



# MARINE CONSERVATION: MULTI MARINE PROJECT SOUTH AFRICA

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

South Africa has everything ...

- ◆ Sun, sparkling warm and clear oceans, and the most beautiful golden beaches you will ever see ... stretching for miles.
- ◆ Mountain climbing, biking and hiking
- ◆ The *Garden Route*, world famous and sheer paradise!
- ◆ Outstanding Game Reserves where you can see wild animals in their natural habitat, and by contrast symmetric vineyards stretching to infinity
- ◆ Sharks, whales and dolphins, and the amusing Cape Fur Seals.
- ◆ Elegant restaurants, barbecues and beach parties
- ◆ And FRUIT everywhere!



But most of all, South Africans are the friendliest and most hospitable people in the world - without a doubt! If you're invited to dinner ... don't eat for a week beforehand because you'll be overfed, especially if it's a barbecue. Wine is cheap and good. The salads are to die for. And - of course - the fruit! From the exotic to the commonplace, it's everywhere.

## THE MULTI MARINE PROJECT

### The GREAT WHITE SHARK

Roaming the world's oceans, the Great White Shark is undoubtedly the greatest predatory force of the seas. Cloaked in myth, misunderstanding and fear, this awesome animal remains a mystery.

Contrary to popular opinion, shark attacks are rare, with only 55 unprovoked attacks each year worldwide by all species of shark, of which 2 – 4 are fatal. The media hype of these attacks and movies have installed a primitive fear in humans – that of being eaten alive by a shark. This fear has been exaggerated, exploited and then marketed at the expense of the wellbeing of the shark species. Sharks' natural feeding areas are seal colonies, not a beach packed with surfers. In fact, it is recently said that sharks hate the taste of human blood!

- **150,000,000 to 200,000,000 sharks are killed each year by humans just for their fins.** On top of that, 16 Billion fish are discarded each year; a lot of this is made up of sharks. They are, as a result, in danger of extinction. Great White Sharks are the last wild predator on earth that we cannot tame; from that point of view alone it deserves our respect and attention. There is an increased awareness and interest in the plight of this animal, thanks to organisations like the one you will be working for.

Great White Sharks are very stable animals, displaying stable and predictable behaviour. They do not eat each other and on very rare occasions fight with one another. They are highly intelligent animals, able to remember and learn quickly.

Sharks are vulnerable and deserving of sympathy and respect. Education helps people to lose the *Jaws* phenomenon and gain the realisation that sharks are a complex and precious species.



## MARINE DYNAMICS/DYER ISLAND CRUISES

### “DISCOVER AND PROTECT”

**You'll learn a lot on this project!** You'll work with two sister companies, Marine Dynamics, who deal with Sharks trips, and Dyer Island Cruises, who offer whale watching cruises and marine eco-trips. Most work is done in and around Dyer Island, which is located 8 km from shore and is completely protected for the conservation of its many resident bird species, including African penguins.

Adjacent to Dyer Island is Geyser Rock, home to a 60,000 strong Cape fur seal colony. These seals are also present all year round. The channel of water between Dyer Island and Geyser Rock is the now world renowned Shark Alley.

The combination of both companies, Marine Dynamics and Dyer Island Cruises, bring together expertise unsurpassed in the tourism industry, combining field experience and knowledge from different fields into one team. The owner of Dyer Island Cruises and Marine Dynamics, Wilfred, is certainly the most knowledgeable person about the ecosystem and varied wildlife found on and around Dyer Island. He was a spear-fisherman and wreck diver for over 20 years and took part in gruelling offshore boat races in the early Nineties. He has a long relationship with conservation and has worked with the South African Cultural History Museum, Maritime Museum and South African Museum in Cape Town, and the Shipwreck Museum in Bredasdorp.

Wilfred has a vast amount of knowledge and is very familiar with the Dyer Island area. He has worked with top marine wildlife photographers as well as scientists specialising in whales, dolphins, seals and seabirds. Wilfred also assisted an international team with the tagging of Cape fur seals at Dyer Island.

Wilfred is an experienced skipper, diver, naturalist and conservationist. He has extensive knowledge of the many species of Cetaceans and Marine birds that you can encounter in the area. He has been working in collaboration with Dr. Peter Best of the South African Museum for several years, helping to collect information about Whale and Dolphin sightings and behaviour.

