CHAPTER 4

FROM CABINETS OF CURIOSITY TO BLUE ZOOS:
THE EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC AQUARIA

Adding a zoo—as well as a museum, library, and art gallery—and aquarium—appears to have been part of the process of converting an impersonal array of buildings and houses into a “city”, of affording a sense of permanence, wealth, and metropolitan identity that mapped places locally and regionally (Anderson, 1998: 36).

4.1 Introduction

As a part of my thesis is about marine animal displays, the history of these displays and the way they have been transformed over time is relevant. As such, this chapter presents a history of the collection and display of marine nature, set within a background of artefact collection more generally. Specifically, the chapter is intended to illuminate the processes by which, over time, marine animals have shifted from being objects of recreational curiosity and science through to being subjects of conservation and entertainment. This shift has taken place within a tourism context.

Marine animals have been displayed explicitly through aquaria. As an institution, aquaria share much with museums and Zoological Gardens. For instance, all three institutions operate on a grand scale. In addition, all were traditionally entangled with the State, often being government funded and often being called upon to display official messages about the objects and animals on display. In an empirical sense, zoos and aquaria are another example of the practice of collecting and maintaining live exhibits. While there is limited critical appraisal of aquaria, there is a significant body of work on museums and on zoos. As such, it is to this literature that I turn for some guidance in rethinking aquaria which are the key means by which marine animals have been historically handled for public consumption.
In Chapter 2 I explained that aquaria were initially set within the Winter Gardens of the major seaside resorts, such as at Brighton, England. The animals and plants for these displays were collected by early naturalists fascinated as they were with the classification of the ocean world during their coastal travels. In this chapter I extend this story. I begin with the historical emergence of the collection and display of marine life for recreation and scientific endeavour. The chapter then moves to what might be seen as the ultimate in marine animal commodification, the Sea World Theme Park on Queensland’s Gold Coast. Here, animals set amongst fantasy rides and a retail extravaganza, are frequently humanised and trivialised for entertainment, a practice legitimated through the logic of science and education. As the chapter will show, at Sea World animals are largely set apart from the human visitors, in this way possibly contributing to the human/animal divide. The chapter then moves on to examine the popularisation of marine animals through films and television before exploring another form of modern day marine animal display, that of the Blue Zoo.\footnote{The term ‘Blue Zoo’ is one used by the Melbourne Aquarium in advertising their education programs. It can be seen to carry the aims of conservation, education and recreation associated with most modern terrestrial zoos.} Here, animals are presented for tourist consumption encased within an immersion and environmental education logic. Initially, I glance at the new Melbourne Aquarium which illustrates a definitive case of urban immersion tourism before moving on to examine another example of a modern form of marine animal display, namely UnderWater World at Mooloolaba on Australia’s Sunshine Coast. At this site the marine animal is at once framed as a source of entertainment and environmental education for tourists. Specifically, this institution uses interpretation to challenge animal stereotypes such as the ‘blood thirsty shark’ and the ‘comical seal’.

4.2 Museum Culture

There is an extensive literature on museum collecting (see for example Elsner and Cardinal (eds.), 1994; Karp \textit{et al.} (eds.), 1992; Karp and Lavine (eds.), 1990). However, for a thesis specifically investigating the collection of live marine nature within a public aquaria context, much of this literature was not directly relevant and as such is only referred to
briefly here. Museums of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were variously called "cabinets of curiosity", "wonder rooms", and "theatres of nature" (Findlen, 1994: 22). Here, the "bizarre and the uniqueness of the universe were collected" (Shelton, 1994: 202). The cabinets stood as representations of Europe's domestication of the world and its customs. At this time the object of collection was clearly the other, and in this way the act of collecting could be seen as "a form of subordination, appropriation, de-personification" (Bal, 1994: 105). Through collections, things that were unknown could be learnt, and things that were known could be observed at close range.

One of the functions of early museums was to collect items from the apparent chaos of nature and present them in a coherent, scientific order in one space. Italy was one of the first areas in Europe to show such interest in natural objects. Here, collecting was the pastime of the social and educated elite who had the leisure time to devote to it. And it was through collecting that they attempted to understand their world. Findlen (1994) notes that humanist and aristocratic desires to search out origins and the past was one way collectors gave meaning to their lives. She further suggests that, "[c]ollecting was one way of maintaining some degree of control over the natural world and taking its measure" (Findlen, 1994: 4). Karp (1992) emphasises that museum displays have been created within a power system whereby the cultural institution classifies societies and nature. It was accepted at this time that experience, a close encounter with actual specimens of nature, was an essential part of gaining knowledge of the natural world.

According to Findlen (1994), the act of collecting was one way in which nature was reinvented by naturalists as an object of humanist inquiry. The quest to see nature first hand was "a search for truth, a truth now found in the contemplation of nature" (Findlen, 1994: 158). Collecting specimens from a nature immediately encountered was then a fundamental part of building knowledge of a mastery over new worlds. And as a consequence travel became a key component in the acquisition of knowledge both of the world and of one's place in that world. At the same time, the act of collecting, through travel, can be seen as "a precondition to the domestication of nature" (Findlen, 1994: 155). As discussed in Chapter 2 of the thesis, travels to nature soon assumed the status of a pilgrimage and often these
tours would include visits to holy sites. Evidence of these voyages was reflected in the theatre of nature that was gradually developed. Hence, the museum became “a testimony to the extent of [one’s] devotion to nature and the quest for knowledge that could only be gained in pilgrimage” (Findlen, 1994: 163).

It was through the travels of naturalists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, discussed later in the chapter, that the process of understanding nature continued. Enlightenment thinkers proposed that the science of natural history was not truly formed until the theatres of nature, the cabinets of curiosity, were replaced with natural history museums. Here, as discussed in the literature review chapter (Chapter 2) in relation to Carl Linne’s classification of plants, the underlying philosophy was one of scientific rigour and the organisation of specimens based upon classification and taxonomy. By the eighteenth century, European museums entered the public domain often relying on donations from private collections and began to provide nations with a new form of identity within the context of a civil society (Karp, 1992).

The notion of accumulating things can be readily placed within the idea of the museum, a feature of Western culture in the nineteenth century (Bennett, 1995). Public museums, which developed their modern status in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, were spaces where artefacts could be classified, a feature separating them from earlier collections of curiosities. In these public spheres it was suggested that high culture has the power to “transform the inner lives of the population so as to alter their forms of life and behaviour” (Bennett, 1995: 20). Significantly, these institutions exhibited nature within a context of the “related projects of liberalism, colonialism and imperialism” (Bennett, 1998: 152). In particular, the construction of the ‘truth’ of evolution worked to reinforce the notion of human superiority over nature as well as that of Europeans over colonised peoples. One institution which specifically collected live nature was the Zoological Garden.
4.3 Zoological Gardens

Zoos are big business. Today, it is estimated that there are 10,000 zoos world-wide (P. Davis, 1996: 214). Anderson (1998: 28) records that in the United States alone in the early 1990s, there were 154 accredited zoos and aquariums “visited by a hundred million people, exceeding the combined attendance at all major-league baseball, football and basketball games”. The collecting of terrestrial animals for display in zoos can be seen to be a process similar to that of the capture and display of marine animals.

As mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, there are numerous connections between natural history museums, zoos and aquaria including their modern-day aim of fostering greater public knowledge about nature and conservation. Many countries have a long history of collecting exotic animals\(^2\) and using them as a display of wealth and status. In her study of the Royal Adelaide Zoo, mentioned in Chapter 2 of the thesis, Kay Anderson places the zoo within an historical process of “colonial and metropolitan regimes of identity formation” (1998: 46). For instance, in Europe in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance animals such as lions, elephants and snow leopards were displayed as signifiers of national pride. In sixteenth century Mexico, Emperor Montezuma II housed collections of raptors, big cats and deformed human specimens. The Hague was unusual in that its menagerie was founded by the citizens in 1590 and allowed the public to see foreign animals for the first time. Similarly, in 1664 Louis XIV’s menagerie at Versailles welcomed the public and scientists alike. It was not until the eighteenth century however, that European menageries became very popular and the travelling collections performed an educative and amusement function (P. Davis, 1996: 209). Thus the collection and display of exotic and other animals can be seen as a means by which nations exhibited their wealth and simultaneously contributed to the impression of imperial advancement at home.

The zoo in Schloss Schönbrunn, Vienna, the private menagerie of Empress Maria Teresa, opened to the public in 1765, and is considered to be the first of the modern form of the institution (de Courcy, 1995). However, the idea of the urban zoo really developed in the

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\(^2\) For a detailed history of collecting animals for display in zoos, see de Courcy (1995).
nineteenth century, its history stemming from the private menageries of rich and powerful monarchs and Emperors and to a lesser extent from the fairground show people and their travelling collections (de Courcy, 1995). It was the London Zoo established in 1828 which is regarded as the first to actively integrate recreation into what had to date been a largely scientific venture. At this time, as Western cities were expanding through industrialisation, prominent citizens worked to establish institutions which would provide education and recreation for the general public. These included art galleries, museums, public libraries as well as zoos, and as I will show, aquaria.

While representing imperial advancement, zoos and other forms of displaying wildlife, are also indicative of “various human strategies for domesticating, mythologising, and aestheticizing the animal universe” (Anderson, 1998: 28). It is within the rationalist confines of the zoo that the nature/culture borderlands have been clearly delineated. Zoos, even the habitat-filled environments of the 1990s, stand as manifestation of humanity’s ability to control and order nonhuman nature. One way in which marine animals in particular have been mythologised and domesticated has been through the development of aquaria. In light of the above discussion of the collection and display of nature in museums and zoos, the chapter now turns to explore the harnessing and commodification of the creatures of the sea. This is done first by looking at the history of public aquaria and the education and advancements in science they provided. The chapter then turns to two ways in which marine animals can be displayed in the modern day: as a source of environmental education (The Melbourne Aquarium, Underwater World) and as a site for entertainment and escapism (Sea World).

