

Flatback turtle monitoring program - Delambre Island -

Information booklet

V 2021



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Department of **Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions**



Interested in becoming a volunteer?

- 1) Read this information booklet
- 2) Confirm your interest and availability by email to James Gee at turtles@dbca.wa.gov.au. Please attach a short CV to your email.
- 3) Receive approval of your application and exact field dates
- 4) Fill out volunteer forms, complete medical forms, attend a medical check by your GP (at your own expense) and send both sets of forms back to James.
- 5) Send copies of insurance coverage if applicable
- 6) Complete Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) induction:
<https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/DBCA%20Volunteer%20Health%20and%20Safety%20Induction.pdf>
- 7) Attend “Turtle Project” briefing session
- 8) Complete online learning module on turtle track recognition and read material provided
- 9) Have fun in the field!



Delambre Island camp

A. About the project

Background

The North West Shelf Flatbacks conservation program has been operating since 2011.

The scientific and management objectives of this program are to assess the size of the flatback turtle population nesting on Delambre Island (by counting tracks and tagging females) and monitor population trends over time. The collected data will contribute to a broader understanding of the ecology and demography of the Pilbara flatback turtle stock.

Dates

The monitoring program will run from mid-November to mid-December each year. Check flatbacks.dbca.wa.gov.au. Transfers to and from the island are organised once a week. Volunteers are expected to stay on the island a minimum of 8 days (eg. Friday to Friday) and are able to stay for 15 days if they wish. We are looking for eight volunteers per week.

Cost

Covered by DBCA are the following:

- ☐ Return transport from Perth to Karratha by plane, shuttle from Karratha to Point Samson and Point Samson to Delambre Island by boat.
- ☐ Accommodation in Karratha, only if required and prior approval required.
- ☐ Food and accommodation on Delambre Island.

Not covered are:

- ☐ Food and accommodation in Perth.
- ☐ Food and accommodation in Karratha prior to and after the trip to Delambre Island unless given prior approval.
- ☐ Transport to and from the airport in Perth.
- ☐ Personal Insurance – Volunteers who are Australian residents/citizens are covered by DBCA's insurance policy (see details below). International volunteers are expected to have their own personal travel and health insurance. Some activities such as snorkelling and diving during the volunteer's own free time are not covered by DBCA's insurance policy. Volunteers may therefore want to contract their own insurance to be covered for these activities.
- ☐ Medical check by GP
- ☐ Personal expenses.



Summary of research activities

The flatback turtle (*Natator depressus*) is the most common turtle nesting on Delambre Island. green (*Chelonia mydas*) and hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) turtles also nest on the island. Turtle research is conducted with DBCA Animal Ethics Committee approval under a Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 Regulation 17 'License to Take Fauna for Scientific Purposes'.

Volunteers will help with research on flatback turtles. Duties may include:

- ☐ Patrolling the beach at night for nesting turtles
- ☐ Tagging
- ☐ Measuring
- ☐ Taking skin biopsy
- ☐ Deploying satellite tags
- ☐ Patrolling the beach and counting tracks during the day
- ☐ Monitoring nesting success and hatching success
- ☐ Deploy temperature loggers
- ☐ Data entry



From left to right: flatback, green and hawksbill turtles

Volunteer requirements and Fitness expectations

- ☐ Capable of patrolling the beach at night for six+ hours carrying 6kg
- ☐ Capable of walking on uneven terrain (rocks, soft sand)
- ☐ Capable of walking 3 - 12km in hot daytime conditions
- ☐ Able to sleep during the day in tents
- ☐ Capable of lifting 15kg
- ☐ Good eyesight for night patrols conducted with special artificial lighting
- ☐ Volunteers must present fit for work each time they are on duty and act in accordance with the DBCA's Code of Conduct.

If you have any concerns about these requirements or any health conditions that may adversely affect your capacity to perform these duties, please discuss this with DBCA staff before applying for the program or commencing duties. It is essential that your health conditions are considered before signing up to the program. All volunteers will need to make an appointment with their GP to get their medical fitness for work assessment signed.