Wilfred, together with others, founded the ‘**Dyer Island Conservation Trust**’. The Trust has several objectives. The most important is the conservation, rehabilitation and protection of the natural environment, including both flora and fauna, in and around Dyer Island.

The Trust is also concerned about the care of wild animals, especially oiled penguins (*see photo on right*).

The Trust will promote educational and training programmes relating to environmental awareness, and greening and clean-up projects. It will also support any research which is related to or supports these objectives. The Trust can even provide funds, assets and other resources for similar projects in related areas, for example, at other offshore islands of the Western Cape. The 2000-house development for Dyer Island's penguins is the first of many planned thrusts of the Dyer Island Conservation Trust, to be undertaken in terms of the "Faces of Need" banner.



## THE BOATS

Your work will probably be split between the two boats going out.

**Shark Fever** is a 10.6 metre or 32 ft long catamaran vessel built specifically for the purpose of viewing and cage diving with Great White Sharks. A large cabin protects you and your belongings from the weather. A spacious toilet is also available on board.

The galvanised steel Shark cage is large enough to accommodate up to four people comfortably. The top deck offers a great viewing and photographic platform to observe the Sharks from the surface above the action.



You will get the opportunity to work and become part of the team on the boat. Shark Fever's skipper, Anthony, has been part of the Marine Dynamics crew since 2002. He knows the area around Dyer Island like the back of his hand and his professional handling of Shark Fever will help you to ensure the passengers on board have a great experience. He is also a diving instructor.

The other two crew members, Thando and Alfred, are from the local community, and have a deep knowledge and interest in the area.

Michael is a marine biologist who has been conducting research projects on the Great White Sharks around Dyer Island since 1997. His research objective is to study the population of these endangered and protected Sharks, to estimate the population size and to offer a better understanding of the dynamics involved around Dyer Island and Shark Bay.

He designed and established a new method to identify individual White Sharks using photographic identification or finprinting.

Michael is the founder of the White Shark Trust and is part of the Marine Dynamics team. Michael or one of his qualified assistants will provide you with all the answers (if they exist) to your questions, and give you an in-depth introduction to the world of Sharks

### Dyer Island Cruises

The boat, **Whale Whisperer**, is the first boat in South Africa to be designed specifically for whale watching. It is extremely comfortable and spacious, with an onboard toilet, observation deck, PA system and even a hydrophone! Whale Whisperer is a 11.5m long, rigid inflatable boat with an aluminium hull and can take up to 24 passengers, and complies with all the safety regulations set out by the marine authorities. All passengers wear comfortable life jackets during the boat trip.

Wilfred is normally the skipper on the Whale Whisperer, or Warren. Warren has been a skipper in both the shark diving and whale watching industry of Gansbaai for several years.



In season they make use of temporary qualified marine biologists to guide on the whale boat.

The marine guides and crew members, Zwelandile 'Kira' Matinane and Khwezi Baleni, are both from the local community and are training to become expert marine guides for the area. Kira or 'Whale Whistler' as he is known, has been working for Dyer Island Cruises since 2002, and Khwezi 'Whale Spotter' since 2005.

### General Information on Diving with the Great White

Finding the Great White is a skill involving years of practice. The correct water temperature, depth, visibility, the height of the swell and current and wind direction are all major factors.

Marine Dynamics undertakes cage diving with sharks. This was originally not a popular idea, as it was believed that by baiting humans in cages, sharks would associate humans with food, by conditioning. This theory was proved incorrect by discovering through research that sharks are highly nomadic animals. Their territory ranges over vast areas, even across continents. Research shows that a shark does not stay in one place long enough to become conditioned. They also disagree that cage diving is dangerous on the basis that a shark cannot mentally separate the human diver from the cage.

### Research

Wilfred is committed to supporting the research fieldwork conducted by the White Shark Trust and enables the population information to be gathered from Shark Fever.

### Conservation

Wilfred's care and dedication to the health of the sensitive ecosystem has led to the launch of different conservation projects for the area:

- **'Faces of Need - Artificial Penguin Nest Project'** which aims at creating 2000 artificial nests on Dyer Island by 2008. African penguins used to burrow into the soft guano (bird manure) on the island to nest. The guano was removed in the mid 1800's and early 1900's and used as fertilizer. Due to guano scraping in the past, down to bedrock, most of Dyer Island's penguins are forced to nest on the surface, instead of



in burrows. The best places to nest on the island are under planks of drift wood. Anything that provides shelter is preferred to an open nest.