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3 Anderson (1998: 28) refers to the recent turn in geography and other social sciences, away from the category of nature towards the “hybrid spaces” between culture and nature, each of these contributing “artificial and natural” (Anderson, 1998: 28) features. Perhaps the next step in the development of animal geography might be the rejection of the concept of artificial and the natural spaces in this context, accepting as we might that such terms continue to fuel the Cartesian divisions of the past in an albeit more gentle way.
4.4 Capturing the Sea: The Rise of Aquaria

Thus far this chapter has briefly touched upon the history of museums and zoos as a way of contextualising animal collection in the past. Part of this process has always been the collection of marine species and this section now looks at the specific history of aquaria. It is a history which leads directly to the sort of marine encounters discussed in the main body of the thesis. As examined in Chapter 2 of the thesis, the seaside as a place of health dates to Europe in the 1600s where people visited seaside spas for medicinal purposes. By the 1800s, botanical gardens, or Winter Gardens, began to spring up at the seaside resorts as places for recreation in the months when it was too cold to sit on the beach. It is within these botanical parks that the first aquaria were set (Walton, 1983).

The development of the modern day aquaria industry has its roots in the collection and captivity of animals many centuries ago. In fact, fishponds are the ancestors of modern aquaria. The Romans built elaborate ponds in which to farm fish. Some ponds had a canal running directly to the kitchen and banquet halls. At times difficult politicians or disobedient slaves were put to their deaths in the ponds containing conger-eels and lampreys (Boulenger, 1925). Similarly, “guests could see the fish caught before being prepared for the feast, and amuse themselves by watching the dying agonies of their greatest dainty, the Red Mullet, which, in its death, takes the varied hues of the rainbow” (Sherrard, 1894: 9). In perfecting the art of pisciculture, the Romans employed sluice gates and “spent enormous sums in making channels from their villas...to the sea-shore, in order to lead the fresh salt-water tide to the intricate system of ponds” (Sherrard 1894: 8). In this way it appears that the early collection and keeping of fish was based on entertainment and ornamentation as well as sustenance.

Sherrard (1894: 8) notes that the Chinese and Japanese “from the earliest times, have been in the habit of keeping domestic fish for their amusement”. Before the Roman period, the Chinese were active fish-keepers and bred fish for their aesthetic value. Here, freshwater fish were kept in bowls before it became a fashionable pastime in England in the 1700s. In particular goldfish strains were bred in China during the Sung Dynasty (970-1278AD).
Similarly, the early Egyptians kept cold water fish in large glass cases for decoration (Mills, 1996). In medieval times, monasteries, abbeys and castles had fishponds or an encircling moat which acted as a form of protection as well as a fish preserve.

In sixteenth century Europe, the collecting of marine animals was especially popular amongst naturalists. Information about plants and animals was gleaned from printed texts and from correspondence between naturalist colleagues. The accumulation of marine life was sometimes difficult for the average naturalist, living as the specimens were in the ocean. As such, collecting took very specific and sometimes particular forms. Information was not just gathered from trips to the beaches where specimens were often washed ashore. Some naturalists would frequent fishmarkets in order to find rare, unusual and varied fish, sponge and other marine species. In this way, information was also collected from the illiterate people who spent their lives out in nature, such as the fishermen, and those working in the marketplace (Findlen, 1994). In addition, Sowerby (1865: 3) noted:

The natures of living beings can never be thoroughly known but by their habits; their habits cannot be well understood unless closely and continuously observed; and if we cannot go down among mollusca, crustacea, and zoophytes to examine them in their native haunts, we can now bring them up to us, to be studied in nearly similar conditions.

Hence, naturalists began to devise ways to keep marine animals alive in captivity. By the sixteenth century the keeping of fish in glass vases and earthenware bowls had begun in Europe. Between the 1820s and the 1860s it seems there was an insatiable thirst for natural history throughout England and Europe, an aspect of the expansion of empire discussed earlier in the chapter. Many middle-class homes in England had their own freshwater aquariums, seashell collections and other evidence of a taste for natural history. The first records of marine aquaria in England can be traced back at least to the mid-1800s with scientific advancement allowing grand scale public aquaria by the 1900s.

It is unclear as to whom should be attributed the honour of the first person to successfully support a marine aquarium. There were several general factors which helped to develop the
aquarium craze. One was that the tax on glass was repealed in England. But in particular it was found that by adding plants to the water, enough oxygen could be given off to support animal life. The amateur British scientist Robert Warington first published these ideas in the early 1850s in a paper to the Chemical Society following his experiments with goldfish and plants. This was followed three years later by his reports in the Annals of Natural History on successful experiments with marine aquaria. As a result, Barber (1980: 116) concludes, “Warington must be considered the official inventor of the aquarium”. This conclusion is supported by the work of Sowerby (1865, and see Gosse, 1856: 8-10) who explains that it was also Warrington who designed the marine aquarium so as its back was towards the light and two sides were of slate and only the front made of glass. This was because he found that too much light caused the plants to develop too fast.

According to Victorian naturalist Phillip Henry Gosse (1856), it was in 1837 that British scientists and other interested observers began to understand how marine animals and plants could be healthily kept in enclosed cases. However other people have also been credited with creating the first aquarium. For instance, it was also suggested that it was a “Mr. Ward” who was the first to create the aquarium. Gosse explained that, “Mr. Ward, in 1841, established, in a capacious earthenware vessel, an Aquarium for fish and plants [where]...the animals lived in a healthy condition for many years” (Gosse, 1856: 7). Alternatively, a “Mrs. Thynne” is said to have been the individual who introduced marine animals and plants to London. Mrs. Thynne gathered some living madrepores when she was visiting Torquay. She took them home to London and kept them in glass bowls. She aerated the water by daily pouring the water backwards and forwards and periodically renewing it with fresh seawater from the coast. In 1847 she arranged for pieces of rock, shell and seaweed to be sent to her and then she relied on the weed to purify the water. In this way she successfully developed her own self-supporting aquarium (Gosse, 1856: 7).

However, Barber (1980) espouses that it was Phillip Henry Gosse and his work in Devon which precipitated the marine aquaria craze. According to Barber (1980), the word aquarium was coined by Gosse who had to decide between using the words vivarium and aqua-vivarium. In the mid-1800s Gosse’s books were widely used by young men and
women in their collections at the seaside. His books helped others form their own collections, either for public exhibition or private study and newspapers ran natural history sections (Barber, 1980). In particular, the publication of A Naturalist's Rambles on the Devonshire Coast in 1853 popularised his work.

According to Barber (1980), in 1856 Gosse published one of the pre-eminent books on the keeping of sea creatures in captivity, entitled The Aquarium: An Unveiling of the Wonders of the Deep Sea. The title of the book represents the significant scientific achievement in accessing marine life. Hence, it appears that in the 1800s the 'wonders' of the deep sea were seen as mysterious and unknown, even to most amateur naturalists. As I have mentioned, zoos and museums collected and displayed exotic nature from far away lands which had become accessible through imperial territorial expansion. In this way we began to use displayed nature as a way of experiencing and therefore understanding it. In a similar way the aquaria industry was trying to capture and unveil that especially inaccessible world—the ocean.

Gosse was the first to develop public marine aquaria and his work helped establish the seven large glass tanks which came to make up the Fish House opened at London's Regents Park Zoological Gardens in 1854. In 1882 Gosse transferred his collection of zoophytes and Annelides which he had been keeping in vases in London to one of the tanks in the newly built Fish House. He noted that the exhibition carried with it much curiosity and novelty in the eye of the public and that it was a very popular place to visit. The aquaria craze had begun, stimulating an aquaria cult in a range of public institutions as well as in private homes. This was despite the fact that keeping marine animals healthy in captivity continued to prove difficult for amateurs and professionals alike. Finally, advances in the understanding of marine ecology saw the development of a vast new aquarium in Regents Park in 1923 (Bracegirdle, 1974).

On the basis of Gosse's work, aquaria at Surrey Gardens in England and in Dublin, Ireland were built. The latter was unusual in that the tanks were fitted with bellows. Visitors were encouraged to use these during their visit as a way to assist in the aeration of the water. In
time, other aquaria sprang up in Belfast, Edinburgh, Scarborough, Yarmouth, Boulogne, Havre, Berlin, Cologne, Hamburg, Hanover, Brussels, Vienna and Boston. This movement came to a climax in 1872 with the Brighton aquarium (see Urry, 1990) which was the biggest attraction of its kind in the world (Boulenger, 1925). Interestingly, the aquaria craze was relatively short-lived and most of the above mentioned sites soon ceased to exist. In fact, London did not have an aquarium between 1890 and 1924.

Within Australia, a nation surrounded by the sea, developments had long been under way for the display of marine creatures. In Victoria, Port Phillip Bay and Western Port presented as ideal sources for live specimens. In Melbourne, work began in 1884 on an aquarium that opened in 1885. It was appropriately housed in the Royal Exhibition Building (Figure 4.1), with its ornate Victorian façade and expanse of gardens (Dunstan, 2000). As was the case in England, exhibition buildings were central to the display of the material and natural conquests of imperial expansion and colonial settlement (Karp and Lavine, 1991; Karp et al., 1992). The Exhibition Aquarium, as it was known, was the first established in Australia and was closely followed by others set up in Sydney’s Bondi and Coogee beaches. In part, the Melbourne Exhibition Aquarium was built to aid education and to allow experiments to be conducted which in the long run were intended to, “lead to further development of the fishing industries in the colony” (Sherrard, 1894: 2). Most of the fish on display were from local waters, there being problems in keeping ocean species in captivity.

Also situated in the Exhibition Building and in close proximity to the aquarium was a museum of other curiosities. Here visitors could see numerous collections, such as the Kelly Gang armour, as well as peruse the art gallery and aviary (Figure 4.2). The Exhibition Aquarium stands as an example of one way in which members of the new colony sought to establish their own place in the imperial moment. Indeed the Chairman of the building initially visited aquaria throughout Europe collecting ideas.

Hence, it appears that the State of Victoria has long had a fascination with marine life as a form of recreational encounter. At the Exhibition Aquarium the smaller tanks were
Figure 4.1:  Aquarium Entrance, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne, 1885
(Source: Duncan, 1996: 177).
Figure 4.2: Floor Plan of the Royal Melbourne Exhibition Building, including the Aquarium, 1885

(Source: Duncan, 1996: 251)
generally made of iron and glass with slate slabs while the bigger tanks needed to have brickfacing to stop them leaking. The lighting in the tanks was dull “in order to allow the habits of the denizens of the tanks being properly observed” (Sherrard, 1894: 4). Because the aquarium was not at the seashore, water from Port Phillip Bay was kept in underground reservoirs and aeration achieved using compressed air. The Exhibition Aquarium appears to have been fraught with logistical problems typical of such ventures. For instance, it was very difficult to get the right mix of oxygen in the water to keep the fish alive, these being laboriously transported to the aquarium in calico lined tins with the water requiring constant aeration. In 1953, the Royal Exhibition Building caught on fire destroying the aquarium and leaving a scene of melted glass tanks and buckled iron frames (Dunstan, 2000). It has taken forty-seven years for a new aquarium to be built in Melbourne, as mentioned later in the chapter.