B. Delambre Island

Location

Delambre Island is the eastern most island in the Dampier Archipelago, located in the Pilbara Region in Western Australia. The closest major town is Karratha which is a 2-hour flight from Perth. The Island lies approximately 22km off the coast from Point Samson, out boat departure point, which is a 45-minute drive from Karratha airport.



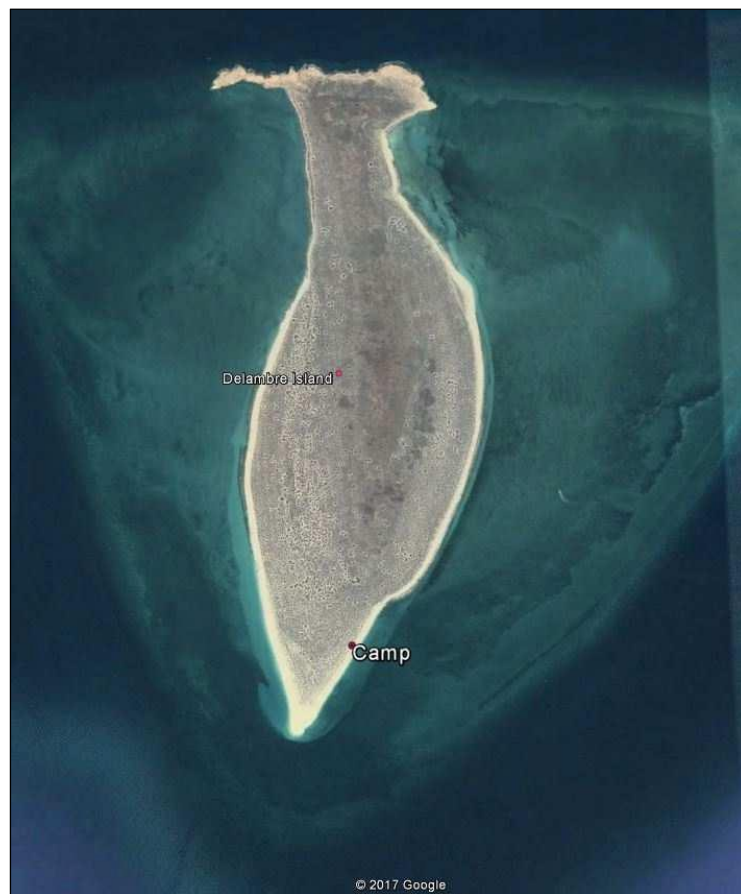
Environment

Delambre Island is a “Class C” Nature Reserve. The island is approximately 4km in length and occupies a total area of 320 hectares. The island has no built facilities, and the public are allowed to camp on the southern tip of the island.

Limestone reefs and platforms surround the island, with diverse coral assemblages on the northern side. Areas of deep sandy soil are found on the island supporting Acacia and Triodia shrubland and coastal heath scrub. In addition to green and flatback turtles, humpback whales can be seen around the Mackerel Islands from June to October, dugongs from September to April and many species of dolphins such as common, bottlenose, spinner and humpback dolphins all year round.

Delambre Island has a resident population of raptors including Osprey, Curlews, Herons and Oyster Catchers and Sea Eagles, and Turnstones, Red Knots, Pelicans, Kestrels Terns and Cormorants are regular visitors. Saltwater crocodiles are rarely seen in the Pilbara, with their common range being further north in the Kimberley.

The turtle tagging program camp will be based on the south-eastern side of Delambre Island and tagging will occur along the east and west sides of the southern tip.



Getting there

Direct flights from Perth to Karratha run daily. From Karratha, staff and volunteers will be driven to Point Samson where they will be transported to Delambre Island by chartered boat. The boat trip across to Delambre takes around 1-2 hours in relatively choppy water.

C. Daily life

Turtle work

Turtle work mainly occurs at night; however, some turtles will nest on a high tide during the daytime. We also count turtles' tracks during the day, starting at dawn. It is important to remember that we work around the turtles – not the other way around.

Please be flexible as shifts will vary due to tides, the number of turtles on the beach and the number of staff/volunteers available. Be aware that some nights may be quiet, and other nights may be extremely busy. Pace yourself as you may get very tired and take time to sleep during the day.