At surface nests, adults have to be continuously on guard against Kelp Gulls, which sneak in and steal the offspring if the penguin is not giving all its concentration! Surface-nesting penguins are also vulnerable to overheating; if the penguin gets dangerously hot it simply deserts the eggs and goes into the sea to cool off. The gulls immediately take the eggs. In January 2005 Dyer Island Cruises constructed 30 artificial nests and transported them to the island aboard Whale Whisperer. Within a few days several of the nests had already been occupied.

Experiments have found the optimal design for the penguin nest boxes and newly installed nest boxes are rapidly occupied by penguins.

The African Penguin is endemic to Southern Africa breeding at 24 islands and 3 mainland sites along the coasts of South Africa and Namibia, with 90% of the population occurring in South Africa. Many of the localities where they breed are now protected.

- **'Bird Rescue Initiative'**

Over the years this initiative has allowed for the transporting of injured and oiled marine birds from Dyer Island to shore.

Transport of scientists from the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute (ornithology) and Marine and Coastal Management to Dyer Island for research is partly sponsored by Dyer Island Cruises.

Dyer Island Cruises donates transport of oiled penguins and injured birds from Dyer Island and transports them, or arranges for them to be transported, to SANCCOB (the national body for the rehabilitation of seabirds) in Cape Town. During the recent disaster resulting from an oil spill by the Treasure, Dyer Island Cruises was instrumental in obtaining a donation from Gansbaai of 60 tons of fish for the oiled penguins. Dyer Island Cruises collects and cares for injured birds and seals found along the coast and transfers them to Cape Town.

Part of the boat trip fee paid by the passengers goes directly to Western Cape Nature Conservation Board.

## Community Education and Development

Wilfred hosts a very active and progressive education programme. It is believed that by educating people they can dispel the myths and inaccuracies surrounding sharks and save the many endangered species around the world.

Educating schools, local community as well as the tourists passing through about the marine life and how to preserve and nurture it is an ongoing process.

There are several civil development projects in the area, such as teaching the local children, educational grants to people with disadvantaged backgrounds, monthly beach clean up projects and more.

- **Clean-Marine Project**

Members of Dyer Island Cruises and BirdLife Overberg have initiated a campaign whereby it will be attempted to develop a sustainable programme to combat several negative impacts of marine littering.

Phases included in this project are the development of educational material, educating the fishermen, collecting litter at sea and coastal clean-up campaigns.

- **Community Projects**

There is a BEE (Black Economic Empowerment) programme in place involving members of the local community. As it is believed it is extremely important to create jobs for the local community, there are many men in the area who are helping to build the penguin nests for 'Faces in Need'.

There is a new initiative that is being put into action called Nolwandle (meaning 'The Sea and Us' in Xhosa). This a project initiated by Marine Dynamics and Dyer Island Cruises and provides monthly training and a market for 13 local Xhosa women from the area to become involved with needlework, handcrafted cards, beadwork and other crafts and eventually help them to become self-sustainable.

If you interested you could spend very valuable time with the women helping to teach some very basic English – which would be an invaluable skill for them to develop.



## The Location

The project runs out of a coastal town of Kleinbaai just outside of Gansbaai which depends on fishing and tourism for its survival. Most tourists come from Cape Town. They are picked up by a tour rep and driven out to **'The Great White House'**, which is the project base. Kleinbaai has a small shop which sells most things you need, but the supermarket in Gansbaai (10 min drive) is the best place for supplies. Kleinbaai is a beautiful little seaside town with stunning coastal views. There isn't much to do in Kleinbaai, the pub and restaurants are in Gansbaai. It is situated approximately two hours south east of Cape Town. Gansbaai is about an hour off the N2 so getting to places would be quite a mission.

Although past volunteers have joined the buses that travel the tourists back to Cape Town. You can also catch either a Translux or Intercape coach from Caledon which would either take you along the Garden Route towards Knysna or back to Cape Town. You would need to ask for a lift to Caledon from a member of staff or get dropped off by the tourist bus if this is convenient for them.

Evening at the accommodation can feel lonely and remote. Many past volunteers have entertained themselves in the evening with music, books and games. At times the crew may go out for drinks, when they do they will often encourage you to join them but it's important to remember that you all have early starts and the crew have families to go home too so it's not something that happens often.