4.5 Marine Animals as Science and Spectacle

A detailed history of the development of marine aquaria is beyond the scope of the thesis. However, the background I have provided in this area thus far acts as a contextual backdrop to the ways in which, in some instances, marine nature has been contained over time, both in the name of science and as a form of entertainment. In particular, marine animals have often come to be known by city folk as part of marine funscapes, such as theme parks. Marine theme parks such as Sea World are easily identifiable as experiences of hyper-nature as I will discuss.

It appears that the boundaries between displays of marine animals for scientific exploration and for popular education are often blurred with the objective of pure entertainment. Possibly the earliest proponent of the display of marine animals primarily for entertainment and himself an aquarium director was the American, Phineas Taylor (P.T.) Barnum. As one of the greatest showmen of all time and well-known for his role in the running of circuses, his was a history of displaying animals including marine life, for public amusement.
As documented by Wallace (1960) and Newman (1994) in 1861, ten years after the publication of Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* (1851), P.T. Barnum developed the idea of incorporating a Beluga whale⁴ in one of his shows. As such he constructed a tank in the basement of his seemingly inappropriately named American Museum in New York and travelled to collect whales caught by fishermen. But he admitted he did not know how to care for them and they died within a few days. On his second attempt to keep whales he built a new tank for them and used real seawater. Two new white whales were caught and were a great attraction in the city. However, as Barnum said, “the whales soon died - their sudden and immense popularity was too much for them” (quoted in Wallace, 1960: 189).

In Barnum’s final effort to keep whales alive in captivity, he publicised the their arrival widely and even stated that, “as it is very doubtful whether these wonderful creatures can be kept alive more than a few days, the public will see the importance of seizing the first moment to see them” (quoted in Wallace, 1960: 189). As he anticipated, the animals were very popular but once again soon died. Undeterred Barnum’s further efforts in marine display diverged to include sharks, sea-horses, angel fish and porpoises. Almost one hundred and fifty years hence, marine animals continue to be exhibited primarily for the recreational fun of tourists. The introduction to the chapter noted that in the modern day it is still possible to find marine animals displayed largely for amusement and entertainment. In contrast to the Blue Zoos discussed later in the chapter, sites such as the Sea World Theme Park stand as examples of marine animal tourism which emphasise entertainment and distance over education and intimacy. It is to an exploration of Sea World as a site of touristic consumption of marine life than the chapter now turns.

4.5.1 “Creating memories to last a lifetime”: The Sea World experience

In direct contrast with the environmental education agenda of UnderWater World and the Melbourne Aquarium (discussed later in the chapter), Sea World seeks to provide tourists

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⁴ Beluga’s (*Delphinapterus leucas*) are unusual looking whales in that they are white in colour and do not have a dorsal fin. In addition they are able to change their facial expressions and make many sounds audible to humans (May, 1990).
with an exciting and fun day out with marine animals forming just one of the plethora of fantastic rides and experiences that are to be had. In contemporary Australia, as elsewhere, the entertainment function of marine theme parks seems to be associated with what might be called the Disneyfication of marine animals. As Anderson (1997: 480) has illustrated, it is a feature of the contemporary moment that cities are replete with relatively commodified forms of vanishing, wild nature, such as the “sanitized eco-creations of the tourist trade that ‘bring in’ and remake the wild”. The clearest example of this is the consumption-intensive experience of nature which is offered up in nature theme parks such as Sea World.

Australia’s Gold Coast exists as a popular destination for tourists in Australia, in large part due to its theme parks which include Dream World, Movie World and Sea World. Symes (1995: 2) suggests that it is within the theme parks’ “habitat of hyperreality” that the cultural logic of late capitalism is overtly displayed, and especially its logics of spectacularisation and consumption. Within such contexts, nature, and specifically the marine animal, has been used as a vehicle primarily for entertainment and profit. Here, tourists are presented with a hyper-nature experience, this being one of extreme commodification and fantasy. Nature at Sea World consists of a highly mediated version of nature, one that is sanitised, beautiful and wholly within the control of its human creators. At Sea World, dolphins are framed as the highlight of the performance, the leading role in the escapism that is the attraction of these multi-million dollar global ventures. Here, tourists can allow themselves to be transported back in time and across different countries on fantastic rides and through entertaining ‘shows’. At Sea World, one can be carried away from the everyday to a reality of safety and fun where Flipper-like dolphins play in clear water amongst a clean, tropical island backdrop. Here tourists can surrender to the magic of these dancing dolphins and reconcile, if they choose, the animal/side-show/retail consumption package with which they are presented.

‘Sea World’ began in 1971 as ‘Ski Land’ under the ownership of Queensland entrepreneur Keith Williams. In 1972, Williams bought out the nearby Marineland, which featured a dolphin show and renamed his Park Sea World. Modelled on parks such as Disneyland, Williams introduced a range of family rides aimed to increase visitor attendance (Figure
4.3). Multinational interests\textsuperscript{5} took over Sea World and surrounding Theme Parks on the Gold Coast in the 1980s. They immediately increased the international profile of Sea World, especially focussing their attention on the potentially lucrative Southeast Asia tourist market (Symes, 1995). Today the three main theme parks in the Gold Coast area attract over three million visitors a year, with 40\% of these being international, largely Southeast Asian visitors (Symes, 1995: 4). Sea World earns approximately $55 million per year. Their publicity material enthuses that the “animals are a constant form of amusement and fascination...and it is them more than anything which brings people back time and time again” (Sea World Education Department, 1996: 4). In addition the increasing range of rides at the Park help to keep visitor numbers high (McRobbie, 1988).

Sea World is an example of extreme spectacularisation of nature and animals. Here, people can be enveloped in a clean, safe and colourful experience where they can feel detached from the ‘real world’. At Sea World, visitors are given a map of key locations with a timetable for viewing particular shows. Hence, even in this paradise of freedom, the tourists’ day is carefully planned for them (Figure 4.4). The Park caters for all the needs of the visitors for the day through a variety of shops and rest areas. Even the child carriers have been incorporated into the marine theme fantasy (Figure 4.5). As Symes (1995: 6) has observed of theme parks more generally:

\begin{quote}
[p]art of the theme park’s appeal might centre on the very fact that it removes from individuals the need to make decisions about their free time and what to do with it. The negation of autonomy might be one of its attractions.
\end{quote}

At Sea World there appears to be a tension between conservation and entertainment objectives. On the one hand the site relies on the popular idea of the dolphin as ‘special’ in order to attract tourists. As the chapter will show, the animals are framed as happy, playful and intelligent and as living in a clean and safe tropical paradise with their every need being met by trainers. Conversely, with popular opinion increasingly questioning the ethics of

\textsuperscript{5} Sea World is owned by the Sea World Property Trust which is listed on the stock exchange. Major shareholders are the American group Warner Bros (33\%) and Australia’s Village Roadshow (33\%). The remaining 34\% is held by public shareholders (Sea World, 1996: 6).
Figure 4.3: Rooftop View of Australia’s Sea World
(Source: Sea World, 1995)
Figure 4.4: Sea World Visitor Map and Guide

(Source: Sea World, nd (c))
Figure 4.5: Dolphin Child Carriers Perpetuate the *Flipper* Myth at Sea World

(Source: Christina Jarvis, 1998).
cetacean captivity, Sea World Managers propound that a visit to Sea World provides positive educational outcomes. They also argue that marine animal research and rescue activities are funded by the organisation. The spectacle, fantasy and entertainment of Sea World take the masses’ minds away from the problems of the everyday. As with Zukin’s (1991) analysis of Disneyland, a “centralization of economic power” (Zukin, 1991: 224) surrounds the site. For example, consumption at Sea World extends far beyond the Park itself. It includes the nearby Sea World Nara Resort, with its monorail transport, as well as various holiday packages. Sea World has an extensive marketing strategy including the use of roadside hoardings, articles in in-flight magazines, advertisements across a range of media, as well as documentaries. Educational talks are given at schools and to community groups while costume character appearances are common at public events and in the Park (Figure 4.6). Dolphins are promoted from the site in a series of posters, short promotional videos as well as through The New Adventures of Flipper television series filmed on location at the Park. Further the production of the place required significant corporate input in the form of sponsors such as Coca-Cola, Peters, the Nine Network Australia, Kodak, Johnson Outboards, Ampol, Qantas, Reflex and Haines Signature.

At Sea World tourists’ desires for proximity to the mythical dolphin and the assurance that all is well in the animal world are projected across a populist moviescape amalgam of the film and television stereotypes of Gilligan’s Island⁶ and the aforementioned Free Willy. In this way, the visitors are seduced by an ideal landscape where all their wishes may come true and where the opportunity to experience an idealised marinescape surrounds them. In her book, Spectacular Nature – Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience (1997), Susan Davis considers that:

[a]s a piece of industrial magic, Sea World represents an enormous contradiction. Using living animals, captive seas, and flourishing landscapes, the theme park has organized the subtle and contradictory cultural meanings of nature into a machine for mass consumption (S. Davis, 1997: 30).

⁶ Gilligan’s Island was a comedy about seven characters marooned on a tropical paradise and their weekly attempts to return to civilisation. They led an idyllic lifestyle in their thatched huts, surrounded by palm trees and sandy beaches with a never-ending supply of fresh food and water. The popular television series ran between 1964-1967 with repeats subsequently aired.
Figure 4.6: The Happy (Costume) Animals of Sea World

(Source: Sea World Property Trust, nd)
Susan Davis (1996) found the visitor experience in the Californian Sea World is one where the boundaries of reality and fantasy are blurred. She has suggested that, “Sea World assures us that its way of seeing nature will be natural” (S. Davis, 1996: 209). This raises the question of exactly how Sea World is telling visitors to think about relationships between what they see as ‘nature’ and the human world. Susan Davis (1997) proposes that the link between education and entertainment at the Sea World theme parks is highly tenuous with the priority for Management being to return a profit to parent company, Anheuser Busch.

