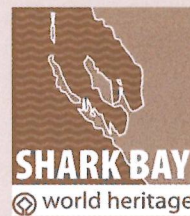
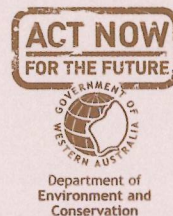


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Shark Bay World Heritage Notes



ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION DISTRICT OFFICE, DENHAM, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

DOLPHIN FEEDING

Monkey Mia's dolphins are wild animals that must support themselves in a marine environment which can be hostile and dangerous. The young calves at Monkey Mia must learn natural behaviour from their mothers and others to ensure that they know how to survive in the wild. Too much feeding and long periods at the beach significantly reduce these vital learning lessons.

At Monkey Mia, a feeding strategy has been developed which allows for human contact with the dolphins while ensuring that the dolphins do not become dependent on handouts or stressed by human interaction. Dependency, or overfeeding, may result in the dolphin calves not learning the necessary behaviour to fend for themselves.

Researchers estimate that dolphins need to eat up to about five percent of their body weight in fish a day. Shark Bay bottlenose dolphins – which are slightly smaller than dolphins of the same species found in cooler waters – need between 5 and 6 kg of fish a day. To ensure that the Monkey Mia dolphins continue to catch their own food, the amount of fish fed to them is limited to about one third of their estimated daily requirements. The amount and type of fish provided to each dolphin is recorded by the DEC Rangers.

Several female dolphins are offered small amounts of fresh fish up to three times a day randomly between 7.30am and 12.00pm when they swim to the shore. A small number of visitors are chosen to assist with feeding them.

Making the most of your interaction with the dolphins;

- Avoid touching the dolphins, touching discourages them from coming close and can make them aggressive
- Never feed the dolphins without the supervision of DEC officers. This is an offence under the *Wildlife Conservation Act*.
- Swim outside the dolphin interaction area.
- Avoid the use of sunscreen on your legs before entering the water. Sunscreens can irritate dolphin eyes.
- Stand no more than knee deep in the water and wait for the dolphins to approach you.
- Dolphin stress signs include tail slapping, head jerks, loud popping noises and an open mouth with bared teeth. You should leave the water if a dolphin is acting aggressively, as once agitated, they can bite.
- You will be asked to move out of the water when the dolphins are fishing in the shallows or when a newborn calf (up to 6 weeks of age) is in shore.
- Children must be supervised by adults when in the water.
- Pets are prohibited in the dolphin interaction feeding area.

