

MARINE ENCOUNTERS

Dive into the adventure










Hello and welcome to our 2010 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.

SPRING 2010

What's in this edition?

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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

The Marine Mammal Conservation Through the Arts

The moving photo above was taken by professional photographer, artist and marine mammal advocate **Bryant Austin**. His organization, Marine Mammal Conservation Through the Arts (mmcta) is committed to peacefully inspiring change within countries that continue to hunt or harm whales. Bryant creates high resolution, life-size portraits of whales to share in

whaling nations and beyond. In 2010 Bryant's photos (which feature our beloved dwarf minke) were exhibited at a few locations across Norway with plans to expand the display to Tokyo and Washington. Bryant has also been the subject of a short film entitled, *In The Eye Of The Whale*, which can be found at: www.mmcta.org or as a link on our website.

On location with the BBC

We are proud to announce Eye to Eye's involvement in the up and coming British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) series on the Great Barrier Reef.

The BBC Natural History Unit / Digital Dimensions project, *Great Barrier Reef*, will be the first definitive international television series on the natural history of the entire GBR system. It will be shown in Australia on Channel Nine, on Discovery Channel in the US and on the BBC in the UK, and is likely to be seen in over 100 other countries worldwide.

In Australia, and around the world, it will be an invaluable educational resource:



Explaining how the Great Barrier Reef was created; how it functions biologically; the variety of its many different ecosystems and how they critically interact together; its significance on a wider scale to the Pacific and other oceans; and the major factors that threaten its health, such as ocean warming, increased acidity associated with climate change and water quality issues associated with development and land use. It will also celebrate the biological wonder that is the GBR, showing the natural wonders and wildlife that exist through all the GBR's different ecosystems and inspiring people to care about it and want to protect it for the future.

Sharks International Conference, 2010



Conference attendees included respected shark diving pioneers Ron and Valarie Taylor and professional photographer Douglas Seifert.

JR was fortunate enough to attend the Sharks International Conference in June this year.

The week was filled with 107 talks and 34 posters. Over 220 conference delegates attended the meeting from 21 countries. Participants included students, early career scientists, professional scientists, lawyers, conservation advocates and resource managers.

It was a privilege for John to meet so many great minds and the conference provided an opportunity to generate and discuss ideas for future joint projects. The academic side of the week ended with an Eye to Eye an OCS supported minke trip on Mike Ball's *Spoilsport*, which provided everyone with a well deserved break. Special thanks to Andrew Chin for organizing the trip. For more conference photos check out our facebook page.



Minke Madness: a new record!

The 2010 minke season (which falls between Jun-July each year) was once again a huge success packed full of sightings, stories and firsts for our research team!

Although the season was a little late getting started (presumably due to higher than average water temperatures) the whales soon made up for lost time by dazzling guests with close passes and spectacular behaviours from both the boat and in-water.

During the 4-day 'Locals' trip a group of minke whales entertained snorkelers with their not-so melodic vocalizations. Far from the haunting sonnets of humpback whales, minke calls have instead been likened to pigs, complete with grunts, snorts, moans and belches! These low frequency sounds travel well in water and passengers reported being able to 'feel' the sound vibrate throughout their bodies.

Thanks to dedicated minke enthusiast **Bruce Paterson**, a hydrophone was used to record these encounters. This allowed guests to re-listen to their

underwater orchestra once on dry land and will be used in the upcoming BBC series on the Great Barrier Reef.

2010 also provided one of the longest and largest (in terms of number of animals recorded at one time) encounters we have ever had! In addition, chief researcher, **Alastair Birtles** beat his personal best for the amount of time spent in-water, racking up an impressive 11 hours without leaving the line (not even to come in for a drink or snack!). That's dedication.

An expose of this expedition will be featured on the Channel 7 Sunday Night Program at 6:30pm in the coming weeks. A special thanks to **Dean Miller** and **Dale Paget** for making this trip such a success.

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate long-time Minke Project scientists, **Susan Soltzick** and **Matt Curnock** who are not only finishing their doctorates this year but are also getting married to each other! We wish them all the best.



Another first for the minke team was capturing the gender of a breaching whale. Up until now no-one has been able to assign a positive sex ID to an animal performing this behaviour. But the spectacular photograph above clearly shows this whale's individual markings and therefore allowed us to determine the sex of the animal (male).

This photo was supplied Northern hemisphere minke whale researcher **Ursula Tscheter** who conducts in-depth studies on their feeding behaviours. Ursula's study site is in the St Lawrence Estuary, Canada and provides us with yet another glimpse into the mysterious life of minkes....

For more on Ursula's project including how to join her field trips as a volunteer researcher go to www.ores.org



This fantastic (and anatomically correct!) minke banner was hand-made by Ursula Tscheter. If you are interested in purchasing one as an educational resource please contact us .

AUIP STUDENTS

This year Eye to Eye Marine Encounters employees were given the opportunity to share their knowledge and passion for the underwater world with eager university students.

Biologists **Jimmy White** (currently doing his PhD on sharks), **Qamar Schuyler** and **JR** travelled to Townsville to lecture groups of undergraduate students from the AUIP (American University International Program).

From Magnetic Island to the beautiful bommies of Wheeler Cay, students received a 3 day intensive course on coral reef ecology and conservation.

With rave reviews from students and other teaching staff Eye to Eye is now looking forward to getting more involved with university groups in the near future.



