



Humpbacks & High-Rises

Whale Tails 2018/4

This is our quarterly newsletter bringing you a summary of the urban marine mammal world. Facts, Stories and Events. Join us on the largest mammal migration on earth!

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Emerging from the water! A close encounter with our majestic humpback whales is something we never forget.

[Whale Season Summary](#)

by Olaf Meynecke

Another year is ending and we are looking back to a successful 2018 whale season. This is our quarterly newsletter and season summary. We are proud to share with you some of the highlights of this season.

Our 2018 whale season covered 136 survey days between June and November on the Gold Coast, HHR volunteers covered over 300 survey hours surveying 675 individual whales. We also observed a minimum of 406 dolphins on 57 occasions, 5 Hammerhead shark, 2 unidentified sharks and 14 turtles. The surveys were done by 60 trained volunteers. We had more whales surveyed than in 2017 (+50) but we also had more survey days (+16) and more volunteers (+2).

We were excited about records of a number of southern right whales mostly mother-calf pairs. A mother-calf pair was seen resting just off Point Lookout for several hours in August – a normal behaviour for southern right whales. Other species sighted include killer whales at North Stradbroke Island, Minke whales, False Killer whales and pilot whales. Over the years we documented the return of various species at similar times with False Killer whales sighted around the first or second week of August, Killer whales and Minke whales in June and southern rights in July and August.

Migaloo appeared to have taken the New Zealand route and therefore passed the Gold Coast much later than last year passing through the Gold Coast overnight on

the 27th to 28th July.

HHR community outreach and media coverage

HHR was running or supporting 14 events in 2018. About 40 people participated in 4 beach clean ups along the Gold Coast. Many kg of plastic were removed from Burleigh Heads, Broadbeach and The Spit. In 2019 we will continue our efforts to remove marine debris and educate the public. At 6 events we had stalls and talks at the premiere of Rubber Jellyfish and the Ocean Film festival. Our volunteers were busy sewing at 4 occasions making bags and wallets for our stalls.

HHR was featured in local and national media including Channel 7, Channel 9 and ABC News. HHR research and work was covered by ABC radio, Hot Tomato and an independent radio in Melbourne. Our local print media Sun and Gold Coast Bulletin featured stories on their front page such as the season summary for 2018.

The ongoing dedication of our volunteers and their hundreds of hours of surveys make our program the largest and only marine mammal monitoring program in south-east Queensland. You can be part of the movement. Volunteer or donate. Join us for the 2019 whale season.

We encourage you to continue your support of our work and help us to care about our marine life.

Wishing you all a Happy New Year! May the whales be plenty and the dolphins joyful.

Olaf Meynecke
CEO HHR



Our volunteers are the heart of our organisation.

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[AGM and end of year celebration](#)
by Dlaf Meynecke

Our AGM and end of year celebration was held at Burleigh Waters Community Center on the 6th December. The AGM is a great time to reflect on the progress we made throughout the year and setting new goals for 2019. We had a number of new team members joining us and some leaving us. We thanked Josh Reinke for his many years of involvement with HHR and his ongoing support and all 2018 volunteers who committed their time to making a difference. The HHR finances are balanced with a slight increase in donation. A substantial donation was given by Rose Thurlow in memory of her son Aaron Thurlow. The donation will be used to develop non-invasive tagging techniques and surveys in Moreton Bay.

New board members were elected Jasmine Rassmussen (Secretary), Sarah Mcculloch (President) and Jane Mcculloch (Treasurer). Our Social Media Campaigner, Campaigner and Events Manager and CEO/Head Scientist continue in their positions. Our new team will bring strength to our core activities and I am excited to work with everyone in the 2019 whale season.

This years award for the 2019 best HHR Surveyor went to Vivian Kalas for her ongoing dedication to endless whale surveys, the 2019 best HHR Campaigner award was given to Jasmine Rasmussen for her outstanding support of events and stalls held in 2018 and the HHR Research award went to Mila Varola for the creation of a whale fluke catalogue. Congratulations to our winners.

This year I met many wonderful people. Volunteers joined us from around the world

to lend a hand. Spending time with such amazing people gives me the courage to continue. While we are faced with devastating problems on this planet we are still sharing it with many beautiful souls. United we can make a difference.



Whale surveys – a volunteer experience

By Anna Vollmer

Humpback whales are something that don't find their ways in my usual daily life. They have always been part of the reason why I aim to work in marine conservation but I never had the chance before to work with them and contribute to their protection. So when I came to the other end of the world, to the Australian Gold Coast, I finally got the chance to meet these incredible animals. For three months I was able to join the HHR volunteer team on a weekly survey together with the whale watching boats from the companies.