Tagging turtles is physically demanding and you should expect long hours working under difficult conditions (approximately 5-8 hours per night). You will be asked to monitor sections of beach varying from 200m to 6km. This will require you to walk over uneven ground and sandy beaches up to 10km a night while carrying a 5-7kg backpack and occasionally to walk up and/or down steep slopes. Volunteers need to have a reasonable level of physical fitness to walk these distances. If you have any concerns about this, please discuss this with DBCA staff before applying for the program or commencing duties.



For some it is also quite mentally and/or emotionally demanding. For safety, ease and comfort, you will always tag with at least one other person. DBCA staff and volunteers with little/no turtle tagging experience will be trained by experienced DBCA staff. Prior to your trip to Delambre Island, read all recommended material and complete the online learning modules.

Data Entry

Data from each night of turtle tagging will be entered into a database the following day using a laptop computer. Volunteers will assist with data entry as it provides participants with a better understanding of the program.

Recreation

There will be plenty of free time during the days. Daytime activities can include wildlife watching, swimming in the sea snorkelling, fishing and walks to look at the island. You are encouraged to bring something else to keep you amused i.e. a good book, diary, sketch book etc. If you bring music, please bring ear plugs to not disturb others.

Tagging turtles is the number one priority of the program, so please do not over-exert yourself with daytime activities as we may have many busy (or late) nights.

Examples of typical days

Four teams of two people would work for 6-8 hours around high tide at night. A fifth team of two people would walk around the island every morning to count tracks.

E.g. 1 High Tide at 600am 600pm – We would start just before sunset and patrol the beach until turtles stop nesting for the night (maybe 11pm). We would then start again around 4am to survey the beach for morning nesters around the high tide.

E.g. 2 High tide at Midday and Midnight – We would start patrolling the beach around 9pm and go through until 4am.

Remember, start and finish times depend upon if turtles are still coming up the beach to nest.

D. On the Island

On arrival (and departure)

A safety and orientation induction will be provided, and time will be given to get settled. A job briefing and rostering will also be discussed prior to beginning work.

Accommodation

Delambre Island has no built facilities; we will be setting a camp up at the beginning of the program and taking it down at the end. Camping equipment will be shipped to and from the island by barge. During the program volunteers/staff, their personal gear and any supplies will be transported by boat.

A camp manager will coordinate the food, water and other supplies ordering, manage the power supply for the camp, manage rubbish for return to mainland and manage the toilets. Everyone is responsible for keeping the camp clean and tidy.

Everyone one will be allocated a tent to themselves, a stretcher and pillow. You will need to bring sheets, sleeping bag/blanket and pillowcase.

Bathroom facilities

All bathing is done in the ocean, or with sea water showers due to limited fresh water. A small amount of fresh water can be used to rinse off the salt water after bathing but please do not expect you will be able to rinse your hair with fresh water every day. There is very little opportunity to wash clothing, except in sea water, so please bring sufficient clothes. Remember it will be warm to hot on the island so you will be wearing t-shirts/singlets and shorts every day.

Toilets are portable camping loos. The canisters need to be transported back to the mainland for emptying, so please be mindful of this when flushing so canisters are not filled up too quickly.

Communications

Mobile phone coverage varies depending on which network you are with. Telstra works well at the camp but is patchy to non-existent on the western side. Other networks do generally not work well in the Pilbara outside of towns. Internet can be access through mobile phone hotspots. DBCA does not provide internet access to volunteers. A satellite phone is kept at Delambre camp for emergencies and the daily call in to Karratha DBCA office.

See list of contact numbers below - A full list of numbers will be provided to volunteers to pass on to family members before heading to the field.

Food

All food (standard meals and snacks) and non-alcoholic drinks will be provided by DBCA. Food supplies will be replenished every 7 days. There will be plenty of food, but you are welcome to bring extra/specific snacks. Breakfast and lunch are do-it-yourself at whatever time you wake up. The

responsibility of preparing and cooking dinner is coordinated by the camp manager, but everyone is expected to take turns in assisting. Cleaning of dishes and tidying up is shared by everyone.

Specific food allergies and needs can be catered for, but early notification must be provided.

Medications

Ensure that you bring any required medications; there will be no opportunity to resupply.

