



Care for Hedland Environmental Association

Flatback Monitoring Volunteer Information Pack 2023-2024



Principal Partner

BHP



Welcome to Care For Hedland Environmental Association! Thank you for your interest in wanting to make a difference and supporting conservation initiatives by our organisation. The Turtle Monitoring Program is very special to Care For Hedland and is the main reason why the organisation was founded by Kelly Howlett, the organisation's initiating chairperson in 2003. Since then, volunteers have helped us monitor, conserve, and educate in our local community and are a valuable asset to our program. The 2023 turtle monitoring program will be the 20th year of turtle monitoring at Cemetery Beach for the program, and we truly appreciate our hardworking, enthusiastic, and dedicated volunteers, as well as the contributions of local businesses, corporations, and council.

This booklet is designed to give you an overview of the organisation, program, what to expect and what to bring.





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1.0 Introduction

Care For Hedland operates out of Port Hedland, one of Australia's bulk-tonnage port and the largest iron ore export port in the world, handling over 250 million tonnes of product a year. The main industries, which define Port Hedland's physical and economic landscape, are iron ore processing and export, salt production and manganese export. 'Hedland' consists of two separate but close townships; Port Hedland and South Hedland and has a population of approximately 20,000 people.

The town and surrounding Pilbara region represent an ancient landscape with some of the oldest geology in the world. The region experiences a harsh climate of arid-tropical conditions across many habitats from coastal to semi- arid and desert landscapes.

Port Hedland is located on the Pilbara coast, Western Australia, 1765 km north-west of Perth, 242 km from Karratha and 612km from Broome. Port Hedland has a rich cultural history and identity. The traditional landowners, the Kariyarra people, call Port Hedland 'Marapikurrinya', referring to the hand-shaped formation of the natural tidal creeks moving in from the coast.

2.0 Overview of Care For Hedland Environmental Association

The Care For Hedland Environmental Association is an independent environmental interest group, established in 2003, to pursue a shared vision of environmental awareness and improvement for the townships of Port and South Hedland, along with the wider Pilbara region. The Association acts as an effective conduit for the communication of environmental and sustainability information into the community and provides a forum whereby business, industry, government, and community can discuss barriers, opportunities, and solutions to sustainable development for Hedland and the Pilbara.

Care For Hedland is run by a committee of volunteer community members and has over 180 members to date. Volunteers are a major resource for the delivery of our projects, and without them we simply would not be able to achieve the things we do.

We are actively involved in raising environmental awareness in its local and wider communities through the delivery of 4 key programs: Turtle Monitoring, Garden Club, Waste Management and Education.

2.1 Partners

Care For Hedland Environmental Association is proudly partnered with BHP. We also have many other financial and in-kind supports such as Lotterywest, Northwest Telegraph, Discovery Parks, Spirit Radio, the Hedland Hotel, the Port Hedland Visitor Centre, the Esplanade Hotel, Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions, and the Town of Port Hedland.

2.2 Our aims

- Bring ideas/feedback to government and bodies on environmental/sustainability issues.
- Assess and prioritise current and future environmental/sustainability issues.
- Ascertain public perception of responsible bodies' efforts in environmental management.
- Assist awareness-raising of environmental/sustainability issues.
- Build a partnership between the community, business/industries and government agencies for the management of environmental/sustainability issues.

3.1 Research area

Research is conducted on two town beaches in Port Hedland. The main beach where the majority of nesting occurs happens to be the Port's town beach which is frequented by visitors for recreational purposes. The second beach which is monitored is located in a suburb called Pretty Pool. Pretty Pool Beach receives fewer nesting turtles and has had issues with vehicles on the beach and foxes in the past.





3.2 Environment

The Hedland environment includes marine and estuarine ecosystems as well as semi-arid landscapes all of which nurture an array of native species. Coastal environments are diverse, comprising of mudflats, mangroves, sandy islands, coastal dunes and beaches. Inland, the landscape is dramatically dry, broad, flat sandy plains which support drought-tolerant vegetation.



