



Welcome to the Whales, Dolphins and Marine Megafauna Marine internship program. Created with the goal of raising awareness about marine conservation issues in Plettenberg Bay, you will combine research, conservation, and education to make a positive impact.

### **Goals of the Internship**

1. Raise awareness and interest in marine conservation issues facing Plettenberg Bay
2. Engage in applied marine research that informs conservation management decisions with scientific advice
3. Develop a network by collaborating with other conservation organizations and research institutes in the region
4. Participate in local marine research, conservation, and education initiatives
5. Teach children about the value of our oceans

### **What will the internship entail?**

This is an hands-on experiential internship. As an intern, you'll actively participate in research, conservation and education projects that involve hiking, responding to strandings, and visiting local schools. You'll also assist in marine research projects, gaining valuable experience in boat-based and land-based field research methods.

Typical weeks involve:

--beach surveys which include tracking shark egg cases and cataloguing marine megafauna, dolphin/whale watching from boats, data counts, river surveys, snorkel trips, data entry, animal surveys from peninsula to track sharks, seabirds, and marine mammals, beach clean ups, responding to marine mammal strandings or mortality events, and community outreach

The internship involves boat-based fieldwork, hiking, and is physically rigorous. Our projects are weather-dependent, and last-minute changes in the schedule are common. Marine mammal strandings always take priority, weather conditions may lead to changes, and data entry tasks are usually done on days that are too windy for field work

### **What experience do I need?**

General interest in marine biology, research, conservation, education, and cultural awareness.

Interns need to show enthusiasm, positivity, maturity, and independence, adaptability, and willingness to work in a team

### **What research methods will I learn and how will that help address research scientific questions?**

#### Research methods:

- Species identification: Learn to identify species of whales, dolphins, seals, sharks, turtles, rays and seabirds, distinguishing between males and female or adults and juveniles
- Photography: Take photos of dolphins and whale fins for individual analysis and tracking
- Camera System Deployment: assist in deploying a camera system known as Baited Remote Underwater Video Systems (BRUVs).
- Video Footage Screening: Code videos for the presence of sharks and rays

#### Research Questions:

- Continue building a baseline data for the Plettenberg Bay that was started in 2019
- Establish the biodiversity and community structure of the elasmobranch (sharks and rays) population
- Determine the distribution and movement of marine animals and monitor their population size
- Investigate human-wildlife interactions and the impact of tourism vessels and shore anglers in a marine protected area
- Assess essential water quality parameters such as salinity and water temperature to gain insights into the estuary ecosystem of the Keurbooms river.

--Delineate breeding ground for juveniles to help support conservation efforts  
--The impact of education on young students about the marine environment in Plettenberg Bay, with specific emphasis on water safety, sharks, and marine mammals.

**Where will I stay and how do meals work?**

The interns will share a house that is located in the town of Plettenberg Bay. The house has several rooms and has a shared kitchen, maid service, laundry, and Wi-Fi. Meals are included in the internships. Dietary requirements like vegetarian, vegan, or other allergies can be accommodated.

**What are the emergency contact details:**

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