Alcohol policy

To ensure a safe work environment where staff and volunteers of DBCA are not exposed to hazards and risks associated with the use of alcohol and/or other drugs, a strict alcohol policy will apply while on the island:

- ☐ Employees and volunteers will present to work fit for duty and free of impairment by alcohol and any other form of drug.
- ☐ A BAC of 0.00% is required for any employee or volunteer undertaking turtle monitoring for the department:

Smoking

In the field, smoking is not permitted while patrolling the beach and handling turtles. Smoking will be allowed in designated areas.

Duties

As well as the turtle related duties, you will be expected to contribute to simple chores, such as washing dishes, keeping the common areas clean, preparing meals etc. Please be mindful to do your part as it contributes to a happy team.

E. Safety and well-being

Fitness and medical history

Volunteers need to have a good level of physical fitness you will be required to go see your GP to have your medical fitness for work assessment completed.

Provided Safety Equipment *

- ☐ Defibrillator
- ☐ A master first aid kit will be located at camp
- ☐ Smaller first aid kits will be available for backpacks
- ☐ Satellite Phone
- ☐ VHF Radios
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Insect repellent

*All DBCA staff are trained in Senior First Aid

Hydration and water availability

Water is transported onto the island with all other supplies. Plenty will be taken onto the island and resupplied throughout but please be mindful to not waste water to ensure plenty for drinking and cooking. Hydration guidelines in a hot climate are a minimum of three litres per day for men and two litres per day for women.

Weather conditions & UV radiation

Weather conditions on Delambre Island in November/December can be hot, particularly around midday. Average temperatures vary between 20°C and 35°C. Please be sensible and 'slip, slop, slap' during the day with long sleeved shirts, sun cream, broad-brimmed hats and sunglasses. There will be ample drinking water so keep your body fluids up by drinking plenty of water. Whilst the weather is usually warm, nights can be cool, and we may experience some rain. Volunteers need to be prepared for a variety of weather.

Sea sickness (transfer to Island)

The trip to Delambre Island can be rough. For those people who suffer from travel sickness it is best to take sea sickness tablets at least 30 minutes before departure.

Cuts, abrasion, sprains, strains

Turtle tagging requires staff and volunteers to monitor sections of beach that may be uneven, rocky or steep, during both daytime and night time. Suitable footwear waterproof, with enclosed toes, ankle support and slip-resistant sole must be worn as you will be walking on soft sand and over rocky areas. Long pants and long-sleeved shirts are recommended as they help prevent scratches from turtles' nails or from barnacles on turtles' carapaces.

Sleep

It is essential that everyone gets adequate sleep. You should be able to sleep during the daytime and at irregular hours. A quiet environment should be maintained around the sleeping area to allow everyone to rest.

Lifting

There will be many tasks requiring lifting. Each person must recognise their own ability and not go beyond this point. There are many people to help and lifting can always be shared. Please remember to keep a good posture and in particular a straight back when lifting.

Working with turtles

Training on how to handle turtles will be provided in order to limit the risks of being injured by turtles:

- ☐ Never stand in front of the turtle - Flatback turtles can bite if given the opportunity
- ☐ When tagging or measuring keep feet and legs away from the turtle because the claws on the flippers can scratch
- ☐ Be careful not to get sand in your eyes when turtles are digging or covering their nest.

Bites and stings

The surrounding reef provides a large diversity of marine life. Marine animals such as stonefish, jellyfish, cone shells and blue-ringed octopuses can be dangerous and can potentially bite or sting. Do not touch corals as you could end up with stings or coral cuts (poisoning). Other animals to be aware of include sharks and rays.

It is highly recommended that you ensure that your tetanus shots are up to date.

Suitable footwear with enclosed toes is highly recommended when going on a hike on the island. Pythons are known to inhabit Delambre Island please be mindful of where you walk when walking through the scrub.

Fishing

You are welcome to bring a fishing rod with you and try your luck during the day. Please note that bait will not be given space in food/drink fridges and eskies, it is recommended that you bring lures in case you are unsuccessful foraging for bait. Avoid fishing where people are swimming. No spear guns please.

