association (ECSA 50) in Venice in June.



We also started an online petition to [stop whale entanglement](#) and boat collision with currently 600 signatures aiming to receive 5 000 signatures over the next few month.

Events

Our major annual Ocean awareness event at Kurrawa Surfclub was a great success. With about 110 people attending we had more participants than last year and we have received great support from local businesses to run the event. It was a fun night that was all about ocean life. Talks were given by Sarah Shark, Sea Sheppard and HHR.



The whale season 2012 was officially closed with a presentation by Dr Liz Hawkins from Southern Cross University and [Dolphin Research Australia](#) on 15th November. Liz provided great insides into Gold Coast dolphins and their ecology in the region. We had 30 people attending the seminar at Southport Community Hall. The seminar was kindly supported by Gold Coast City Council and SEQ Catchment.



The year ended with a celebration in December on South Straddie to bring together HHR volunteers.



Our annual general meeting was held on 20th December with members agreeing to increase our efforts to protect urban marine mammals in the coming year.

Whale Cam (Cittercam)

The permit to continue...Beside difficulties and the lack of boats as well as functional camera units for this year we will continue this research component in the coming season. Deployment trails will start earlier than in previous years and commitments by partners have already been received, giving hope that finally a successful Cittercam deployment can be reported.

White Whale News

It was a lucky season for the Gold Coast seeing Migaloo swimming by on the 27th September. He was sighted earlier during his northern migration in June near Coffs Harbour. Mini Migaloo as the new white whale that was sighted in the Whitsundays last year was called has not been seen or positively identified this year. However, there is a northern version of Migaloo that was seen in Norway in August.

Whale strandings and incidents

This year's strandings and incidents of humpback whales were lower than last year with about 15 humpback whales being reported in the news that stranded on the east coast of Australia. Unfortunately, more incidents than last year were witnessed that included varies entanglements in shark nets, fishing gear and boat collision.

The shark net entanglement that had most media attention happened on the



22nd August near North Stradbroke Island where a sailor had to free two humpback whales out of the shark nets set near beaches.

A sperm whale was washed up dead on North Straddie in November and inspected by a HHR team.



HHR action

A report on the development of the national fluke data base was released at beginning of this year. This document will hopefully provide the foundation of consolidated fluke data base.

HHR President Olaf Meynecke also provided a review of the Queensland five year marine mammal stranding report.

HHR members underlined the importance of marine mammal protection at a rally held on the 3rd November and flyers were distributed on public beaches during the whale season to raise ocean awareness. An Android app called [Whale Trails](#) is available for download to help tracking whales in coastal waters.

HHR outlook 2013

We are setting our targets high for 2013. We aim to increase the quality of the survey data and hope to welcome a

third whale watch operator joining our good cause.

A symposium on urbanization and marine mammals will be held at the [AMSA 50](#) conference in July 2013 on the Gold Coast. Furthermore, we are aiming to collect blood samples from deceased whales and we will be working on resting spots and health status of humpback whales as well as undertake research on dolphins.

HHR acknowledgement

HHR council likes to thank everyone for their support and interest in the protection and research of urban marine mammals. In particular we like to thank the following organisations for direct contribution to research:

Whale Watching Gold Coast, Whales in Paradise, Griffith AERC and Griffith Centre for Coastal Management and SEQ Catchment. Special thanks also go to our dedicated volunteers and interns. We will grow stronger and expand our efforts to protect urban marine mammals in the Gold Coast bay in 2013. Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and a great start into the New Year!