In spite of their attempts to counter public concern about cetacean captivity, the purpose of Sea World remains primarily one of family entertainment. Its publicity material offers a discourse of escape from the restrictive regime of the everyday. For example, the Park promotes itself as “the most amazing world of all” (Sea World brochure, nd(a)) where the visitor can have “oceans of fun” (Sea World Education Department, 1996: 3). Sea World is another world of fun and excitement where visitors can “party on” (Sea World, nd(b)) with a highly corporatised version of nature. This is a place where tourists are invited to “make contact with another world...a world of shows, a world of thrills and mystery, a world of fabulous food and wonderful shops” (Sea World, nd(c) and see Figure 4.7). Sea World allows people to gaze through a lens of playfulness and safety at a version of the natural world. Many visitors may never have had the chance to view marine nature so closely.

Sea World makes much of its contribution to research and environmental education. It has established the Sea World Research and Rescue Foundation, an independent body which provides funding for a range of projects associated with marine conservation. In terms of education, the Company’s promotional material boasts that “[t]he educational opportunities at Sea World are limitless” (Sea World Education Department, 1996). Sea World runs an educational program for schools called Project Neptune. This involves visits to the Park, a collection of worksheets and guided talks for students at various levels. Sea World reports that they had over 36,000 students on excursion in the Park in 19947 out of an estimated 1.2

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7 Importantly, not all these students were visiting to learn about nature. There were also students in subject areas including physics, tourism, catering, small business management and art.
million general tourists (Sea World Education Department, 1996: 1-5). As ‘students’ are such a small proportion of the total tourist population it is clear that any serious attempt at environmental education would surely need to target this much larger group of ‘non-student’ visitors. My own evaluation of Sea World suggests little attention is given to the education of visitors. A visit to Sea World will show that the only written commentary is on the Park Map (Figure 4.4). There are virtually no interpretive displays or signs and nearly all information about the animals is passed to visitors through commentaries at the various animal ‘shows’. In short, Sea World does not provide its visitors with many educational opportunities, which may seem anachronistic in an institution so proud of its environmental education agenda.

A good example of the animal ‘shows’ on offer at Sea World happens at the recently opened Dolphin Cove (Figure 4.7). Dolphin Cove is a large aqua pool with an island and surrounded by landscaping of fake stone headlands, palm trees and tropical plants. The pool has shallow sandy edges and a 7.5m central section. Tourists are seated in a covered auditorium area. Loud music heralds the release of the dolphins into the Cove from adjacent pools. It is new age, upbeat and fun, leaving one feeling positive that something exciting and wonderful is about to happen. Like the rest of the Park, Dolphin Cove is spotlessly clean, the staff meticulous in their presentation and manner. According to the commentary, Dolphin Cove is “the greatest marine mammal habitat anywhere in the world”. Cheers and clapping erupt from the crowd as “the true stars of Sea World - the dolphins” cut through the pool and show the full “magic of Dolphin Cove”. As the animals leap onto the bow wave of an inflatable in the pool, the speaker calls out, “why do they bow ride? -Because they can and it’s fun!”

Unlike the example of UnderWater World where tourists are carried into the world of fish through acrylic tunnels thereby breaking down boundaries, the discourse of escapism and

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8 A explained in Chapter 3 of the thesis, Sea World on the Gold Coast chose not to assist my research in any way beyond providing copies of their promotional material.

9 While it is true that dolphins may bow ride for the simple pleasure of it, other explanations are equally valid such as using the wave to remove barnacles, or as a form of transport (see Bonner, 1980, Connor and Micklethwaite Peterson, 1994, May, 1990).
Figure 4.7: The Entrance to Dolphin Cove

(Source: Christina Jarvis, 1998)
fun at Sea World functions to keep all the boundaries intact. In Dolphin Cove, tourists are invited to encounter cetacea but only as radically other to themselves and their world. For instance, with the dolphins performing in time with the music, the loud speakers cry, “the aim of the Dolphin Cove is to provide contact with another world”. This discourse of separation may perform two functions. There is the potential for tourists’ eyes to be opened to the idea that the world is far more than just its human components. Alternatively, by referring to the dolphins’ world the commentary may in fact be reinforcing the human/nature divide that some, such as Val Plumwood (1993) and William Cronon (1996), argue is at the core of current environmental problems. The commentary accompanying the entertainment focused dolphin ‘performance’ included some information about dolphin communication, feeding patterns and echolocation. Generally the emphasis of the Dolphin Cove ‘show’ is on the dolphins performing acrobatic tricks, propelling divers into the air and waving to the appreciative crowds (Figure 4.8). At times, spectators may be reminded of zoos and their chimpanzee tea parties when the Sea World dolphins assume an artist’s persona (Figure 4.9). It would seem that despite the potential environmental education function of Sea World, the conservation message is kept out of the site of Dolphin Cove and the ‘show’ that goes on there. Hence, to some extent Australia’s Sea World can be read as a place of mass leisure consumption and entertainment under a façade of environmental education which is used to justify the confinement of cetacea.

Although the dolphins are the major animal attractions at the Park, fish, seals and penguins are also used to entertain tourists. A very popular section of the park for tourists is the setting for the ‘Golden Seal Show’. Here, in surrounds of primitive jungle, Egyptian artefacts and a *Raiders of the Lost Ark*\(^\text{10}\) soundtrack, people dressed as explorers carry out a journey with the seals to find a hidden treasure. The seal ‘show’ is highly anthropomorphised, the animals presented to the audience as ‘talking’ on command, burping, kissing the female explorer, hopping along on one flipper and in one instance helping out with a case of C.P.R.! In this ‘show’, the antithesis of the seal ‘show’ at

\(^{10}\) Set in 1936, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* is one of a series of three major feature films starring Harrison Ford as an adventurous and comical archaeologist who seeks ancient treasures in the dangerous and remote South American jungle.
Figure 4.8: Dolphins: Stars of the 'show' at Dolphin Cove

(Source: Sea World Property Trust, nd)
Figure 4.9: A Dolphin 'Artist' at Sea World

(Source: Sea World Property Trust, nd)
UnderWater World mentioned later in the chapter, environmental education was entirely absent.

Sea World also has a small aquarium containing about twenty displays of tropical fish, sharks and eels. The enclosure is dark and quiet, in stark contrast to the hype and excitement of the rest of the Park, which may in part explain its relatively low patronage. Information about the fish was primarily in text format, and as with similar sites I have observed (Sydney Aquarium, UnderWater World, Seal Rocks Sea Life Centre), few people appeared interested in reading the information in detail. Peter Davis (1996) makes the point that often the labelling in the aquariums does not live up to the institutions' claims that they are concerned with public education and marine conservation. He states that "[t]here is a real need to upgrade aquarium labelling - like labels in botanical gardens it is too often assumed that all the public want is a name" (P. Davis, 1996: 220).

Not far from the entrance to the aquarium is a concrete structure housing a population of Little Penguins. It was strange to see a collection of the birds during the day, a period they more often spend fishing offshore. It was not possible for the birds to perform their many daily and seasonal functions, such as riding in on the incoming surf, negotiating a path across the beach, climbing the dunes, greeting their partners, feeding their young and so on. These birds appeared quite static, not tempted by the pool of water provided for them. Interestingly, and in dramatic contrast with Dolphin Cove, this pool was littered with coke cans and ice-cream wrappers. Interpretation about the birds was scant, limited to a small-font sign above the shelter, barely readable from the point of viewing.

The only substantial on-site interpretation at Sea World comes in the form of the Shark Encounter 'show'. This is held in an indoor theatre, much like a cinema, with dimmed lights and a glass aquarium wall behind the film screen. This performance, including a short film, has a strong conservation message encouraging visitors to understand sharks and in doing so decrease the fear often associated with them as a result of films such as Jaws.
Covering issues such as shark finning\(^{11}\) and netting the film seeks to educate visitors without humanising the animals. At the end of the film, curtains reveal a floor to ceiling aquarium housing an array of sharks and fish. Accompanied by the sound of bubbles and clever lighting, tourists learn about the history of diving and underwater exploration before watching the animals being fed. Participant observation at the site revealed that at the end of the shark ‘show’, there was not the loud applause that followed the dolphin and seal performances. The crowd, including the children, had been very silent throughout the event, with occasional gasps as a particularly large fish passed into view. Hence, the shark performance appeared to meld the objectives of education and entertainment in a way absent from the dolphin and seal ‘shows’. Here, the animals framed as ‘wild’ seemed to draw a silent, perhaps wary respect from the visitors who appeared entranced as they were drawn into the unknown ocean habitat.

Overall, the shark display at Sea World may be seen to be a similar immersion and educative experience as that of the Blue Zoos discussed next in the chapter. In contrast, the spectacularised animal shows, such as at Dolphin Cove, are more about distanced viewing and staged tricks. The changes and innovations we see in the Blue Zoos, such as the immersion experience and the emphasis on detailed on-site interpretation and scientifically-based talks by staff, follow a new philosophy of animal captivity and presentation. Here, in this highly mediated site, there is the assumption that environmental education is a responsibility, that it will have positive conservation outcomes and that immersion-style encounters enhance this agenda. The degree to which this is the case is largely unknown, and is an area examined throughout Chapters 5-8 of the thesis.

4.5.2 Blue Zoos: Contemporary Educational Marinescapes

According to Newman (1994) the first dolphins in captivity were kept by the film industry and not by aquarists. In the 1930s a group of movie producers in Florida set up a large tank

\(^{11}\) Shark finning is the process by which sharks accidentally caught in fishing nets have their dorsal fins cut off before being thrown back into the water alive. Many fishermen do this in the belief that by killing sharks they are "doing the world a favour" (Dolphin Tour Operator, 1998).
of fish to use as a backdrop in underwater scenes. In response to the huge public interest, the site was renamed Marineland of Florida and was the world’s first oceanarium. The population of bottlenose dolphins at the site eventually bred in captivity and played a role in the film *Flipper*, as discussed further in Chapter 7.

Annually, tens of millions of people visit U.S. aquariums. Newman (1994), a Vancouver Aquarium Director for many years, suggests that the aim of present day aquariums is to provide education and recreation for people, carry out research, and inspire appreciation and stewardship for nature, especially aquatic nature. For example, the mission of the Vancouver Aquarium was to present “animals to the public so that people would know and care about them and generally develop more sensitivity towards living things” (Newman, 1994: 83).