Snorkelling

You may bring snorkelling gear with you and must snorkel within your ability and within sight of other people. It is preferred that you use a 'buddy system' i.e. snorkelling in pairs. Because Delambre is remote and we may not have a vessel with us, everyone will be asked to go no further than 30m from water's edge when swimming or snorkelling. See paragraph above regarding bites and stings.

Staff and volunteers participating in out-of-hours (before or after work or during your lunch break) in-water activities such as snorkelling when on field trips may not be covered by departmental insurance for injury or evacuation purposes. A large number of variables are associated with determining the department's liability and each claim would be treated on its merits prior to injury or evacuation compensation being given to the employee/volunteer. Therefore, all staff/volunteers who wish to engage in any out-of-hours snorkelling during fieldtrips do so at their own personal risk, with potentially no corporate insurance cover. If you wish to ensure you are covered adequately then you may consider organising personal dive injury and evacuation insurance through an independent provider. No diving will be permitted.

Other

Appliances such as gas BBQ or camp stove might be different from what you are used to, so please do not hesitate to ask for instructions before using them.

Before leaving to go on walks or do water activities, you must:

- ☐ tell someone (who is awake!)
- ☐ wear sensible clothing/footwear
- ☐ take sufficient water, and
- ☐ record your details (name, destination, time of departure and expected time of return) on the provided whiteboard. Failure to do so will result in a severe fine: cooking and washing up for the rest of the trip.

Please take these safety procedures seriously. If you have any questions or doubt, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff.

F. Things to bring

For tagging:

- ☐ OLD clothing – long pants and long-sleeved shirts or overalls
- ☐ Head torch – it must have a red light
- ☐ Suitable footwear waterproof, with enclosed toes, ankle support and slip-resistant sole – make sure they are **comfortable** as you will be doing a lot of walking! Shoes/boots with high ankles will help keep sand out. Reef walkers or wetsuit booties are not suitable
- ☐ Gaiters or sock guards may be useful for keeping sand out of your shoes/boots
- ☐ Glasses/contacts (if required) for recording or reading tag numbers
- ☐ Watch/timepiece for recording the time on datasheets
- ☐ Alarm clock (essential to ensure that you wake for your shift)

In general:

- ☐ Sheets, pillowcase and sleeping bag/blanket
- ☐ Sunglasses x 2
- ☐ Sunhat
- ☐ Water bottle
- ☐ Casual clothing for ALL conditions (it can get cold at night, especially if there's a wind – a warm shirt/light jacket and beanie are recommended)
- ☐ Small daypack for day use when exploring the island
- ☐ Water bottle
- ☐ Sunscreens
- ☐ Towel/sarong
- ☐ Toiletries, medications and personal items
- ☐ Sense of humour

Optional:

- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Binoculars
- ☐ Books/music etc
- ☐ Eye shades and ear plugs for daytime sleeping
- ☐ Any special food you require
- ☐ Fishing, swimming and snorkelling gear

G. Other important information

Volunteer insurance

Volunteers are covered under DBCA's insurance policy for volunteers if they are registered volunteers and if they are Australian residents/citizens.

Volunteers are covered within the scope of the tasks designated and available for a particular project. They are also covered whilst travelling between place of residence and place of voluntary employment but not during any substantial deviation for reasons unconnected with the voluntary employment.

Volunteers who wish to engage in any out-of-hours diving or snorkelling during fieldtrips do so at their own personal risk, with potentially no corporate insurance cover. If you wish to ensure you are covered adequately then you may consider organising personal dive injury and evacuation insurance through an independent provider.

Personal Injury: Benefits are paid on an "out of pocket basis" after other entitlements have been exhausted. That is, volunteers are required to first claim on Medicare, private health cover, personal insurance, employment sick leave entitlements, compulsory third-party insurance etc.... Volunteers are covered up to \$221,891 for personal accident.

Vehicle and property damage: Benefits will be paid on an "out of pocket basis" for damage caused to a volunteer's private motor vehicle or personal property used whilst undertaking authorised Departmental volunteer activities, after other entitlements have been exhausted. That is, volunteers are required to first claim on private insurance before submitting a claim for out of pocket expenses to the department. RiskCover may pay excess over \$1000.

