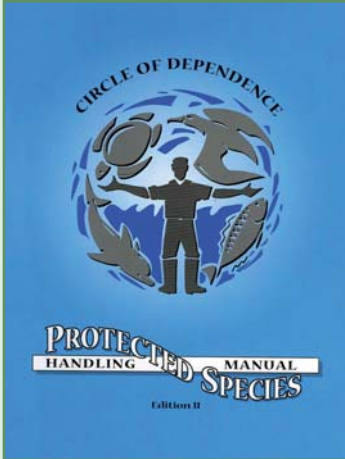


# HANDLING PROTECTED MARINE SPECIES MANUAL, WORKSHOP & EXTENSION PROGRAM

## overview of the project



*The Protected Species Handling Manual*

Australian seas are home to a rich diversity of species, some of which are threatened due to human activities. It is inevitable that in our coastal and seagoing pursuits, there will be some contact with these species, often as a result of fishing. Ocean Watch Australia recognised a need for training and guidelines so that when these interactions occur, both the animal and the handler are unharmed. In this project, the group revised and reprinted the Protected Species Handling Manual and ran a series of workshops based on the manual. The manual is now being used in training workshops and has been adopted in the Codes of Conduct for tuna and billfish fisheries. The booklet has also been widely distributed to a range of organisations that have an interest in marine related activities. It is a clear and easy to use reference that helps the fishing industry to implement environmental management practices.

## how the project was carried out

The manual was produced in two formats: an A5 booklet for general distribution and an A4 version for inclusion in the industry Codes of Conduct. The material contains step-by-step clearly illustrated guides to rescuing, handling and releasing marine species that have become trapped or entangled by fishing equipment. Birds, fish, mammals and reptiles are treated in separate sections, with a constant emphasis on the safety of both handlers and animals.

The project included a series of workshops designed and run for the fishing industry. Some covered handling marine species in general, and others have given advice on handling accidentally caught turtles. These workshops utilised the skills of a range of experts from industry, wildlife carer groups and the community. Participants received practical advice on the handling of the animals and birds and outlined the skills needed in their rescue. Copies of the manual were distributed at the workshops for future reference.

## outcomes now and in the future

The revised Protected Species Handling Manual is a tangible outcome of this project. It represents a versatile and valuable resource, being produced in different formats according to its use. Copies have been sent to a variety of environmental research and rescue organisations and a pdf version is available to download on the Ocean Watch website. Ocean Watch also has an educational trailer that promotes the manual through visits to regional shows and talks at the Sydney Fish Markets.

The ultimate outcome of the project is an increase in knowledge among fishing operators and coastal communities, which will enhance the survival of many marine animals. Ocean Watch and SeaNet will continue to implement their educational campaign to improve handling practices throughout coastal Australia, using the manual as a tool. They plan to produce a version in Bahasa to cater for the large number of Indonesian crew in the tuna and billfish industry.

## benefits, challenges & lessons learned

Ocean Watch has received very positive feedback from its workshops and from the State and Federal Governments for its revised manual. The organisation has provided an excellent, easy to use resource that users have found to be well set out and informative. The manual and associated workshops have built the capacity of the fishing industry and the community to comply with legislation and keep the oceans healthy for the future. Ocean Watch has provided educational material for the first time on what can be done for marine animals should an encounter occur, where previous information has merely stressed avoidance of any encounter and stated the laws about what cannot be done. A minor challenge for the project was gaining the participation of fishers and making it relevant to the fishing industry.