In recent years there has also been a growing interest in aquariums throughout Asia, particularly in Japan. The Japanese government has encouraged these developments as a way of attracting tourists and increasing domestic spending. In 1990, the Japanese Aquarium Association had sixty member institutions. In all, nearly 40 million people visit Japanese aquariums annually (Newman, 1994: 240). As always, popular attractions at Japanese aquariums are cetacea, an interesting contradiction considering that country’s persistent attempts to resume commercial whaling.

Newman (1994) is adamant that aquariums have stimulated an interest in and concern for the ocean over the last 50 years. It seems that in post World War II America there was a rapid growth in interest in marine biology. The War had brought with it a need for a greater understanding of oceanographic information for naval operations and beach manoeuvres. Just prior to this time pioneering work about diving was being published such as William Beebe’s *A Half Mile Down* (1951) and his account of exploration in the 1920s and 1930s, *Galapagos—World’s End* (1924). Such work inspired writers such as Rachel Carson’s *The Sea around Us* (1950). At the same time Jacques Cousteau’s AQUA-lung allowed greater access to the sea for naturalists and other popular works appeared, such as Cousteau’s *The Silent World* (1953), and Eugenie Clark’s *Lady with a Spear* (1954). Thus public interest in
the ocean was growing and providing a solid foundation for development in marine displays and education. At the same time, the scientific and technological advancements of the time allowed people greater access to the once unknown depths of the sea and to the ‘wonders’ that lived therein.

European and American aquaria were initially places of amusement and it was not until the 1950s that they were reinvented as sites of learning, recreation and advocacy (Newman, 1994). Similarly, in the U.K., aquaria have been influenced by wider changes in attitudes about the ocean and through the development of environmentalism. Peter Davis (1996) explains that British aquaria were initially part of zoos and were certainly not seen as a major drawcards on their own. On the contrary, visitors were drawn to the furry and larger animals such as lions and to anthropomorphic birds such as penguins. However, the environmental revolution of the 1960s brought about significant changes in the way the public saw marine life. The prominence of Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (E.N.G.O.s) like Greenpeace and their anti-whaling campaigns followed by their efforts to reduce drift net fishing because of its impact on dolphins focused world attention on the oceans. Peter Davis (1996: 217) suggests that “as a result whales and dolphins became potent symbols for the conservation movement”, a point I return to in Chapter 7. It was also in the 1960s that Jacques Cousteau was involved in arguably his most popular ocean venture, The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau (1966). Brought to the public in the form of a television series narrated by Cousteau between 1966 and 1973, people more than ever before had immediate and safe access to the ocean.

In 1983 in Britain, the Marine Conservation Society was founded and began campaigning for a system of Marine Nature Reserves, for cleaner beaches and for an end to the trade in marine curios. At the same time, the new technology of television invited nature, including the sea, into homes across the world. As Peter Davis (1996: 218) has noted, “[a] series of new underwater spectaculars hit the television screens, featuring the colourful world of coral reefs…and the majesty of the humpback whale…[m]arine life had a new image and the public wanted to see it”. Interest in the ocean displayed through recent popular culture is also evident through major feature films such as The Big Blue (1988), Free Willy (1993),
DOLPHINS—The Ride (1997b), and The Living Sea (1998). For instance, the story behind cult film, The Big Blue (1988) is one of a young man torn by the knowledge that he loves and communicates better with dolphins than with humans. A decade later the producers of this film also made the visually spectacular ocean documentary, Atlantis (1998). The Living Sea (1998), filmed for IMAX cinemas, took audiences on a journey of the Earth’s oceans, from the creatures of the deep to the terrifying thrill of big wave surfing. Another IMAX film, DOLPHINS—The Ride (1997b), was produced by Bob Talbot, well known marine photographer and the producer of Flipper and the Free Willy films. The film which includes a four minute simulator ride, was designed to allow people to see the world from the point of view of dolphins. In this way, Talbot suggests, humans can “become the animal” (Talbot, 1997a).

However, it was Free Willy (1993), and subsequent sequels, which successfully captured the attention of millions of movie goers, at once rekindling the myth of boy star Sandy and his companion Flipper, and focusing attention on the lives of cetacea in captivity. Briefly, Free Willy is the story of a captive orca and a street kid called Jesse. When Jesse discovers the whale is to be killed by the owners of the aquarium, he carries out a desperate plan to free the animal. The film and real-life stories of this animal are ironically similar. The ‘real’ Willy, a whale affectionately known as Keiko, was captured in Icelandic waters in 1979. In 1996 a Free Willy Keiko Foundation, set up by Warner Brothers Studio and child activists, was instrumental in rescuing the whale from a cramped and overheated tank in a Mexico City amusement park and transporting him to an Oregon aquarium for rehabilitation. In 1998 in his new home, the whale star was attracting up to 9,500 visitors a day (Banse, 1998: 26). He was flown to Iceland for further rehabilitation with the intention of returning him ‘to the wild’, just as in the movie. Hence, Willy, like Flipper, has played a pivotal role in bringing marine animals into the hearts and imaginations of city dwellers. The critical difference between these two celebrities is the public outrage at the conditions under which Keiko lived and the recognition of the deep hypocrisy associated with the making of the film.
Thus films have contributed to a global interest in marine animals and in their conservation. One result of this growing interest in and concern for the marine can be seen in changes brought about within the aquaria industry, institutions more usually referred to as Sea Life Centres or Marine Life Centres. In Peter Davis’ (1996) view, modern aquaria are clearly concerned with evoking a conservation ethic within the visitor population. He refers to the Monterey Bay Aquarium where, for example, a submersible traverses the 10,000-feet deep Monterey Canyon, feeding live images to the public. The mission statement of the Institution states: “[t]he purpose of the Monterey Bay Aquarium is to stimulate interest, increase knowledge and promote stewardship of Monterey Bay and the world’s ocean environment through innovative exhibits, public education and scientific research” (Monterey Bay Aquarium, 1990 quoted in P. Davis, 1996: 219).

The pedagogical project of these modern aquaria is in line with that of the ecomuseum and the modern zoo (see for example Poulot, 1994; Bennett, 1998). In examining cases such as UnderWater World and the new Melbourne Aquarium, the chapter suggests that such ventures seek to involve the community in the process of learning and discovery. It was during the 1970s, as Western nations increasingly grappled with concerns about natural resource management, that the ecomuseum movement based upon the Visitor Centre framework gained momentum. The ecomuseum differed from the traditional museum in its implied ecological approach. Here, the focus was on recording cultural and material resources, as well as increasing understanding through education about the environment, research, exhibitions and publications (Poulot, 1994). Poulot (1994: 78) concludes that the modern day ecomuseum seeks to educate people about community resources. Here, “the old task of salvaging and recording has been replaced by the business of discovering and interpreting culture”.

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12 One Victorian example is the newly opened Seal Rocks Sea Life Centre on Phillip Island which uses technology to relay live footage of seals from an offshore colony to a large screen in the Visitor Centre (see Appendix 5.2).
13 These new marine complexes should not be confused with Dolphinaria of previous years such as Adelaide’s Marineland whose main function was that of entertainment. This site housed several dolphins and a range of fish and sharks. The main attraction was the dolphin shows where, as a child, I watched the animals chasing balls and jumping though hoops of fire. During the 1980s, as the facility fell into a state of disrepair, and after much public protest, Marineland was closed and the dolphins relocated to another Park.
As an addition to their pedagogical role, the new class of aquaria offer a spectacle equal to that of any similar animal-based institution. Technological and design advances provide people with the chance to wander across the ocean floor, as various sharks, rays fish and in some cases mammals glide past. These exhibits do not alone propel conservation messages to visitors. Importantly, they are supplemented with lectures and demonstrations from staff, information provided across a range of media as well as opportunities for ‘hands-on’ such as through touch tables and touch pools. As Peter Davis (1996: 219) explains, “[l]ike museums and zoos, they can provide an atmosphere which inspires and excites, and consequently have tremendous potential for putting across environmental messages”.

Although Newman’s (1994) account of modern marine parks is largely confined to the U.S., he does make mention of Australia, seeing it as a country ripe for the development of new style aquaria. One example of this is the Great Barrier Reef Wonderland in Townsville where people can wander along acrylic tunnels passing through large tanks filled with fish, thereby allowing them to feel they are sharing the marine world.\textsuperscript{14} Built in 1987, it houses a living coral reef and Interpretation Centre. Newman (1994: 243) cites it as “one of the most interesting aquariums in the world”. This is yet another example of that which was inaccessible in the eighteenth century now being unveiled with the help of technology. In the modern case, people can now become immersed in the deep without leaving the city or even putting on a wet suit as is shown in the following examination of two contemporary Blue Zoos, the new Melbourne Aquarium and UnderWater World.

There are many ecomarine tourism sites along the East Coast of Australia.\textsuperscript{15} Each of these sites frames the marine life of Australia in different ways and each variously attempts to educate their visitor population. However, two good illustrative examples of Newman’s ‘new aquaria’ and of Poulot’s ecomuseums are the Melbourne Aquarium and UnderWater World, these being Blue Zoos where the community education and conservation agenda outweighs that of entertainment. Although the efforts here are promising, in many

\textsuperscript{14} A list of the Aquaria of Australia appears in Appendix 4.1
\textsuperscript{15} Between February and April 1998 I visited several marine tourism sites along Australia’s East Coast. These ranged from small ventures, such as the aquarium in Sorrento, through to major tourist attractions such as the Sydney Aquarium on Darling Harbour and Underwater World in Queensland.
Australian contemporary marine displays there remains a seemingly unresolvable tension between the goals of entertainment and conservation, a tension which reflects the historic binary of captive specimens as being both objects of curiosity and of science.\textsuperscript{16}

The new Melbourne Aquarium which opened in the heart of Melbourne in January 2000 stands as a typical example of the new breed of aquaria where environmental education is paramount within a context of entertainment and recreation. As with UnderWater World, the Melbourne Aquarium gives visitors a plethora of media to use in their quest to learn about the world of water. Of these, computerised interactive displays are favoured by visitors of all ages. However, in some important ways, the example of the Melbourne Aquarium stands apart from that of UnderWater World.