3.3 Culture

Port Hedland and its surrounds is rich in culture. There are more than 31 Aboriginal language groups in the Pilbara region which includes the Kariyarra, Yindjibarni and Nyamal countries. Today Aboriginal cultural and language groups in the Pilbara are still strongly connected with their land and cultural beliefs and practices.

3.4 Climate

Hedland generally experiences a very hot climate which is defined by two main seasons; Summer (wet season) is from around November to April with extremely hot days and warm, balmy nights. This season also experiences spectacular lightning storms, isolated rain showers and cyclones. The main cyclone season is between January and March. Winter (dry season) runs from May to October and experiences milder day time temperatures and cooler nights.

For the time of the turtle monitoring season (November to February) temperatures can easily reach 40°C with very warm night time temperatures. It is therefore important to take this into consideration when packing, ensuring you have cool clothing and sun protection.



4.0 Project work

Volunteers may have the opportunity to assist with 6 different areas: morning track monitoring, night monitoring, tagging, morning hatchling monitoring, data management and community events such as holding market stalls, promoting the program, community education and school talks.

4.1 Morning track monitoring

Volunteers assist staff to record all new activities made by turtles emerging to nest the previous night. Both successful and unsuccessful emergences are recorded and added to a database.





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4.2 Night monitoring

Volunteers are required to assist staff to observe turtles coming to shore to nest at high tide. A major focus of this work is engaging public interest, education and awareness-raising and people management in order to protect nesting turtles from human disturbance on the beach.



4.3 Tagging

Scientific tagging is only run for 2 months from early November to mid-December. Volunteers assist our Scientific Coordinator by recording data, restraining the turtles and removing barnacles. Please be advised that volunteers WILL NOT be doing the actual tagging of turtles themselves as this requires a high level of skill and expertise. Volunteers will be assisting in the tagging process only.

4.4 Nest excavations

Starting in January, the night monitoring will incorporate excavating up to 40 nests with the Evening Coordinator/s. Although it may be a little stinky, it is an excellent way to learn about what happens to the eggs and hatchlings after the mum's have left. We will run a training session for volunteers to learn how to excavate nests.



4.5 Morning hatchling monitoring

Hatchlings start to emerge from the nests from around late December through to mid-February. Volunteers will assist staff to walk along the beaches and record all hatchling emergences and nest disturbance and may assist hatchlings where necessary. As this biological event is of great interest there are often members of the public on the beach to see the hatchlings, therefore entailing a degree of people management and education.

4.6 Data management

You can't collect scientific data without needing to enter it somewhere! Volunteers will be required to enter data collected from morning and night monitoring and tagging into a collective database. For those with the know-how, you could also be involved in performing some simple data analysis too.

4.6 Community events

As we are a community-run group, we place a lot of value on engaging our local and non-local communities in what we do. It is so special to have this rare species of turtle nesting year after year on a town beach so close to residential areas, industry and Australia's largest export port. We encourage everyone to be involved, and do our best to manage this, which is why we rely a lot on our volunteers to assist.

Care for Hedland holds stalls at local markets and shopping centres, publish articles in the local newspaper and conduct community and school talks. You might even find yourself talking on the local radio!

When you are not busy doing field work at the beach, entering data or resting, you will likely find yourself involved in one of our community activities.





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5.0 Volunteer workdays

There is no set schedule for volunteers for this program, as the times and events fluctuate significantly. We cater to the interests and needs of our volunteers when we can. While some days may be packed with events and turtle monitoring, other days may be slower. For university students wishing to complete a placement with us, we will work with you to create a schedule. The information about shifts below is a guideline, but these will depend on what the staff have organised.

- Morning Shifts typically start around 6 am at Cemetery Beach. This can take a few hours in some cases where there are many tracks and/or hatchling emergencies.
- Evening Shifts can start as early as 2 pm for Daytime Nesting Events, and for regular monitoring, anywhere from 6 pm to after midnight. The timing for the evening monitoring will fluctuate with the tides.
- Scientific Shifts will start after dark, and the schedule will be dictated by the Scientific Coordinator.

