

Catherine Peters

PhD Student

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Research Interests/Experience:

My research interests centre on marine mammal conservation and ecology with a primary focus on understanding anthropogenic impacts and the mechanisms that influence cetacean habitat usage, social structure, movement patterns and site fidelity. These key parameters will form the focus of my PhD studies.

I graduated from the University of Manchester, UK, with a BSc (Hons) in Zoology. Following graduation, I assisted on several research projects including (1) The marine ecosystem health initiative, Utila Centre for Marine Ecology (2) Biorock implementation and maintenance, Gili Centre for Marine Ecology and (3) Surface and Underwater Research on Feeding Australian Humpback Whales (PhD study by Kylie Mackenzie, Queensland University, Australia). Further to this I undertook independent research, Energetic Cost of Behaviour in *Orcinus orca*: a non-invasive acoustic study, and gained key skills in deployment and maintenance of acoustic hydrophone arrays and photo-ID (San Juan Islands, USA).

More recently, my research experience expanded to New Zealand, with an extended intern position within the C-MRG lab group (PhD study by Sarah Dwyer, Massey University, New Zealand), prior to becoming a PhD student with C-MRG. I have also successively become an active member of the Kaikoura Oceanic Research Institute (KORI).

Thesis Title:

Distribution, ecology and conservation of cetacea in far North waters, New Zealand

Supervision:

Dr. Karen Stockin (Massey University, Albany)
Dr. Matthew Pawley (Massey University, Albany)
Prof. Mark Orams (School of Hospitality and Tourism, AUT University)

Study Aims:

- ❖ Using dedicated, systematic surveys to provide the first assessment of far North waters for cetacean and quantify the importance of these waters for delphinids (bottlenose)

- dolphin, common dolphin, false killer whale, pilot whale) and larger balaenopterids (Bryde's whale, humpback whale) by assessing density, habitat use and behaviour.
- ❖ To determine any ecological and behavioural differences between the two forms of *Tursiops* encountered with far north and BoI waters.
 - ❖ Assess the status quo of the tourism industry and determine what if any changes have occurred as a result of changes in tourism pressure, management regime and population decline. This will also include looking at subsurface behaviour as well as acoustic monitoring around tour vessels.

Funding:

- ❖ Department of Conservation
- ❖ JS Watson Trust, Forest & Bird

Publications/Reports:

Peters, CH. & Stockin, K. 2013. Responses of bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) to vessel activity in Northland, New Zealand. *Internal progress report to the Department of Conservation, Northland conservancy, New Zealand.* 30pp.

Peters, CH. 2013. Incident report, RE: Round 9 - G.J. Gardner NZ Offshore Powerboat Race. *Massey University confidential report to the Department of Conservation, Northland conservancy, New Zealand.* 4pp.

Conference presentations:

Dwyer SL, Stockin KA, Visser IN, Clement D & **Peters CH.** 2012. The importance of Great Barrier Island waters for Nationally Endangered New Zealand bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). *Australian Marine Sciences Association-New Zealand Marine Sciences Society, Tasmania, Australia.*