**Minke Whales
(June/July 2011)**

We are currently organizing itineraries and logistics for next year’s minke season, which will feature 4- and 6-day trips along with special expeditions sponsored by *Australian Geographic & Asian Diver*.

As always our daily trip schedule will remain flexible to accommodate changing weather conditions and seasonal marine highlights.

We will also have our charismatic researchers on board to share their enthusiasm, knowledge and stories and help you get the most of your minke experience.



**Osprey Reef/AUV
(Nov 2010)**

For an adventure dive trip with a difference join PhD student Tom Bridge and his AUV to explore coral biodiversity on the GBR Ribbons and Osprey Reef.



Reef Sharks (Nov 2010)

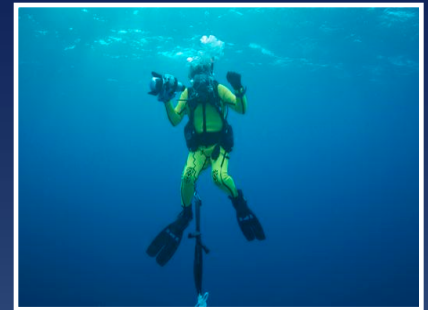
After the success of last year’s *Australian Geographic sponsored Shark Discovery expedition* (on board ‘Spoilsport’) we have decided to once again offer this adrenaline-filled trip. So join our scientists and crew as they tag and track reef sharks while diving world-famous Osprey Reef.

**Tiger Sharks & Turtles
(Nov/Dec 2011)**

Starting in 2011 we will once again venture into the remote waters of the Far North to tag and track Tiger sharks and Green turtles. The waters around Raine Island are truly one of the last frontiers, a wild place where fish and mega fauna thrive in near pristine conditions. Stay tuned for more on these trips....

News just in: We may be offering a Far Northern in Dec/Jan this year! Please contact us with your expressions of interest.

**PHOTOGRAPHER
PROFILE:**



Douglas Seifert

The World Editor of *DIVE Magazine* and author of the Water Column feature, Douglas is a globe-trotting photojournalist whose award-winning work is renowned in the diving industry (as is his bright yellow wetsuit). Along with his lovely fiancé, Emily, Douglas has spent the past two minke seasons with us, tirelessly pursuing the perfect minke shot – and this year he just might have gotten it!_____



Congratulations!

We would like to congratulate our dedicated biologist and friend, Qamar Schuyler who has recently been accepted to do her PhD on turtle conservation by the University of Queensland.

We know Qamar will do an amazing job and look forward to having her as on board as a guest turtle researcher in the near future.

On the road with JR

John began the year by attending the German boat show BOOT and meeting up with old friends and operators from around the world. John shared a booth (and home!) with good friends **Christiane** and **Karl** to raise awareness and promote the use of ENOS, the electronic locating and rescue system www.seareq.de. E2E continues to add a higher level of safety to all of our dive trips with the use of the ENOS system ...your 6-10 km electronic safety sausage!



Following BOOT, **John** attended *National Geographic's GeoTourism Conference* and the launch of ARKive <http://www.arkive.org/> where he had the great pleasure of meeting the deep sea oceanographer and conservationist **Dr Sylvia Earle**, <http://www.mission-blue.org> and the opportunity to present her with a copy of the *Great Barrier Reef Undersea Experience* <http://www.undersea-experience.com/> by **Andy Dunstan** and photos by **Jurgen Freund**.

Next overseas trip was to Singapore where **John** was invited as a guest speaker at ADEX (Asia Dive Expo) in April. With the cover shot of *Asian Diver Magazine's "The Big Blue Book"* and E2E's article, Dwarf Minke Whales featured as one of the top 10 pelagic that will amaze you! It was a pleasure to participate in such conservation oriented show and we thoroughly enjoyed sharing the minke whales with AD's **Laura** and **Jonathan**. We look forward to another Asian Diver/Asian Geographic Minke Expedition in July 2011!



JR, Jen and Sam at ADEX



Jo from Asian Diver meets Jenna and 'Chai', an orphaned wallaby joey.

In July, the OCS conference not only gave John the chance to meet with many of the world's top shark researchers but also the huge honour of meeting with the legendary female pioneer of shark research Dr Eugenie Clark, "The Shark Lady"!



JR and Eugenie Clark at the Sharks International Conference

Other News:



This joint initiative with the World Wildlife Fund was set up to investigate the connectivity between the wildlife and peoples of the region, and the threats they face.

For more on this incredible journey please visit:

http://blogs.panda.org/coral_triangle/about/

and stay tuned for a book featuring Yogi's fantastic pictures.

Last but certainly not least, we are very proud of one of our fabulous chefs **Ragini Osinga** who has started her own sustainable seafood campaign with her facebook page, "Sustainable Chefs". Please check it out!

We are pleased to welcome home Yogi and Stella Freund who have just returned from an 18 month photojournalistic expedition into the heart of the Coral Triangle (an extremely biodiverse region that spans Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands). Within this area live 75% of the world's coral species, 6 of the world's 7 marine turtle species, at least 3,000 marine fish species.



Eye to Eye Marine Encounters now has our own facebook page so please join us and keep updated on expeditions, conservation issues and interesting marine facts .



A big thank-you from all the Eye to Eye staff and crew. We look forward to sharing more underwater adventures with you again soon...



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Local diver Michael Gabour hangs out with a potato cod



Aus Geo's Todd, Andrew and JR on a minke trip