

Laura Torre

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Research Interests/Experience:

My research interests are varied and include marine mammal behaviour, ecology and conservation, sea turtle conservation, effects of marine tourism on marine species and studies of threatened endemic terrestrial and marine species. I believe in the power of education and sharing conservation messages with young people so that they become inspired to take action for the environment.

My local research experience includes assisting with a photo-ID and a marine tourism study of common dolphins in the Hauraki Gulf. I have also assisted with biopsy and photo-ID catalogue matching work with Bryde's whales in the Hauraki Gulf. Through recent coursework I have participated in field projects using techniques to monitor and manage wildlife. Projects included: transect searches for endangered snails, bird counts via fixed width transects on an offshore island sanctuary, surveys for cetaceans on a tourism vessel to investigate habitat usage, and a baseline assessment of a stream restoration and erosion control project. I also used GIS to plot cetacean sightings in the Hauraki Gulf and analysed how environmental variables affected where sightings occurred.

For my Special Topic research project I conducted a research project looking at historic and opportunistic sightings of humpback whales in the Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand. I compiled historic whaling data from a local shore-based whaling station as well as data from contemporary opportunistic sightings looking for trends in the data set.

My international research experience includes assisting with a study of humpback whales off Maui where I was tasked with photo-ID, deploying underwater camera and hydrophone, collecting environmental data and data entry. In Oahu I assisted with a fluke matching project for North Pacific humpback whales.

I served as project manager for the Hawaii Longline Seabird Mortality Mitigation Project which aimed to reduce the bycatch of threatened populations of albatross in the local longline fishery.

Thesis Title:

Utilisation and behaviour of humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) mother/calf pairs in Gold Coast near shore waters and its perception by whale watchers.

Supervision:

Dr Karen Stockin (Massey University, Albany)

Dr Olaf Meynecke (Griffith University, Gold Coast)

Study Aims:

- ❖ Determine the distribution of humpback whale cow/calf pairs in southern Gold Coast near shore waters during the southern migration.
- ❖ Examine the utilisation of humpback whale cow/calf pairs in southern Gold Coast near shore waters during the southern migration?
- ❖ Document the behaviours of humpback whale cow/calf pairs
- ❖ Conduct surveys of whale watch passengers to determine the value passengers place on on-board learning.

Publications:

Torre L, Martinez E & Stockin KA. In prep. Where have the humpback whales gone? Historic catches and opportunistic sightings of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in the Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand.

Torre L. 2012. Historic perspective and opportunistic sightings of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in the Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand. Massey University Special Topic Report.

McNamara B, **Torre L** & Grabowsky-Kaaialii G. 1999. Final Report: Hawaii Longline Seabird Mortality Mitigation Project. Submitted to the Western Pacific Fisheries Management Council, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.

Cousins K, McNamara B, **Torre L**, Klieber P & Grabowsky-Kaaialii G. 1999. Investigating Methods to Reduce the Incidental Catch of Albatrosses in the Hawaii Longline Fishery. Submitted to the Western Pacific Fisheries Management Council, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.

Conference presentations:

Torre L, Martinez E & Stockin KA. 2013. Where have the humpbacks gone? Historic catches and opportunistic sightings of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in the Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand. *The 20th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals, Dunedin, New Zealand.*