For volunteers arriving from out-of-town, you will have a meeting with the Environment Association Coordinator, Evening Coordinator/s, and/or Scientific Coordinator when you arrive to determine what shifts you may like to participate in. Should we have an event happening during your time with us, we will let you know so that you are included in.

6.0 Potential project hazards

The Pilbara is a rugged part of the country, with some of Australia's hottest temperatures and its fair share of dangers both on land and in the water. When you arrive on the program you will be required to read through our health and safety Risk Assessment, but as a heads up, here are some things to be prepared for:

Hot weather. The turtle season coincides with summer meaning temperatures can breach 40°C. Prepare for hot days and very warm, balmy nights!

Cyclones. Hedland is located in a region which experiences the effects of an average of 4-5 cyclones per year. Most cyclones occur between late January and late March.

Dangerous marine animals. Our beaches are home to animals such as stingrays, stone fish and cone shells.

Please refer to the kit list below to ensure you pack appropriately.



7.0 Things you need to think about

7.1 Suggestions for what to pack

Equipment	Need	Quantity	Comments	Check
Enclosed shoes	Essential	1	To do any field work you must be wearing enclosed shoes to protect your feet against rubbish that may be in the sand and harmful marine animals on the reef. We generally use hiking boots or sneakers- just make sure they're thick soled and prepared to get a bit wet!	
T-shirts	Essential	3+	You will receive one volunteer shirt, but you will want to bring more for other field work and relaxing/down time.	
Fleece/Sweatshirt	Optional	1	It is extremely hot in Port Hedland, especially during the summer months (November-February), however you may want one light long sleeve cardigan/sweatshirt/jumper in case we get some cool weather with cyclones.	
Trousers & Shorts	Essential	3+	To deal with the heat, we wear shorts for day work, both in the field and in the office. Long pants are useful for night work as they protect your knees and keep the sand out (to an extent!).	
Waterproof raincoat/poncho	Optional		It does not often rain in Hedland, however cyclones will bring a lot of rain, mainly in January – February.	
Swimsuit	Essential	1	There is a safe swimming beach and a pool to swim at.	
Thongs/sandals	Optional	1	These are handy for down time as shoes can get a bit hot sometimes.	
Hat/cap	Essential	1	Wide-brimmed is best to offer as much protection as possible. Caps are useful at night to block out light from streetlights which can disrupt your night vision.	

Equipment	Need	Quantity	Comments	Check
Soap, shampoo, and other toiletries	Essential		Your accommodation DOES NOT supply this. Please bring your own or buy it from shops in Hedland.	
Towel	Essential		Best to bring your own as it is not guaranteed at your accommodation.	
Sunscreen	Essential		This can be purchased at the local shopping centre should you wish to not travel with it.	
Insect Repellent	Essential		As you will be working in the outdoors, you may run into mosquitos, sand flies, and other creepy crawlies. This can be purchased at the local shopping centre should you wish to not travel with it.	
Small backpack	Optional		This may be useful to keep your personal belongings together (such as keys, wallet, sunscreen, water bottle) during field work.	
Sunglasses	Optional	1	We have many cloudless days, so sunglasses help reduce the glare on the beach. If you wish to complete more morning work, these would be very useful.	
Alarm Clock	Optional			
Water shoes	Optional		Port Hedland has several locations where people can walk off the sand, straight to reef systems. If you would like to explore the reef, you will need enclosed shoes, to safely explore.	
Camera	Optional		Port Hedland and the surrounding areas have beautiful scenery, local flora, and fauna. Should you be into photography, it is worth it to bring some sort of camera with you.	
Water bottle	Essential	1+	Minimum 1L water bottle.	
Books/playing cards	Optional		This is just a suggestion for those coming in Jan/Feb as we do not work if a cyclone is imminent.	
USB stick	Optional			



7.2 Training

You will receive full training when you arrive to start your program. It is a good idea to bring a notepad and pen to write anything down. Training will be delivered by a series of PowerPoint presentations, quizzes and practical exercises in the field. For our out-of-town volunteers and volunteers that are not able to attend the Volunteer Training Day at the end of October, we will provide you with all the information and hands-on training you will need.