Level One in the Melbourne Aquarium (Figure 4.10) features a series of touch pools and billabong areas. Staffed by interpreters in busy periods these have proven to be one of the most popular attractions at the site (Melbourne Aquarium Interpretation Officer, 2000). As with UnderWater World, Touch Pools allow visitors hands-on experience of a range of slow moving shore platform creatures under the supervision of Interpreters well versed in the details of the lives of the animals. However, it is at the Mangrove Pool where visitors are afforded an eye-to-eye view of larger marine animals, which sets the new Melbourne Aquarium apart from its Queensland counterpart. With the thick aquarium glass absent, visitors lean over low walls, gazing into shallow water scattered with highly active estuarine fish, including Stingrays and small sharks. This experience differs markedly from that of the far smaller and more traditional rectangular aquariums featured on the Ground Level.

The Melbourne Aquarium takes visitors a step further towards ocean immersion as it plunges tourists into what is called “Subspace” (Melbourne Aquarium, nd). This part of the aquarium experience comes at the end of two levels of aquatic displays and extensive interpretation. As with similar sites, tourists experience various ocean fish as they walk

\textsuperscript{16} Until a link can be established between visitors to these sites and long-term positive attitudinal change in relation to visitor’s use of the environment, I would question their validity as educational institutions.
Figure 4.10: Floor Plan of the new Melbourne Aquarium

(Source: Melbourne Aquarium Brochure, nd)
through acrylic tunnels. However, the centre of this exhibit is particularly interesting in its design and associated meanings. Referred to as “The Fish Bowl” (see Figure 4.10) visitors find themselves in a large, glass, circular room with a three hundred and sixty degree view of the fish. This display may serve any number of functions. For example, in one way, the visitors themselves are creatures in a glass bowl, objects of interest to the animals swimming past. A second interpretation might relate the design of the area to a form of panoptic\textsuperscript{17} surveillance, where the animals are constantly in view of their ‘masters’, the tourists. In either case, the visitor is as one tourist put it, “as close to going for a dive as you can without getting wet” (male tourist, 32 years, 2000). Interestingly, the Melbourne Aquarium experience ends with a simulated deep ocean ride, providing all the thrills and excitement of a theme park ride but set apart from the animal displays. In seeking to fulfill tourists’ desire for entertainment and fun, this enormously popular ride (Melbourne Aquarium Staff Member, 2000) remains clearly distanced from the live specimens shown elsewhere in the building.

A similar aquaria philosophy of display, immersion and education is evident at UnderWater World at Mooloolaba on Queensland’s Sunshine Coast. Established in 1989 with stage two of the development completed in 1990, its major sponsors are Coca-Cola, XXXX Brewery, Kodak, Streets and the Ten Network. The mission of this privately run institution is, “the conservation of the aquatic environment through living displays, education, research, and the fostering of environmental responsibility” (UnderWater World, nd). The Interpretation Centre has an extensive educational component. While they run marine education programs for schools, much attention has been given to educating the touring public as well. Examples of interpretive opportunities at the site include a touch pool at the start of the tour where people can handle sea creatures and ask staff questions. A sign by the pool states:

We invite you to connect with some of the animals that call the sea home.

We trust that through this experience you will come to appreciate the importance of the sea and work for its protection (UnderWater World, nd).

\textsuperscript{17} The idea of the panopticon is developed further in Chapter 5 of the thesis.
Other signs in UnderWater World’s Interpretation Centre offered similar encouragement for people to take responsibility for the sea environment. For instance, in a section called ‘Getting Involved’, educators at the site sought to empower visitors thus:

You can help ‘touch the sea’ in a positive way by joining those who are presently working to educate, conserve and manage. Don’t be mistaken into thinking that you can’t make a difference—you can! You’ve taken the first step by coming to UnderWater World to learn more about the natural world.

Touch the sea! Connect and care!

Although slightly presumptuous in assuming visitors’ reasons for going to the site, educators there have genuinely tried to incorporate the visitor into the experience. There are many opportunities for visitors to interact with the displays by using computers, listening to whale sounds, pushing buttons to determine answers and hear conversations between a range of marine resource users. Importantly, the Interpretation Centre has devoted a significant area to challenging popular myths about the dangers posed to humans by sharks. Extensive interactive displays teach about shark biology and behaviour. Various types of shark skin can be touched, certainly one useful way to begin to demystify this much maligned animal. A life size model of a shark (Figure 4.11) allows people to interactively light up parts of the animal and learn how it functions.

Another key feature of the site is its ‘Seal Show’, seals being the only mammal in captivity there (Figure 4.12). Usually, about 150 people view the show which is repeated five times a day. It might be expected that such a ‘show’ would conform immediately to the notion of the performing animal, of circuses and some marine parks. But here the ‘show’ was framed with a commentary that stressed the educational goals of the ‘performance’. The show did not include ‘tricks’ but was simply a viewing opportunity for the public with a scientific narrative. Interestingly, although the seals were used in this instance to educate tourists about marine mammals and the dangers posed to them by humans, the experience was still promoted as a ‘show’. Perhaps this indicates an expectation on behalf of visitors to be entertained in a specific way by captive animals. Similarly, Managers at the site may be

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18 The ‘show’ began with a stormwater drain discharging plastic waste into the seal pool which the mammals then swam amongst. The commentary explained that stormwater from urban areas washes rubbish into marine waterways which can harm marine animals such as seals, dolphins and birds.
Figure 4.11: Interactive Shark Display, UnderWater World

(Source: R. Eason, nd).
Figure 4.12: The Seal 'Show' at Underwater World

(Source: Christina Jarvis, 1998)
seen to be harnessing the entertainment expectation of the visitors in order to project their conservation agenda to a wider audience.

When the seals swim into the pool visitors are taught about their behaviour and survival mechanisms as well as the ways they are trained for the ‘show’, such as their jump out of the water for closer viewing by tourists. Usually during the ‘show’ people can elect to have their photograph taken with the seals. However, if the animals are not interested in that activity then such opportunities are missed. Indeed on my visit to UnderWater World, the seals refused to swim back into their enclosure for the photograph shoots, an example of ‘mis’behaviour much enjoyed by the audience. It seemed that visitors to this blue zoo were more than happy to applaud the agency of the seal and did so at the expense of being able to take home a photographic reminder of the event. Rather than being dismayed, this new ecotourist delighted in the non-performance of the seals.

A major feature of UnderWater World is the acrylic underwater tunnel display. These consist of three main sections, the tropical reef zone, the rocky reef and cave zone and the deep ocean zone. A moving walkway carries visitors through these zones, as if transporting them from one world to another. By carrying tourists under the water they can become encased in the ocean world with its various creatures. In taking the tourists to the animals, UnderWater World attempts to break down the boundaries which exist between culture and nature. Atmospheres of the various ocean environments are altered using sound, heat and light, further enabling visitors to feel they are a part of the seascape. For instance, on entering the tropical section, it is light and the air is warm. The interpretation material in the tunnels includes photographs and text with a key theme being the unfair treatment of sharks by humans. As tourists move along the walkway towards the underwater caves section, speakers near the floor give out sounds of the water’s edge and sea gulls. By the time the tourist reaches the deep ocean zone, the air temperature has dropped and the only noises to be heard are the eerie soundings of submarines. Again, the tourist can become

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19 I chatted to a middle-aged woman in the deep ocean section, asking her how she felt about seeing sharks and the other animals. Of the sharks she said, “they’re lovely, but I feel sorry they are locked up. I am a Pisces. I wouldn’t like to be locked up. They look so frustrated. But perhaps it is good for the children’s education”.

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partially immersed in the sea, in this case experiencing a range of environments therein. At UnderWater World, tourists are shown the dynamism of an admittedly captive sea, which from the shore can so easily be conceived of as one-dimensional.

4.6 Conclusion

Chapter 4 has shown that the keeping of fish as a food source and for entertainment has a long history. As with museums and zoos, the development of public aquaria has been associated with a desire to classify and domesticate nature within a context of imperial scientific exploration and the emergence of leisure time in industrialising societies. Public aquaria with their roots in the 1800s came about through naturalists’ tireless quest for knowledge coupled with important scientific and technological advances. Over the last two hundred years, there has been a shift in viewing the marine from a logic of separation to one of immersion. In the first instance, specimens were displayed out of context and were presented under the agenda of the human master. In the modern day, this relationship has shifted. A growing number of films and television series about ocean animals have brought animals of the sea into cinemas and lounge rooms, frequently framing these creatures as wild, beautiful and worthy of protection. More recently, aquaria have attempted to partially immerse visitors in the world of the animals through the use of techniques such as underwater walkways and through interpretive programs which encourage the visitor to recognise and question the culture/nature binary. In this way, modern aquaria appear to hold a degree of respect for the agency of the animals as attempts are made to re-create their worlds even within the confines of the city.

Hence over time some aquaria have maintained a commitment to science and education as is manifest in the contemporary moment in places such as UnderWater World and the Melbourne Aquarium. These sites stand as places of animal entertainment where the boundaries between conservation and entertainment are decidedly blurred. UnderWater World visitors drawn the to seal ‘show’, are educated about the animals and threats to them in a context of fun without humanising or degrading the animals. Indeed, on one occasion
the seal's spontaneous decision to disobey the trainer's request was met with delight by tourists. However, at the same time the financial gain associated with the human fascination of marine animals, particularly cetacea, has seen institutions concerned with using these animals as almost solely entertainment, such as Sea World, flourish. In recent years, as environmental consciousness has grown, such places have had to defend the confinement of cetacea. As such, Sea World has incorporated an environmental education program into their operation. It remains to be seen as to whether these educational initiatives are genuinely assisting the future viability if these marine animals and their environments, or if they are but a form of pseudo education designed to justify a tourism industry which depends upon the marine animal exhibits. The site remains one of commercialised animal exploitation and consumption. Boundaries between our world and that of the animals are not challenged by a visit to Sea World.

