

2.2 The community raises awareness about the protection of wildlife, including ways for everybody to help contribute to solutions.

There are many ways for locals and visitors alike to gain a deeper understanding of the wildlife and habitats around them in the Whitsundays. If you google “Whitsunday whale” the first few hits are all from local tourism sites that tell anyone who clicks about the migrating humpbacks, calving in the area, and the updated distance requirements and rules within the Whitsunday Whale Protection Area.

The Tourism Whitsunday website has a whole [page](#) dedicated to our Whale Heritage Area candidacy. Most of these sights also advise visitors to download Eye on the Reef, a citizen science app by GBRMPA. [Eye on the Reef](#) allows you to report sightings and incidents, provides local zoning maps, includes seasonal closures, and provides contact information for reporting events e.g., vessel collisions, zoning offenses, and sick or injured animals.

The WoW Steering Committee has also started collaborating on a Facebook page “[Whales of the Whitsundays](#)” that has garnered major interest and has over 1.4K members so far. This is quite impressive for a region with only 38K residents. Locals are encouraged to post about any whale sightings and share whale related information. Featured posts include:

1. Information on the Whale Protection Area and the additional rules that apply
2. Encouraging members to add details about their media and how they got shots that may look to be outside of the regulated whale viewing distances (zoom camera, whales being curious and coming close on their terms aka “mugging”) as a way to reinforce that even though there are strict rules, having amazing experiences and photos can be done with minimal impact
3. How to report whale strandings and becoming a stranding response volunteer
4. A reminder to upload sightings to Eye on the Reef.

The WoW steering committee has produced a Whales of the Whitsundays information flyer (attached). This has many QR codes that link to whale information including the regulations. This flyer has been provided to many tourism businesses, marinas and to Hamilton Island for display during Race Week to further share the information.

Even if visitors to the area have done little research pre-arrival, many companies provide welcome packs. For example, Coral Sea Marina - the largest marina in the Whitsundays, provides a welcome pack that includes: A Marina Welcome Book (that has a section of Environmental Initiatives within the marina), The Tourism Whitsunday Visitor Guide, Whitsundays National Parks Brochure, The Be Pest-Free Flyer, Whitsundays Marine Park Zoning Map (Map 10), Visiting the Whitsundays Recreation Guide, Spearfishing Guide Flyer, Eye on the Reef Business Cards, How Zoning Works Flyer, and Whale Zoning Information Flyer. These are also available at marina reception for anyone who is interested.

Education about the local wildlife and how to protect it isn’t just for adults. The four local schools are also [Reef Guardian Schools](#), which means that students in each year level learn, through projects and integrated units, how to protect the Great Barrier Reef and the diverse creatures and plants that live within it. Whales of the Whitsundays has been involved with multiple outreach efforts including participation in the Cannonvale State School under-8s day, involvement in the Great Barrier Reef Festival Family Fun Day, and helping plan the first annual Traditional Welcome Whales Event where

children were encouraged to become part of the artwork by adding their handprint (attached). Keeping the younger generation included in the protection of whales and their habitats is key in their continued preservation.