

MARINE ENCOUNTERS

DIVE INTO THE ADVENTURE



Hello and welcome to our 2013 newsletter. We have had a very busy and productive year and wish to thank all those who joined our expeditions, volunteered their time, assisted with research projects and

followed our progress via the web. Without your continued support and enthusiasm for our shared vision this unique form of marine conservation and tourism would not be possible.

Early in 2012 owner/operator John Rumney (JR) was diagnosed with oropharyngeal cancer. He spent almost a year in Brisbane convalescing while the rest of his family kept *Eye to Eye Marine Encounters* alive (particularly wife Linda Rumney who spent days nursing JR and nights nurturing



the business). Fortunately, those times are behind us and JR is back where he belongs – creating extraordinary wildlife experiences for guests. Coinciding with JR’s return to the sea was the resurrection of our beloved *MV Undersea Explorer* for this year’s Swim With Whale season, which made 2013 a year we will always remember....

SPRING 2013

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In the end we conserve only what we love, love only what we understand and understand only what we are taught

JR BACK AT THE HELM



Dr Russ Andrews (Alaska SeaLife Centre) and Dr Alastair Birtles (James Cook Univeristy) proudly display one of the LIMPET tags used in this study



The data obtained from these tags is helping to unravel some of the mysteries surrounding dwarf minke whales

MINKES TAGGED – A WORLD FIRST!

Four dwarf minke whales have been tagged and tracked through a unique collaboration between marine scientists from the *Minke Whale Project*, *Eye to Eye Marine Encounters*, *Alaska Sea Life Centre* and state-of-the-art research vessel *Whale Song*.

The pilot study was an attempt to solve one of the great mysteries of the oceans: Where do dwarf minkes go after wintering in the Great Barrier Reef?

“Although they occur all around the Southern Hemisphere, the GBR hosts the world’s only known predictable aggregation of these exquisitely beautiful little whales,” says Dr Alastair Birtles, who has been studying the dwarf minke whales for 18 years.

“We were joined this year by Dr Russ Andrews of the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the Alaska SeaLife Center, a world renowned telemetry expert who has previously been involved in tagging over 20 species of marine mammals,” Dr Birtles said.

Small LIMPET tags, about the size of a matchbox, are designed to be minimally-invasive and are attached to the dorsal fin with two medical-grade titanium darts 4mm in diameter. Dr Andrews said that the darts eventually fall out and their fins heal over completely afterwards.

All 4 transmitters were attached by PhD candidate (and world leading minke whale tagger) Jimmy White during encounters with whales east of

Lizard Island. The results showed that all whales headed southward. Two of the whales are continuing to transmit from SW Tasmania while the last transmissions from the two remaining whales showed them at Harvey Bay and Fraser Island. Given that the mean attachment time for these LIMPET tags is a month, the team was very pleased that all four tags stayed on for at least this length of time.

“Tracking the whales via the ARGOS website is proving one of the most exciting experiences of my research career,” Dr Birtles said. “Their tracks have transformed our understanding of the movements of these animals”.

The successful tagging was achieved at the end of the 18th consecutive minke field research season for the JCU-based Minke Whale Project and *Eye to Eye Marine Encounters*. The team is currently working together to plan and apply for new grants for 2014 to continue this ground-breaking research.



Data from Minke Whale sat tag 1 (Spot) as of 16 September

ADVENTURE FOR CHANGE

We all love adventure films and we all love conservation stories. *Adventure for Change* mixes the two together to showcase the most amazing ways people are making changes for a sustainable future.

Formed earlier this year by Dr Dean Miller, Aaron Jamieson and Rumney sisters Jenna and Nikki, *Adventure For Change (A4C)* strives to share exciting conservation stories with everyday people through free social media platforms (facebook, vimeo, youtube, twitter)

For their first expedition A4C spent 2 months in the sub zero temperatures of Eastern Greenland documenting the effects of climate change on its wildlife and indigenous



Dean and Aaron flying the Australian Geographic flag high in Greenland



The A4C team meeting with grades 6-7 at Port Douglas Primary School (where both Jenna and Nikki attended)

The second expedition was with *Eye to Eye Marine Encounters* during the 2013 minke season and featured our sustainable swim with whale industry and stunning underwater behaviours.

A4C is also passionate about engaging the local community and as such encourages schools to get involved in their projects (through classroom sessions, school projects and interacting online via facebook/email). In fact, the kids at Port Douglas Primary School were so enthusiastic about whales that they even named their own minke whale, Narla!

To watch the team's videos/pics and follow their stories become a friend on facebook: *Adventure For Change*

Beautiful Whale by Bryant Austin



Bryant Austin

The right eye of "Ella" – a dwarf minke whale photographed on one of our 2010 expeditions.

Bryant Austin is a portrait photographer. But instead of capturing people with his camera, he dives underwater to create incredible portraits of whales. He has just released, *Beautiful Whale*, a photographic book that captures the grace and intelligence of these magnificent creatures.

Bryant became part of the *Eye to Eye* family when he joined us on board our scheduled and custom Swim With Whale expeditions a few years ago. He had some remarkable encounters during his time with us and forged a special relationship with dwarf minke 'Ella' who features heavily in his book.