In leaving the safe confines of Sea World and the urban aquaria, Chapters 5 to 8 of the thesis continue to unravel the spectrum of ways of experiencing marine animals in modern day Australia. From a position of moderate mediation amidst the confines of mass tourism infrastructure to a space of minimum mediation the thesis continues its journey of gradual immersion into the realm of 'the wild'. Hence, the thesis floats from the sandy beaches of Phillip Island into the waters of Port Phillip Bay, gathering insights of visitors to these sites as it travels, in a bid to investigate the contours of hyperseparation and intimacy between humans and other animals in marine animal tourism.
CHAPTER 5

THE IMAGINED WORLD OF THE
PHILLIP ISLAND PENGUIN PARADE

Parade: 1. Show, display, or ostentation.
2. The orderly assembly of troops, boy scouts, or any other body,
   for inspection, display or any other purpose
   (Delbridge et al., 1982: 1252)

5.1 Introduction

Two and a half hours drive south east of the new Melbourne Aquarium is a place where tourists can encounter marine animals unconfined but within an extensive ecotour infrastructure. Alighting from cars or buses, visitors to the Phillip Island Penguin Parade are met by the sight of a substantial Visitor Interpretation Centre and by the smell of a cool, salt-filled Southern Ocean breeze with just a hint of penguin. Armed with cameras, rugs and unbridled anticipation, these visitors venture towards picturesque Summerland Bay to await the arrival of an enormously popular marine animal, the Little Penguins of Phillip Island.

This chapter presents an analysis of the ways in which one of the case studies in the thesis, the Phillip Island Penguin Parade, frames marine animals for touristic consumption. It is concerned with the question of how marine nature is produced at the site, both historically and at the time of my fieldwork there. This site is Victoria’s second-largest tourist attraction after the Melbourne Zoological Gardens, and, due to Phillip Island’s estimated 30,000 Little Penguins, it is also considered to be the State’s most visited natural destination (Ryan, 1996). The Phillip Island Nature Park, of which the Penguin Parade is a part, contributes almost $100 million to the Victorian economy annually. The Nature Park won the 1999 Ansett Australia Major Tourist Attraction Award (Kuiper, 1999). In

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1 The Phillip Island Nature Park also won this award in 1998 (Gilchrist, 1998).
addition, as Ricketson (1991: 62) states, "[a] recent bureau of Tourism Research study reveals the Penguin Parade to be far and away the attraction most enjoyed by overseas visitors to Victoria". The Penguin Parade contributes an interesting example of an attempt to at once exploit and conserve nature so as to derive economic and ecological benefits in the longer term.

This chapter details the way in which, over time, penguins have been produced for tourism at the Penguin Parade, "Australia’s most visited natural wildlife attraction" (Glover, 1992:1). During this century significant changes have occurred at the Penguin Parade reflecting shifting attitudes to the environment and to animals. To explore these shifting attitudes to Phillip Island’s Little Penguin population, the chapter is divided into three sections covering the varied ways the penguin has been framed over time. Each of these perspectives variously assists in the production of the penguin for tourists. Firstly, the chapter looks at the development of the penguin as a novelty attraction, where the animals are sold as appealing stars of the theatre of nature. In this perspective the penguin is often anthropomorphised within a logic of postmodern tourism. Secondly, the bird is framed as a threatened commodity due to encroaching urbanisation and as being of growing value to the local and state economies. Finally, the chapter details the way penguins are framed as a way to "get back to nature," a bridge whereby tourists can re-find ‘the wild’ on an island depicted as being rich in coastal beauty and overlain with recent government conservation initiatives. As I will show in Chapter 6, these constructions are, to various extents, evident in the comments of some of the tourists who visit the birds.

These varied framings of the penguins at the Penguin Parade place the birds centre stage within the processes of fun, conservation, education and objectification. This picture of the production of nature at the Penguin Parade is based on a consideration of such things as: the management and sponsorship aspects of the site, a discussion of the human-made landscape, the promotional material (brochures, advertising) as well as the in situ interpretation material (signs, interpretation displays). The Penguin Parade exists as a place where marine nature has been socially constructed in a particular way and with certain

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2 As tourists drive onto Phillip Island, a roadside sign invites them to “Get Back to Nature on Phillip Island”.
objectives. It is through the processes of packaging, promoting and presenting animals that a particular brand of 'nature' can be readily accessed by tourists within the culture of touristic consumerism surrounding it. At the Penguin Parade, it is the penguin which performs as the star of the 'show'. In considering how Phillip Island's Little Penguin population has become a significant natural attraction in Australia, the chapter will now move to look more closely at the ways in which the mediated animals are sold within a contemporary touristic context.

5.2 The penguin as novelty

In a general sense, penguins are a frequently anthropomorphised animal. Their upright walk, and 'dinner suit' feather pattern and colours have allowed easy association with humans. They have been further popularised through such characters as The Penguin in the Batman and Robin series and films as well as the cartoon character, Pingu the Penguin (Figure 5.1). After almost three-quarters of a century under the tourists' gaze, the Phillip Island penguins have evolved as objects of fun and novelty within a context of a contemporary tourism industry. The construction of the animal in this way is best understood within the context of the concerted efforts to build a tourism industry around them. The Penguin Parade depicts the animal as having human qualities, or at least characteristics with which humans may easily identify. As will be shown, through interpretation programs these characteristics have been a useful tool in attracting increasing numbers of tourists to the site over time. Indeed, the very fact that the arrival of the penguins is referred to as a 'parade' is evidence that they are packaged as performers in a 'show', assembled animals on display for human entertainment.

With tourist numbers now at 520,000 annually "[n]ature conservation has become big business" (Edgecombe, 1989: 103) on Phillip Island. The objectification of the animals on the Island, including the penguin, is more evident than ever. Clearly, the need to conserve the animal 'resource' remains integral to the well being of the Island's economy. A vigorous advertising campaign has also made the penguins an international tourist
Figure 5.1:  Pingu the Penguin

(Source: http://www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/5681/pictures.html#pics)
attraction, especially popular within Southeast Asia and Japan (also due in part to the association with the Pingu character) as well as in Europe and North America (Cuttriss and Bird, 1995).

Wealthy Melburnians have been visiting Phillip Island since the 1840s, first by horse and buggy, then by ferry across Western Port, to stay with settlers. Many places were given European seaside names. By the late 1800s, people began visiting the Isle of Wight Hotel and sailing on Green Lake. Townships grew at Rhyll and Cowes (Figure 1.3). To local people and visitors, the site of today’s Penguin Parade at Summerland Beach (then Pat’s Gully), “appeared as a wasteland in which nothing good or interesting was visible...[with the] whole land area having an unfriendly appearance” (Grayden, 1993: tape recording).

In the late 1920s three local men, Bert West, Bern Denham, and Herbert Watchman met visitors at the Island’s ferry and punt landings and drove them in hire cars to watch penguins return to their burrows at dusk on Summerland Beach. Bert West was particularly instrumental in establishing the site as a tourist attraction, purchasing his own car in 1926 in order to transport visitors (West, 1982). As the potential for the tourism dollar was realised, local entrepreneur, A.K.T. Sambell, used his Phillip Island Holiday Development Company to build an access road to the beach. Tourism was seen as a much-needed alternative in a place suffering under the effects of depression and low prices for farm produce (Grayden, no date). The penguins appeared as an unusual and fun focus for an emergent tourist market.

As no written records remain, it is not known how these early tour guides might have framed the penguins. However, photographic evidence shows tourists sitting in close proximity to the arriving birds (Figure 1.4) and it is known that there was significant destruction of habitat caused by foot traffic. As such, it appears that for these early tourists, the focus of the event was the birds and little interest was shown in the conservation of the surrounding habitat. Notably, the use of torches at the time worked to place the penguins in the limelight in much the same way as the modern-day floodlights do. Overall, visitation to

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3 Nor did exhaustive archival searches reveal if they provided any oral interpretation of the penguins.
the Penguin Parade in the early part of the twentieth century was an ad hoc, haphazard affair, managed predominantly by a single operator catering for local interest.

The potential of the site and its animals to draw more tourists, and from further afield, was soon recognised. Subsequently, in 1928, a guesthouse was built and was enlarged in 1931 to house ten visitors. Owners of the guesthouse hoped to encourage people from Melbourne and other parts of the mainland to visit the penguins. When the first bridge from San Remo to Newhaven was opened in 1949, the development of Phillip Island as a tourist resort began in earnest. At this time, people's reasons for wanting to visit the place were largely to look at nature and the various animal inhabitants, particularly koalas and penguins (Cuttriss and Bird, 1995). So even fifty years ago the wildlife attractions on the Island drew large numbers of tourists. And over time the access to these animals has been greatly increased by the use of techniques such as the floodlights of the Penguin Parade and the inclusion of viewing stands in the 1960s. This packaging of nature has supported the local and State economies and simultaneously allowed the animals greater protection from human impacts such as habitat loss. Hence, the penguins increasingly were seen as animals of great novelty value, but increasingly also as something which should be protected and studied, as I discuss later in the chapter.

By the 1980s, volumes of tourists to the penguin site were such that their management necessarily became more formal. Specifically, government intervention led to a number of structural changes which introduced the formal management of the penguin event itself as well as the penguins. This management and subsequent protection worked to develop another way in which the penguins were socially constructed. In 1981, as tourism numbers and the earning capacity of the penguins increased, control of the then Penguin Reserve was passed from the State government to a special Phillip Island Penguin Reserve Committee of Management (hereafter P.I.P.R.C.M.). This body was in addition to the Scientific Advisory Committee (referred to below). At this time there was considerable concern about a decrease in penguin numbers and it was thought that without stringent intervention, the penguin colony would die off within ten years (Scrace, 1995). Together the Committees managed the entire penguin habitat on Phillip Island for the “protection and
enhancement of the penguin colonies and the enjoyment and education of the public” (Edgecombe, 1989: 103). Hence, at this time it was acknowledged that the penguins were deserving of scientific study, while at the same time they were envisaged as being a source of interest and entertainment for tourists. In 1984, this perspective was formalised with the inclusion of a tourism industry representative on the P.I.P.R.C.M.. The Committee included representatives as follows:

- Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
- Environmental Consultant
- Department of Zoology, Monash University
- Phillip Island Conservation Society
- Phillip Island Shire Council
- Department of Zoology, University of Melbourne
- Melbourne Zoological board
- Phillip Island Tourism Association.

The inclusion of a representative from the Phillip Island Tourism Association indicates a shift in viewing the penguin as a general object of curiosity and science towards one that was also capable of being an economic asset and a source of novelty and entertainment.

In the late 1980s, an Australian Bicentennial Project grant of $3.3 million was used by the Penguin Parade to dramatically alter the landscape through the construction of infrastructure capable of supporting high volumes of tourists. This included a boardwalk across the dune system, updating the viewing stands of the 1960s, and building a Visitor Interpretation Centre (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). Notably, the viewing stands worked to create an outdoor theatre setting where, under lights, people could observe the ‘comical’ penguins ‘rushing home’. A particularly important part of the design of the Penguin Parade complex.