Conflict of interest

Volunteers are required to read DBCA's Conflict of Interest Information Sheet and Conflicts of Interest Policy before they start working.

A conflict of interest is a situation arising from conflict between the performance of the functions of the department and private or personal interests. Volunteers should take all reasonable steps to avoid a conflict of interest and be aware of and identify for themselves any conflicts of interest or perceived or potential conflicts of interest and disclose them to a member of staff.

Occupational Health and Safety

Safety and health in Western Australian workplaces is regulated by the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* (the OSH Act) and the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996 (the OSH regulations) supported by codes of practice and guidance notes

DBCA has a responsibility to ensure volunteers are not harmed as a result of the work carried out by the employer, employees or other volunteers.

Volunteers are not considered 'employees' for the purpose of the Acts; however, DBCA's policy states volunteers are to be treated like employees.

Volunteers are protected under Section 21 of the Act where employers must ensure that people who are not their employees are not harmed as a result of the work carried out.

Section 23E of the Act also encompasses volunteers and states that employer duty of care requirements are applicable.

Emergency response procedures, Evacuation Plan and Medical incident

You will receive a copy of the emergency response procedure and evacuation plan before starting your trip.

In case of a medical incident, volunteers must:

- ☐ Administer first aid and report injury to Trip leader
- ☐ Seek medical attention and obtain a First Medical Certificate from their GP
- ☐ (Advise GP this is not 'Workers Compensation')
- ☐ Volunteer pays for the treatment, otherwise delays may occur possibly resulting in debt collection from volunteer by provider.
- ☐ Volunteer to complete a RiskCover workers' compensation Claim form (obtained through DBCA Community Involvement Unit or Risk Management Branch)
- ☐ Provide documents showing out of pocket costs e.g. difference between Medicare payment & GP
- ☐ Risk Cover reviews information accuracy vital to determine liability.
- ☐ Claim is determined – if approved claimant is reimbursed out of pocket expenses

NOTE: Claimant must pay the account first, then claim through their own insurance or Medicare. Insurance does not cover total cost of treatment.

General code of conduct

DBCA's staff and volunteers are expected to be open, accountable, responsive, innovative, outcome focused and collaborative and will always act with the highest integrity.

Volunteers are required to read DBCA's Code of Conduct before they start working. Some important points are highlighted below:

Staff and volunteers are required to:

- ☐ act with integrity in the performance of official duties and to be scrupulous in the use of official information, equipment and facilities
- ☐ exercise proper courtesy, consideration and sensitivity in dealings with members of the public and other employees/volunteers.

In case of a workplace incident (e.g. conflict between volunteers, complaints regarding workload or work environment, harassment, health and safety issues), volunteers should report to the trip leader/volunteer coordinator immediately.

Media

If a journalist contacts you directly, refer them to the trip leader.

There will be 'talent release forms' available for you fill out if you allow your image to be used by the department for media/advertising about the program.

Photography

Please be aware that volunteers must follow the code of conduct regarding photographs of turtles, work undertaken or staff, which are taken whilst on duty. These are considered 'official information' and can only be disclosed with the express permission of the Director General (DG). Placing photos on social media such as Facebook or Instagram is considered publishing, so would require DG permission.



Volunteers may take photos for personal use whilst on the island. Photos of scenery or of the volunteer, taken whilst 'off duty', may be published on social media as long as any caption or comment does not disclose information that is not already in the public domain.

Volunteers are encouraged to follow the department's Facebook page and share updates and photos of the turtle work from there.

For more information regarding photographer's right it can be found at:
<http://www.artslaw.com.au/info-sheets/info-sheet/street-photographers-rights/>

H. Essential contact numbers

Scott Whiting

Office: 08 9219 9752

Mobile: 0413 375 782

Scott.whiting@dbca.wa.gov.au

James Gee

James.gee@dbca.wa.gov.au

Tony Tucker

Office: 08 9219 9795

tony.tucker@dbca.wa.gov.au

Shaun Wilson:

Office 08 9219 9806

Mobile: 0400 121 175

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will get back to you as soon as possible

Thank you for your interest in the program! We are looking forward to the field season and to meeting new volunteers with a keen interest in turtle conservation!