Every survey that I joined was very special, but I was the luckiest person when I saw the whales for the very first time! The conditions for a first whale survey were not optimal, the sea was quite rough and it was very windy. Nevertheless I went out on the boat together with two fellow volunteers who also conducted their first survey. On our way out to the sea, we all were really excited and a little nervous but ready to give our best for the survey. When we reached the open water, strange feelings in our stomachs were telling us that the sea was indeed quite rough. Ignoring the little sea sickness, it did not take long to find our first pod of two adult whales. Due to the rough conditions the whales tended to be more surface active, so we were amazed by a high number of pectoral and tail slaps. Yet the whales decided to make us even happier by showing some beautiful breaches for several times! We stayed with them for quite a while and were sad to leave them, but solid ground under our feet made us very happy again either. Although we did not see the whales from up close and we struggled with the rough conditions, it was amazing to simply see those animals for the first time and to not only watch them but also to gather valuable data which contributes to their protection. Thanks to HHR the wonderful world of the humpbacks became part of my daily life.



Join our [HHR expeditions](#) in 2019 and learn all about our marine life in the bay.

[Internship with HHR](#)

by Mila Varola

I joined HHR during the late whale season, from August until November – what an experience! I’m very happy to say I did my part in helping HHR with humpback whale research. Helped by some volunteers, I created a catalogue of all the humpback flukes photographed off Gold Coast shores from as early as 2004 until 2016. Using the fluke and the dorsal fin patterns, in fact, it’s possible to fully distinguish every single individual. Isn’t it amazing? We aim that by doing so it will be possible to provide better insights into how the Gold Coast bay is used by humpback whales and – look! – our Migaloo the albino whale has been included in it too! Even if my time in Gold Coast now is over, I will keep working on the catalogues as much as I can and we hope that with all this information we will help to develop further steps towards the conservation of these gentle giants.



Movie Night

by Teleri Ewe

HHR had a screening for the documentary Sea Sonic. We had 40 people come to the screening at Mo's clubhouse. Olaf gave a talk about the importance of the research from HHR, we had guest speaker Holly from kill the shark nets and a sound installation of ocean recording from award winning sound artist Dr Leah Barclay. All very fitting for the screening of Sea Sonic. An eye opening documentary about the impact of noise on marine mammals. It highlights the link of the use of cargo ships, sonar from war ships and oil exploration on marine mammal populations. Something I personally have never thought about. Like all great documentaries it then explains how these impacts can be lessened and how we can help. If you missed the screening I highly recommend watching it. After the screening we had the excitement of raffle prizes which were an assortment of goodies and vouchers from local businesses. Such as HomeSweetHome Gifts, Pashina, Osteria de Mare, Miss Brown Vintage, Govindas, Greenfolk, Body Peace and Rasmussen Messages. To end the event on a high note we had vegan pizzas and desserts! Be sure to join us on our next exciting screening.



Beach Clean Up

by Holly Richmond

On the 3rd of November, the Humpbacks and HighRises team and generous volunteers ran a successful beach clean at Burleigh Heads Beach, in Justin's Park. The team were very excited and motivated to help spread the word about marine

debris and to help clean up our local oceans. The event kicked off at 9:30am with over 15 volunteers picking up rubbish along the beach and in the park. After 40mins of picking up marine debris, the ~25kg of rubbish mass was sorted into categories and counted. An outstanding 1431 cigarette butts were collected. All recyclable items were recycled and the rest of the marine debris was appropriately disposed of.

The team noticed an overwhelming amount of single use plastic collected throughout the clean up, including 52 plastic straws. Plastic straws, drink bottles, bags, cups, coffee cups/lids and cutlery were the main single use items found amongst the rubbish. The rest of the marine debris included washed up broken pieces of hard and soft plastics, rubber items and disregarded or forgotten clothing and shoe items. The findings of the beach clean were not unexpected. Generally, single use plastic items are what pollutes our oceans most. Approximately, 8 million tonnes of plastic waste enters our oceans each year, that's equivalent to 1 garbage truck load every minute! This shouldn't come to a surprise to most people as plastic is everywhere! In our streets, bushes, backyards and oceans. Plastic is a substance that the earth can not digest. It is a substance that is broken up, rather than broken down in our environment. It never truly goes away.

The very last step we need to do to stop ocean pollution is...clean the beach... confused? Well we are not discouraging beach cleans however we are encouraging the initial step... plastic use. If we all aim to reduce our single plastic usage, we wouldn't have to clean our beaches as much. Try the top 5 items! Straws, bottles, bags, cutlery and coffee cups! Let's aim to replace them with reusable items and simply saying no to single use plastic. The key is to be prepared, have a reusable water bottle with you everywhere! Plastic bags should be your number one priority!