There is something enormously powerful about Bryant's images, from his detailed close-ups to full-body portraits composed of hundreds of images. This work is helping to bridge the gap between humans and whales by reaching out to people on an emotional level. Follow Bryant on his facebook page: *Bryant Austin - Studio Cosmos*



CAIRNS UW FILM FESTIVAL

The 7th Annual Cairns Underwater Film Festival (CUFF) was held on Saturday 24 August 2013 at the Cairns Civic Theatre.

The festival combines an underwater film and photo competition (which focuses on the rich and diverse beauty of the Great Barrier Reef and Coral Sea) with a film festival showcasing underwater imagery from around the world.

We are proud to announce that *Adventure For Change's* video featuring minke whales was very well received. To watch go to: <https://vimeo.com/71616711>

All profits from the festival were donated back to the community. This year's recipients, the *Minke Whale Project*, *Tangaroa Blue* and the *Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre* received a combined total of \$20,000!

A huge thanks go out to Christian Miller and this year's CUFF organizers and volunteers.

AUIP STUDENTS

In June we wrapped up our fourth successful year working with *AUIP (American Universities Program)*. Jimmy White once again led reef curriculum, this time with the fantastic support of biologists Suz Garrett and Peta Campbell.

Highlights included a 3-day field itinerary implemented by one of the Universities (instead of the traditional 2 days) which gave students more time to get comfortable in the water and enjoy themselves; reef animal sightings including manta rays and sharks as well as the genuine enthusiasm displayed by the students.

Eye to Eye staff really enjoyed the final day role-playing where students representing different Great Barrier Reef stakeholder groups engaged in lively debates. Watching these young minds arguing with such passion and conviction really proved how much they learned during their time with us and gives us hope for the future conservation of the world's natural wonders.



Run by a team of passionate volunteers CUFF screens local and international talent, giving filmmakers a chance to showcase their films where 100% of the profit help protect local marine

The AUIP program gives students the chance to experience and understand coral reef ecosystems first hand

NOW ON TRIP ADVISOR

Finally! *Eye to Eye Marine Encounters* is now on Trip Advisor. If you have enjoyed a trip with us in the past then please take a few minutes to review us on this site (the largest travel forum in the world). Since we are a small family run business with an equally small budget for marketing, your positive reviews are sincerely appreciated.



WELCOME!

We would like to congratulate a number of our crewmembers who have recently started their own families.

Welcome **Zoe Barnett** (Adam Barnett and Katya Abrantes), **Henry Cutler** (Steve & Nao Cutler) and **baby White** (Jimmy White & Jana Bodak). JR and Linda are also expecting their first grandchild from their eldest daughter Shannon Rumney and fiancée Jameel Kaderbhai! We look forward to sharing many fun times with the next generation of Eye to Eye/Undersea recruits. Very exciting times ahead!



AWARDS

We are so proud of JR who was awarded the prestigious 2012 *Ecotourism Australia GECKO Medal for Individual Excellence*. This achievement celebrates his lifetime of work for sustainable visitation on the Great Barrier Reef.

Last year, *Eye to Eye* was awarded runner-up in the *PlanetWhale Sustainable Whale Watching Awards* and we have already been short listed for this year's accolades!



PlanetWhale is an online community aimed at inspiring and educating people about whales and dolphins. This organization provides a unique platform for guests to review and rate tour operators based on their ethical practices and each year hosts *WhaleFest*, the world's biggest celebration of wild whales and dolphins.

IWC CONFERENCE



Earlier this year JR was invited to participate in the first ever Sustainable Whale Watching Workshop held by the International Whaling Commission (IWC). Along with delegates from PlanetWhale (including founder Ian Rowlands) the group spent 2 days discussing best practice guidelines and the development of sustainable whale watching industries and legislation in countries.



MARINE ANIMAL STRANDING WORKSHOP

Eye to Eye staff recently attended a workshop to learn how to respond to marine strandings. The main focus of the session was on turtles and dugongs due to the increase in local incidents that have occurred following Cyclone Yasi (and the subsequent loss of sea grass). The day included theory and practical components and equipped volunteers with the skills to adequately assess and rescue animals in distress.



The end of an era.

Those of you who have travelled with us before may be familiar with our beach game 'bite the box'.

For the passed 12 seasons Dean Miller has held the title of champion but in June 2013 his tyrannical reign finally came to an end when we was ousted by non other than Nikki Rumney - the new people's champion.



Other News:

A day to remember on Aroona

A massive THANK YOU to captain Ross Miller for helping us to celebrate Jenna Rumney's 30th bday on his beautiful *Aroona*. With Ross's great skills and the vessels superb seaworthiness everyone had a truly memorable day. We will once again be offering private family/group charters on *Aroona* in the coming year so please contact us if you would like more info on this fantastic vessel.



MV Aroona

The Love Boat.

Congratulations to Warren Thurlow and Annie Marment who met on one of last year's Swim With Whale trips and got engaged (underwater!) on board this season!



The happy couple!



Eye to Eye Marine Encounters has a very active Facebook page so please join us and keep updated on expeditions, conservation issues and interesting marine facts/pics /videos.



A big thank-you from the Rumney family and Eye to Eye team. We look forward to sharing more underwater adventures with you soon...