## YOUR PLACEMENT

The placement is designed to give volunteers the opportunity to work with Marine Dynamics/Dyer Island Cruises in the area of not only sharks but also whales, penguins, tourism, research and community development. You will work with the teams directed by Wilfred Chivell, although not directly with Wilfred himself on a day-to-day basis. You'll be taught, guided and lectured by very skilled field teams.

There is a huge variety of work that you will be going and this will largely depend on what work is being done at the time you are there.

During the summer time (November, December, January and February), Marine Dynamics are very involved in Tourist trips and dives (these fund research and community development projects) and thus they have very little time for the research and development side of their work during this period.

Wilfred likes to think that you may be fortunate enough to spot the **'Marine Big 5'** – as he calls it.

**Shark** – The Great White

**Whale** – Southern Right, Humpback and Brydes'

**Penguin** – African

**Seal** – Cape Fur

**Dolphin** – Bottlenose, Common and Humpback



## Research

Much emphasis will be placed on observing behaviour and the interactions of sharks around the boat. You will be taught how to get in and out of the cage and how to remain secure and safe in the cage. You may have to record observations of the White Sharks. This will include sex, size, markings and behaviour.

You might be asked to help fill in data sheets for the sharks they spot day to day. Most of this work will be for Michael on the Shark Boat.

Depending on your previous experience you are likely to learn many new skills. From running a boat and keeping it in a good working order to identifying the sharks and other marine life & learning their behaviour. Some times researchers use the boat trips to collect data, so speaking to them will teach you a lot as well.

On the whale boat you will help to GPS all the whales, birds and dolphins.

## Community Development

- Events such as monthly beach clean-up projects. These involve members of the local community and the children.
- You may help some of the local men from the community to place or bury the penguin houses. This may be hard physical labour resulting in sore backs and hands – but satisfaction knowing you have provided a home

and shelter. The manufacturing of the nests gets done by the employees of Dyer Island Cruises and they may sometimes need your assistance.

- Seal entanglement and injury data collection. There is work being done from The Whale Whisperer to help record sightings of seals that are injured by Sharks or that get entangled in rope or debris in the sea.

Our most recent volunteers buried 40 penguin houses under very stony ground and were rewarded with a guided walk by the person from Cape Nature who is overseeing activities on the island to see how the penguins already occupy previously placed colonies. Even Michael Scholl was jealous as permission to go onto the island is rarely granted and only to people directly involved with the conservation.

## Tourism

If your project falls during the high season – which is October to January – you will be more heavily involved with the tourist boats as Marine Dynamics is very busy with tourism at this time. Throughout the year there will be tourists, though, and you will be expected to help out with this aspect.

You will also be helping the crew prepare the boat. This includes preparing bait and chum for the day, packing the wetsuits, fuelling the boat, etc. Other duties will include taking data, looking after clients, washing the boat, controlling the decoy, etc.

During the months of July – December, Southern Right Whales are in the area – so you may be doing work on the 'Whale Whisperer'

## In General

You will probably rotate between the shark boat, the whale boat and work on land, varying between maintenance, dressing clients, checking jackets, cleaning the parking lot, placing and manufacturing penguin nests, etc.

Marine Dynamics/Dyer Island Cruises has a strong affiliation to research, education and conservation. High standards are essential and you will be working under the full authority of Marine Dynamics/Dyer Island Cruises, as all the paid staff members do. As a volunteer, if you work well in a team, you will have a wonderful experience working with some of the most skilled white shark, and marine teams in the world.



**For the sharks:** Best sightings are May to September.

The chances of seeing sharks are 90% or more. During winter stormy weather is a fact of life, and this can prevent us from going out to sea.

December to March is considered the "low" season for sharks. Sightings can vary daily from very good to below average. With wildlife there are no guarantees – you just never know.

**For the whales:** They run from July – December. This is quite possibly the only place in the world where one can see a mighty whale and a great white shark on the same boat trip.

You will be involved with boat-based whale watching. Southern right whales are almost guaranteed July to December. All trips are weather dependent.

*Please remember that your work will depend on outside factors, such as what is required from you at the time you're there, what the weather is like, what time of the year you're there, what research projects they are working on and how busy Marine Dynamics/Dyer Island Cruises is during your placement.*

## A Typical Day on this Project

Wake up at and get ready any time between 6:30 – 8:00. After breakfast, assuming that the boat trip will take place that day (because the trips are subject to weather conditions), the day will start with making your way to the 'Great White House' where, once the tourists have had their briefing, you will help to dress them in their jackets and life vests or go and prepare the boat for the trip.