Next time you are shopping, have a handy material bag ready to be filled with clothes or groceries. (secret tip: utilise the paper mushroom bags at the supermarkets for all your loose fruit and veg!) Have a metal straw and bamboo cutlery in your handbag next time you go for lunch. Or, try remember your reusable coffee cup next time you get your daily dose of caffeine by simply leaving a clean cup or mug in your car. If your struggling to make some changes or lacking the tools to do so, feel free to check out our eco friendly reusable merchandise via our website or our next stall event! We look forward to seeing more friendly and passionate faces for our next beach clean!



Whale entanglement at Burleigh Heads

by Olaf Meynecke

On the 3rd November a humpback whale calf was caught in the Burleigh Heads shark net. This was the second whale in the 2018 whale season to have been caught in the Burleigh Heads net and the first ever recorded whale entanglement in November. In many ways this was an unusual entanglement. I believe it marks the turning point in the long history of catching whales in shark nets on the Gold Coast. I received a call from a colleague at about 620am. We rushed to Burleigh Heads and by 7am the calf was set free from the net. But the distressed whale was trapped for at least 3 hours with first sightings reported at 430am that morning from beach goers.

That morning a photographer happened to be at Burleigh Heads witnessing the entanglement. The footage shows the shocking details of what happens at our beaches. The small whale trying to desperately gasping for air while the mum blows bubbles underwater in distress. The entanglements have traumatic consequences and impact the well-being and survival of the animals. The footage was released through our channels and was seen by thousands of people who also signed the stop whale entanglement petition. We are now close to 40 000 supporters who want these cruel nets replaced. Lets get to 100 000. Go to [Stop whale entanglements](#) now.

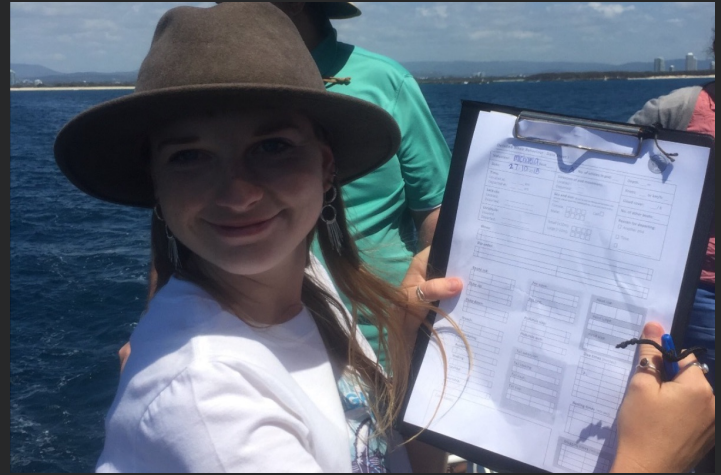


MBRS stall

by Sarah McCulloch

We attended the UQ Moreton Bay Research Station open day in November to spread the word about the humpback whales that travel past Moreton Bay during their

migration. Even though the whales had left for the year, everyone was very excited to hear about our research, and share their own stories of encounters with the whales during the season. It was a really fun day where we were able to engage with many families and get people excited about the arrival of the whales in 2019!



Upcoming Events & volunteer opportunities

You can help making a difference and be part of our growing group of whale and dolphin researchers.


- Clean up Australia Day is Sunday 3rd March 2019. We will be having a clean up event in Burleigh Heads. Make sure to join and help make a difference.
- Be part of our dedicated volunteer team and sign up. Whale season starts again end of May 2019 with the first training seminar held in May. Send us an e-mail to science@hhr.org.au to register.
- Want to be part of the core team and get the real deal? Join our dedicated team that runs HHR at our monthly general meetings. Held at the end of each month. Next meeting end of February 2019.
- Sign our petition: You can stop whale entanglements by supporting our [Stop whale entanglement letter](#) and request alternative methods to be put in place and developed. Do you know a business on the Gold Coast that would like to endorse the open letter? Please, send us an [e-mail](#).
- Join our 3-day research expeditions on the Gold Coast. Bookings and details [here](#).

HHR relies on the interest, support and good will of people who feel that protecting marine mammals and learning about them is important. We are honest, independent and stand for the well being of our natural wonders and a sustainable whale watching industry. Our ongoing work entirely depends on donation. Please, consider [donating for whale research and protection](#).


MAMMALS


You can support whale protection and research in south-east Queensland; a small donation goes a long way.

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