

**PROJECT:** Population abundance, structure and habitat utilisation by bottlenose dolphins *Tursiops* sp in Binningup and adjacent waters.

I am seeking skilled research assistants for field work that will commence in June 2009.

Assistants will help me in collecting behavioural data in the field on the bottlenose dolphin population off the southwest coast of Western Australia. The field work begins in June 2009 and will continue to June 2011. Fieldwork will be based just north of the coastal town of Bunbury, approximately 2hr drive south of Perth.

**PROJECT SUMMARY:** The project aims to ascertain the population size and structure of the dolphin population in the Binningup region and determine the residency patterns of the population. It will identify critical habitats for dolphins for particular behavioural activity states and determine drivers of these. As this area is zoned for the construction of a desalination plant the project will also investigate the potential displacement effects of the construction and operation of the plant. This will assist in establishing the long-term viability of the population. **FIELD WORK:** All observations and data collection will be conducted from a 5.7m centre console boat equipped with a 100HP engine. Assistants should be prepared to work long hours with early starts. Aboard the research boat assistants will be required to assist in boat handling and data collection and be expected to participate in the following duties in the lab: data entry, fin-matching, and database/catalogue maintenance. Field work is physically and at times mentally demanding but you will have the opportunity to observe and gain hands-on experience in relation to survey techniques, photo-identification, behavioural observations and improve existing skills. This experience will be most useful to students or anyone hoping to pursue a career in behavioural ecology or population biology.

**PREREQUISITES:** 1. Enrolled in or completed a degree in biology, marine science, animal behaviour or a related field 2. Previous field experience with marine wildlife (photo-identification and boat handling skills would be advantageous but not a prerequisite). 3. Be enthusiastic, team oriented, have a positive attitude and good sense of humour as well as a genuine interest in marine mammal science. 4. Be adaptable and patient as fieldwork is highly weather dependent. This means office based work during bad weather and long consecutive days in the field when weather permits and

fieldwork will vary between weekends and weekdays. 5. Be prepared to work long days in a small vessel in small team of 3 people 6. Be able to commit for a minimum of 1 month (though applicants willing to commit for longer will be preferred) Regrettably I am unable to provide monetary compensation or living provisions and research assistants will be responsible for travel to Perth or Bunbury and their own living expenses. Pickup from Perth may be possible but is dependent on arrival time.

If you are interested, please provide a short CV and cover letter attention of Dee McElligott (d.mcelligott@murdoch.edu.au <mailto:d.mcelligott@murdoch.edu.au> ).

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