



# Humpbacks & High-Rises “Whale Tails” 2013

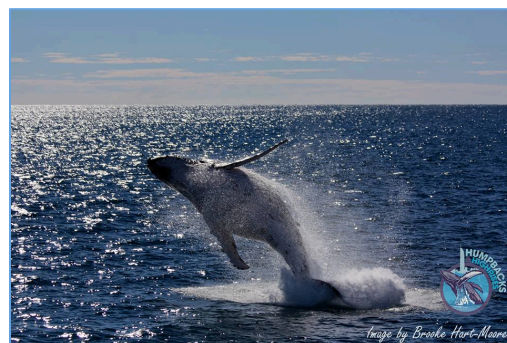
## *Whale Season Summary*

A successful year for HHR has passed. Here is a summary of our efforts and success in 2013. This year HHR had over 50 volunteers who collected information on whales and dolphins in the Gold Coast bay. About 275 whales were recorded for the database during 100 survey days. This was supported by three whale watch operators. We have therefore increased our survey efforts in 2013. We have collected 100 individual fluke pictures and an additional 2000 photographs of whales (behavior, scaring, peduncle) and were given an additional 20 000 images for screening. We have collected more than 50 movement tracks and also collected water property information.

We also had a number of dedicated contributors such as the Master Student Laura Torre and PhD student Josh Reinke.

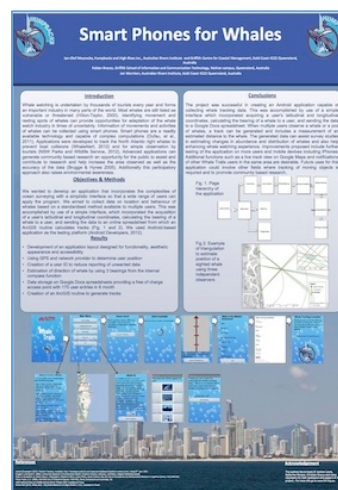
## *Media*

Media reported on our activities throughout the whale season. HHR President Dr Olaf Meynecke gave a number of interviews and prepared a radio program for ABC Gold Coast. For the first time a [radio program](#) on Gold Coast humpback whales was aired and received positive response from all people involved. Articles in the Gold Coast Sun, Gold Coast Bulletin and Courier Mail covered our research and petition to stop whale entanglements. We have also received multiple news coverage on Channel 9 News.



We generated over 200 posts on marine mammal related topics on our [Facebook blog](#). Our community on Facebook grows steady and we are finally close to 1000 Likes. Help us spread the good spirit and invite others to Like us.

A poster about our Android app to track whales was presented at the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Australian Marine Science Association on the Gold Coast in July. Dr Olaf Meynecke also organised a marine mammal symposium together with Dr Liz Hawkins from [Dolphin Research Australia](#). The symposium was well attended and provided a platform to discuss current research and issues.





Our online petition to [stop whale entanglement](#) was delivered to Gold Coast City Council and the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection. About 2700 people signed our petition. The response from the government showed little interest to change the current management practice. We therefore have to continue collecting more evidence that current practice is risking the lives of whales, dolphins and people.



#### *Events*

Our annual Ocean awareness event at Kurrawa Surfclub was held on 8<sup>th</sup> August and attracted over 90 supporters. Some 20 local businesses helped us to run the event. It was as always a great night to raise awareness about our ocean. Talks were given by Sarah Shark and HHR.



Our annual general meeting was held on 1<sup>st</sup> December at Burleigh Heads beach and was followed by a BBQ.

Josh Reinke was elected as secretary, Zack Parkes as treasurer and Dr Olaf Meynecke as president. We like to thank Nicolas Rakotopare for his support as treasurer since 2011 and Catherine McInnes as secretary for 2013.

#### *Whale Cam (Cittercam)*

There has been no progress regarding Cittercam in 2013. The permits remain in place but are likely to be extended to different areas.

No units were available for us due to large numbers being lost in other projects. A new unit that is smaller and equipped with more technology is currently being tested by NatGeo. This gives us hope for 2014-

#### *White Whale News*

Migaloo was difficult to spot from the Gold Coast in 2013. However, reports came in from Woolongong and Point Lookout in June and July. He was sighted later in Cairns in August. The southern migration was a little more mysterious. No confirmed sightings during his southern migration. There has been no confirmation of Mini Migaloo that was seen in the Whitsundays two years ago.

#### *Whale strandings and incidents*

There were many strandings during 2013. The most infamous being the stranding of three orcas near Fraser Island in the first week of July. Strandings of humpback whales were also reported from Newcastle, Fraser Island and Moreton Island.

A number of shark net entanglement occurred. On the Gold Coast alone 5



humpback whales had to be freed from the nets. In NSW a juvenile humpback whale drowned in shark nets in October.

#### *HHR action*

The delivery of our petition to stop whale entanglement and secure resting spots for humpback whales was an important campaign for HHR. We will continue our efforts and rest when our demand is fulfilled.

HHR showed presence with a stand at Green Week at Cavil Ave in Surfers Paradise. We also had a stand at the Planet Ocean screening at Gold Coast Art Centre and participated in the panel session as well as presented at the Save our Spit information night and at the turtle conservation fundraiser.

Presentations were given at Southport High and St Patrick College.

An iPhone app called Whale Trails is now available for download to help tracking whales in coastal waters.

#### *HHR outlook 2014*

For 2014 we aim to maintain our research efforts and number of volunteers. We envisage continue engaging with a third whale watch operator to join our good cause.

A symposium organised by our HHR President on marine megafauna will be held at the AMSA 51st conference in July 2014 in Canberra.

Furthermore, we are aiming to test the first set of blood and serum samples from deceased whales for health indicators.

#### *HHR acknowledgement*

HHR council expresses their gratitude to everyone who support us and showed interest in the protection and research of urban marine mammals. We like to thank the following organisations for direct contribution to research:

Whale Watching Gold Coast, Whales in Paradise, Spirit of Gold Coast Whale Watching and Griffith Centre for Coastal Management. Special thanks also go to our dedicated volunteers and research students. We will continue to grow stronger and expand our efforts together with other organisations. May the ocean be with you for 2014. There are many good reasons to stand up for our environment.