7.3 Logistics

7.3.1 Accommodation

Interstate/international volunteers stay in Port or South Hedland through a billeting system where our local members and volunteers kindly open their homes to provide you with a place to sleep and a hot shower. Bedding is supplied however please bring all your own toiletries and towels. We ask that you please respect our volunteer/member homes and treat it as your own (if not better!).

7.3.2 Food

Food is not included in the fee payable for the program. By not having food included it means we can keep our costs down, unlike many other volunteer programs! Please allow your budget to include money to pay for food here. There are a couple of supermarkets in Hedland (Coles and Woolworths) and you are able to cook food at your billet accommodation.

7.3.3 Transport

Care for Hedland has 1 car which is prioritised for our staff first. For billet accommodation close to work areas, you may be given a bike. There is the potential for access to another car, but you must have a current Australian driver's licence to use it. Use of the Association's car will be used within Pretty Pool, South Hedland, and Port Hedland areas only. If there is no car available, one of our coordinators will give you a lift for work and shopping trips.



While we cannot guarantee it, there may be the opportunity to go on day trips with our coordinators using the Care for Hedland Trooper. The date, time and location of the trip will be up to the coordinator's schedule and communications between staff and interested parties.

7.3.4 Other supplies

There are two very small shopping centres in Hedland, each with a supermarket. There are a collection of other shops, such as Harvey Norman, Kmart, Just Jeans, major banks (with ATMs), Brumbys, chemists, Chicken Treat, Subway, McDonalds and Sanity, but that's about it! Unless you can get what you need from any of these stores, it's best to bring it with you!



7.4 Social

We organise a number of social events such as barbeques, drinks and community events such as movie nights. We encourage all volunteers and members to attend as it's a great way to meet people with a similar interest.

7.5 Travel arrangements

Port Hedland has a small domestic/international airport with two carriers, Virgin Australia and Qantas. There are daily flights between Port Hedland and Perth, and less regular flights to and from Brisbane and Bali (Denpasar). Please make sure you are aware of flight prices and book flights early. Booking flights in advance may save you money and will help us with allowing us more time to source accommodation.

7.6 Dates

You may come to volunteer with Care for Hedland at any time throughout the turtle nesting and hatchling season which runs from 30th October to the end of January. You may stay for as short or as long as you like - there are no set program start or finish dates.

7.7 Costs

The cost of participating in the program is \$150/week for the first 2 weeks and \$50/week thereafter for longer stays. What's included in the cost:

- Pick up and drop off at the airport
- Work-related fuel for car
- Administration fees
- Local insurance for work-related activities
- Membership fee
- Volunteer t-shirt
- Care for Hedland soft toy
- Donation to the Association

What's NOT INCLUDED in the cost:

- Flights
- Any travel insurance
- Personal fuel for car
- Food
- Social-related expenses
- Personal kit
- COVID Quarantine expenses
- Payment can be made by cash, bank transfer or cheque/money order on or before the arrival date. A deposit is not required.



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8.0 Resources and reading

Here are a few websites and reading materials to help you get a better idea of what you will be doing and where you are going!

Care For Hedland website <https://www.careforhedland.org.au/>

Port Hedland Visitor Centre website <http://www.visitporthedland.com/>

Department of the Environment, Federal Government of Australia Threatened Species Profile of Flatback
http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=59257

A guide to turtle beach track monitoring in Australia

http://www.ningalooturtles.org.au/pdf_downloads/TRAINING%20GUIDES%20DOWNLOADS/A%20Guide%20to%20Beach%20Track%20Monitoring%20in%20Australia.pdf

9.0 Contacts

Please contact Environmental Association Coordinator for any extra information or to confirm your booking.

coordinator@careforhedland.org.au

Mob: 0488 907 260

Thanks for your interest and we hope to see you on the beach!

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