



Care for Hedland Environmental Association
Turtle Monitoring Program
Volunteer Information Pack
2026/2027





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 Chairperson Kelly Howlett in 2003. Since then volunteers have helped us monitor, conserve and educate in our local community and are a valuable asset to our program.

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

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Introduction,

Care For Hedland operates out of Port Hedland, one of Australia's bulk-tonnage ports and is the largest, iron ore export port in the world, handling over 250 million tonnes of product a year. The main industries, that 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 16,000 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 northwest of Perth, 242 km from Karratha and 612km from Broome. Port Hedland has a rich cultural history and identity. The traditional land owners, the Kariyarra people, call Port Hedland 'Marapikurrinya', referring to the hand-shaped formation of the natural tidal creeks moving in from the coast.



Map of Australia showing the location of Port Hedland in the country's northwest.

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, with over 160 members to date. Volunteers are a major resource for the delivery of our projects. 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, Sustainable Living/Garden Club, Waste Management (incl Containers For Change) and Education.



Partners

Care For Hedland Environmental Association is proudly partnered with BHP. We also have many other financial and in-kind supports such as the Town of Port Hedland, North West Telegraph and Triple M Radio - Hedland.

Our aims

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

Research area,

Research is conducted on two town beaches in Port Hedland. The main beach where the majority of nesting occurs is Cemetery 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 driving on the beach and foxes in the past.



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, with broad flat sandy plains that support drought-tolerant vegetation.



Culture

Port Hedland and its surrounds are 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.

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.



Project work

Volunteers may have the opportunity to assist with 6 different areas: morning track monitoring, night monitoring (incl tour guiding), mark & recapture program, morning hatchling monitoring, nest success and excavations, data management and community events such as holding market stalls, promoting the program, community education and school talks.

Morning track monitoring

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

Night monitoring

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



Tagging

Scientific mark & recapture program is run for 50 nights 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 body condition, measurement, PIT tag reading and data recording processes only.



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.

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.

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, publishes articles in the local newspaper and conducts community and school talks. You might even find yourself talking on the local radio!



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



Volunteer itinerary example work days

Below are two examples of a typical volunteer work day. Some days will be busier than others, this depends on how many volunteers we have to help out, both local and non-local. Most work is done Monday to Friday, some work will be required to be completed on weekends. Monitoring occurs each day including Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Example 1	
Hour	Activity
5:30 am	Pick up from accommodation to drive to beach
6 am	Start morning monitor
8 am	Finish morning monitor & eat breakfast
9 am	Short radio interview (about CFH activities)
9:15 am	Arrive at the office to do data entry
12:30 pm	Lunch
1 pm-6:30 pm	Rest
6:3 pm	A social event or shopping centre stall

Example 2	
Hour	Activity
2 am - 10 am	Rest (after late night monitoring)
11 am - 12:30 pm	School talk activity
12:30 pm	Lunch
1 pm - 6:30 pm	Rest
9:30 pm – 1:30 am	Night monitoring or tagging



Please be aware that some activities are only conducted during specific times of the year:

Tagging: start November to mid-December

Morning track monitoring: 30th October to 28th February

Morning hatchling monitoring: around late December to mid-February

Community work and data entry: October to February

Out-of-town volunteer dates: 20th October 2025 to 21st January 2026

Please consider these dates when booking to avoid disappointment!!

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.



Equipment	Need	Quantity	Comments	Check
Clothing				
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!	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>
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!).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waterproof raincoat/poncho	Optional		It does not often rain in Hedland, however cyclones will bring a lot of rain, mainly in January – February.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swimsuit	Essential	1	There is a safe swimming beach and a pool to swim at.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thongs/sandals	Optional	1	These are handy for downtime as shoes can get a bit hot sometimes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 street lights which can disrupt your night vision.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunglasses	Optional	1	We have many cloudless days so sunglasses help reduce the glare on the beach.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other				
Small backpack	Optional		This may be useful to keep your personal belongings together (such as keys, wallet, sunscreen, and water) during fieldwork.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alarm Clock	Optional			<input type="checkbox"/>
Soap, shampoo and other toiletries	Essential		Your accommodation DOES NOT supply this. Please bring your own or buy it from shops in Hedland.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Towel	Essential		Best to bring your own as it is not guaranteed at your accommodation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunscreen	Essential			<input type="checkbox"/>



Equipment	Need	Quantity	Comments	Check
Water bottle	Essential	1+	Minimum 1L water bottle	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>
USB stick	Optional			<input type="checkbox"/>
				<input type="checkbox"/>



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.



Logistics

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!).

Food

Food is not included and you must supply your own food. 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.

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.

If there is no car available one of our coordinators will give you a lift for work and shopping trips.

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, ChickenTreat, Subway, McDonalds, 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!





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.

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. **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.**

Dates

You may come to volunteer with Care for Hedland at any time throughout the turtle nesting and hatchling season which runs from the 20th October 2025 to the 21st January 2026. Other than paying for your Care for Hedland Membership, (\$25.00 for single and \$40.00 for families) there are no other costs. Stays are limited to two weeks. You may stay for a shorter period, but your maximum free stay is two weeks.

Costs

The cost of participating in the program is just the purchase of your Care For Hedland Membership. This can be done online at <https://careforhedland.org.au/become-a-member/> or directly into our bank account. What's included if you come and volunteer with us:

- Billeted Accommodation
- Pick up and drop off at the airport
- Pick up and drop off from the beach
- Local insurance for work-related activities
- Membership fee
- Volunteer t-shirt
- Care for Hedland soft toy

What's NOT INCLUDED in the cost:

- Flights
- Any travel insurance
- Personal fuel for car
- Food
- Social-related expenses
- Personal kit
- COVID PPE, RATs and isolation expenses

Account details for electronic bank transfer

Name: Care For Hedland Environmental Association
BSB: 036 183
Account: 154 364

Mail address for cheque/money order

PO Box 436, Port Hedland WA 6721

Payment can be made by cash, bank transfer or cheque/money order on or before the arrival date. A deposit is not required.



COVID PPE and Isolation

Like all places around Australia, COVID-19 is present within our community. As such COVID-19 and isolation requirements, may impact some people's ability to volunteer with our program.

If you are an inter-state traveller intending to volunteer with us, please research and stay up to date with Western Australia's COVID-19 cases and requirements. **You are responsible for organising and covering the cost of your own COVID PPE and isolation requirements** (in the event that you acquire COVID-19 whilst volunteering with us).

For more information on COVID-19 in Western Australia, updates and advice please see:

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/covid-19-coronavirus>

We advise all our staff and volunteers to always be careful, monitor hot spots and get tested if you are sick or if you have been in an area where there have been confirmed COVID cases.

If you need to leave your volunteering position early due to COVID or cannot finish your volunteering, the Association will organise a refund of unused volunteering fees. If your trip is extended in Port Hedland due to COVID, there will not be additional fees charged and the Association will continue to have you involved in the program if your stay is lengthened.

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%20each%20Track%20Monitoring%20in%20Australia.pdf

Contacts

Please contact Environmental Admin Officer Amy (mob) 0488 907 260 for any extra information or to confirm your booking.

Email: eao@careforhedland.org.au



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

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First version produced by Jasmine Rowe, March 2014
Cover photograph: J. Rowe