You walk the tourists down to the boat. Once the boat leaves the harbour, you'll spend between 3 and 6 hours out at sea.

The Shark Boat will go out once or twice a day depending on numbers and time of year and the Whale Boat normally goes



out four times a day (for a duration of roughly 2 hours for each trip).

During your time on Shark Fever, you will participate in data collection. Once a shark is spotted, you will need to record as much information as you can about it, including data such as size, sex, any scars or other identifying marks, the length of time it remains around the boat, behaviour, and if it is a re-sight, etc. Michael will inform you about what information you need to collect.

If it is decided that it is a 'good' shark, the cage will be lowered into the sea and you will help with preparing the tourists for the cage dives. This will include getting them into their wetsuits. You may not participate in a cage dive on each occasion, but you should have the opportunity on couple of occasions.

Please keep in mind that not every boat trip ends in a cage dive – it will depend on whether there are any sharks around at that time, whether the sea conditions are conducive to lowering a cage, and other similar factors. Just to give you an example, though, a very recent volunteer on a one-month placement went out to sea on 20 occasions, but the cage was only lowered on 9 of those occasions.

At the end of the 5 hours, you will return to the shore and here your work will continue. Once back in shore you might have to wash the boat down and pack all the kit up. The equipment needs to be washed and hung to dry for the next day. If it is busy there might be a second boat trip so all the above is repeated. If not, they have the rest of the day off.

The working week is 6/7 days, it is possible to take weekends off, if you ask.

The work you do will ideally be split between Shark Fever, Whale Whisperer and work on land or in the office. It will largely depend on what is happening at the time of your placement and where the most help is needed. This is only a rough idea of the work that you will be doing.

You will be given information and the necessary material to help you answer any general questions that the tourists on the boats might ask you and you will be expected to know and provide basic information.

## Lectures and Activities

During your placement you might have the opportunity to attend some lectures on various aspects of shark and marine conservation. The number of lectures will vary at different times of the year.

Wherever possible – a weekly lecture and activity will try to be organised for you. However due to the work load at the time of the year that you are there and other external factors – you must show understanding if this cannot take place.

## ACCOMMODATION

Your accommodation will be in a comfortable house in Kleinbaai.

You will stay in a shared dorm room and you have the use of a bathroom, a kitchen, lounge area, and courtyard braai area. The house is situated within a short 10 mins walking distance from the 'The Great White House'

It is important to note that although there will be cleaning staff that will come in once a week, it is your responsibility to ensure that you keep your area clean and tidy.

### Expenses to be aware of when you are planning your budget:

There are unfortunately no washing machines available at the accommodation. The local Laundromat will cost approximately R30 per large wash – and they come to collect and return the loads every Tuesday.

Internet is available for you to use at the Marine Dynamics/Dyer Island Cruises office at the Great White House. Failing this - there are two internet cafes, one close to the accommodation which will cost you R20 per minute and another in the town which will cost you R10 for 15 minutes.

### Food:

Food is NOT provided on this project. This is because when we have provided food to volunteers on this project in the past, there were such varied tastes, likes, dislikes, etc., that it proved difficult. The local supermarket stocks a variety of food; there are kitchen facilities in the house for cooking.



**ON ARRIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA:**

You will be met at the airport by our Cape Town Manager, Jim Morel, Volunteer Coordinator, Eleanor Kilduff, or our preferred airport transfer company.

You will then be taken to a lodge in Cape Town, where you will spend one night before being fetched the following morning by the 'White Shark Bus', which takes you onto Kleinbaai. Please be aware that the bus usually arrives at around 5am so don't have a late night!

The Multi-Marine project team will introduce you to everyone and go through an orientation with you when you arrive. Our SA team is on call 24/7 if necessary, and are always there to help you in many different ways.

**The next step**

If you would like to join us on one of our exciting projects then please fill in either an online application form at our website ([www.travellersworldwide.com](http://www.travellersworldwide.com)) or one that is attached to our brochure. Once you have booked and confirmed your place we will send you detailed pack information regarding your placement and country.

**I do hope you join us and please do call or email if you have any questions at all about this or any of our other projects – 01903 502595 or email [info@travellersworldwide.com](mailto:info@travellersworldwide.com)**

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