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4 Renovations to the Visitor Interpretation Centre completed after my fieldwork in 1997 have further emphasised Management’s commitment to environmental education within the confines of a business necessarily dependent on ticket and retail sales. The changes have seen a shift in the way that space is used in the Visitor Centre. Initially, much of the floor space in the building was devoted to interpretation displays. Following the renovations, more space was given over to commercial aspects of the business. For instance, the main souvenir shop was moved and extended so as to hold more stock. Another boutique souvenir section was also added. The area where food was sold was also moved and room made available for a café-style restaurant. The changes were in response to a need to increase revenue at the site (Phillip Island Penguin Parade Ranger a, 1996).
Figure 5.2: Diagram of Phillip Island Penguin Parade Site Showing Visitor Centre, Boardwalk and Viewing Stands

(Source: Scrase, 1995: 22)

Figure 5.3: Photograph of Area Shown in Figure 5.2

(Source: P.I.P.R.C.M., 1992: 22)
as it now stands is that visitor access to the bird viewing area is through the Visitor Centre. Here, at a site of moderate mediation, tourists are given the opportunity to access management-sanctioned depictions of the birds through a variety of media before they experience the ‘real thing’. The display content, referred to throughout the chapter, functioned to present multiple meanings of the penguin. Certainly the penguins are framed as objects of novelty, but also of science, of conservation and of spectacle. Hence, in the late 1980s, attempts to incorporate interpretation with the experience of wild animals became a priority. At the same time, these developments may be seen to be steps towards the creation of a fun-land where family groups could be entertained by the strange looking birds as they waddled to their burrows at night.

The interpretation opportunities at the current Penguin Parade can be categorised as either formal presentations or self-guided tours, both of which act to construct the animals as objects of education. Briefly, the formal presentations include the Summer Activities program and the lectures given at schools by the Rangers. However, it is the self-guided tours within the Visitor Centre that provide the primary educational opportunity for tourists. Here, information is presented in a variety of formats. Until early 1997, visitors learnt about the penguins by reading information boards, examining displays, looking at photographs, dioramas and art work, and by participating in some low key interactive displays in the Penguin Experience section, as discussed later in the chapter. In addition, a 10-minute audio-visual (also referred to later in the chapter) that followed the penguins across the four seasons in a year, was played repeatedly during the evenings.

Inherent within the interpretation material at the Penguin Parade Visitor Centre is the idea of the penguin as a novelty object. For instance, children are often delighted by the

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5 Entrance tickets to the Interpretation Centre and to see the penguins cost A$11.50 (adult), A$6.00 (child), A$29.00 (family), A$8.00 (concession).
6 The framing of the penguin as an object of novelty and fun has not always been so at the Penguin Parade. For instance according to Penguin Parade staff, before construction of the Visitor Interpretation Centre in the late 1980s, interpretation displays were designed to prepare people for the night by telling them about the weather, the time the penguins would arrive and the birds’ seasonal cycles. The idea was to “set up expectations in peoples’ minds” (Phillip Island Penguin Parade Ranger b, 1996). The intention of the then P.I.P.R.C.M. was that, “interpretation should function to develop in visitors a desire to find out more about nature and to better understand the interrelationships between elements of the environment” (Varcoe, et al., 1985: 59). Initially, the displays were presented with a minimal amount of text, the intention being that their
costumed penguin which wanders around the Visitor Centre, waving to them and hugging them as photographs are snapped. Prior to 1997, some displays allowed visitors to touch taxidermed birds and a special area was set aside to allow visitors to have their photograph taken with them and the costumed bird. In addition, money placed inside a large mechanical penguin will reward the donor with recorded penguin calls. At the time of my fieldwork, the first image seen by tourists as they entered the Visitor Centre was an alcove with a brightly-lit display of a massive penguin which stood about 10 feet high. This was often a place used by tourists to take photographs of themselves with the over-sized bird. Visitors were then able to enter the souvenir shop, the kiosk or begin their tour of the other displays.

Until 1997, all interpretation material was presented on information boards. This written interpretation covered various themes. These included such things as a history of tourism of the site, details of the Reserve Management structure and the planning process, information about contributions by sponsors, descriptions of the penguins’ habitat and general biological information about the birds. A noticeable gap in the historical information was details about indigenous people on Phillip Island and their relationship with the Reserve site.

In part, the displays depicted the penguins in a fun anthropomorphic way. As alluded to above, much of the material attempted to relate the lives and the world of the penguins to that of humans. For example, one section asks, “why do penguins walk upright like humans?” In another panel, information relating to the penguins’ diet of small fish referred to it as “fast food”. Similarly, the section referring to penguin predators in the sea such as

message was self-explanatory (Phillip Island Penguin Parade Ranger b, 1996). During busy periods, films of the penguins were shown before dusk. Between 1984 and 1985, National Parks and Wildlife Rangers went to the Penguin Parade and gave talks to the tourists. This was the only interpretation provided at the time (Phillip Island Penguin Parade Ranger b, 1996). Management structure was also smaller, with the only positions being General Manager, Operations Manager and a Secretary.

7 Similarly, a new computer game allows children to manoeuvre a penguin through the ocean to catch fish while at the same time avoid ships and sharks. If the latter comes onto the screen the penguin is heard to say “Oh ohh”.

8 Staff were concerned that this required attention and it was subsequently presented in the renovated version.

9 Words in inverted commas relating to the Visitor Centre displays are quotes from the original display material, unless otherwise stated.
Great White Sharks was entitled "Jaws". And in referring to the swimming activities of penguins, these "Little Aussie Divers" were noted to be "last in the book of penguin Olympic records for diving and swimming". Repeatedly comparisons were made between the human world and that of the birds. For instance, one information board read:

People see well in air, fish see well in water, and penguins need to see in both. When we open our eyes underwater without a facemask, things appear blurred. Penguins do not need a facemask underwater as they have a flattened cornea (display at the Penguin Parade, 1996).

In this way some mediation at the site acts to question the strength of the culture/nature binary.

Other sections of the displays did not support the theme of relating the experience of nature and the penguin to those of humans. Specifically, there was an inference that the world of the Little Penguin was somehow apart from the human (and thus the tourists') world. One section particularly highlighted this point. Entitled "Problems Can Be Natural", the text outlines 'natural' threats to the penguins in "their world" (such as weather) as opposed to the "problems brought about by Europeans over the past 200 years [which] are a different story". Similarly, the interpretation material espoused that the penguins live in an "incredible world, so alien to humans". There is a contradiction here. On one hand tourists are being drawn into the world of the penguin so that they might understand and learn to protect it. But at the same time they are being told that their world and that of the penguins are not the same.

The descriptions of the interpretation displays outlined above present a complex story. Here, anthropomorphised penguins are at once framed as 'like us' but also as quite apart from the human world. It is possible that both perspectives may be problematic or positive in a conservation sense. Projecting human characteristics onto the birds may blind tourists to the actual lives of penguins while at the same time objectifying the birds in ways which are not about them but are more about humans. Alternatively, anthropomorphising the penguins may be a useful conservation initiative in that although the animal's world is misinterpreted, a point of empathy may be established between tourists and the animals.
Similarly, it is hard to discern if the culture/nature dualism is most readily challenged by drawing links between the penguin’s and the tourist’s worlds or by actively setting them apart so as the animal may be afforded greater agency.

Another part of the Penguin Parade where the novelty quality of the penguin is emphasised is, not surprisingly, in the proliferation of merchandise for sale at the souvenir shop in the Visitor Interpretation Centre. Soft penguin toys, key-ring penguins, and penguin books and videos adorn the shelves. The bird also features on stationary, sticker sets, stamps, household goods and a range of clothing items contributing to the idea of the bird as novel and fun. Glossy information booklets about the penguins are also available (Figure 5.4). Here, the animal is depicted as humorously parading past tourists after it has seemingly magically appeared from the sea. The booklets also show various comic poses from the facets of the birds’ lives on land.\textsuperscript{10} However, the information about the birds contained in these souvenir booklets is not entirely light-hearted, a reflection on the status of the animal as threatened, as I will now discuss.

5.4 The penguin as threatened

The management, tourism and interpretation histories of the Penguin Parade also tell a story of a bird that has been threatened by the impacts of humans. The development of the site as a tourism complex has come about for a variety of reasons. In part, environmental degradation elsewhere in Australia and the world has focussed attention on the birds and the pressure placed upon them, especially by the subsequent encroachments of land containing rookeries by human developments. This urbanisation has brought with it other threats to the penguin’s survival such as feral animals and an influx of weeds detrimental to the bird’s habitat. The animals were also recognised as economically valuable by Victorian Governments and, as such, infrastructure has sprung up around them as a means of ensuring their survival and encouraging visitation.

\textsuperscript{10} The booklets also explain the research activities at the Penguin Parade, perhaps in part to legitimise the commercialisation of the site.
Figure 5.4: Cover of a Penguin Parade Tourism Publication

(Source: P.I.P.R.C.M., 1992)
Certainly, within a few years of the first organised tours at the Penguin Parade, penguin numbers began to fall as tourists trampled on penguin burrows and vegetation. In response, 10 acres of penguin habitat was donated to the people of Victoria by local landowners, the Spencer-Jackson’s. The land, recognised for its importance to the ongoing survival of the birds, was set aside and eventually became the site of the current Penguin Parade (Edgecombe, 1989).

In spite of infrastructural attempts such as the use of boardwalks to control visitor impacts, increasing numbers of visitors to the island have had a dramatic impact on the various wildlife communities. Some native species have become rare while introduced species have prospered. In response, conservation attempts have been made by Governments and individuals, mainly focussing on the seals, mutton-birds, waterfowl and wading birds, koalas, some native plants and the penguins.

In the 1950s, with growing numbers of visitors to Phillip Island, increased pressure was placed on penguin habitat. A contradiction was increasingly played out in that tourism rather than agriculture was being encouraged as a source of revenue on the Island (Head, 2000). At the same time, tourists began to have an adverse impact on penguin numbers. In particular, part of the Summerland Peninsula was sub-divided to make way for a holiday housing development, known as Summerland Estate (for details, see Head, 2000). The impact on the birds was various including many being hit by cars and the spreading of Kikuyu grass from the housing estate to the penguins’ burrows, forming a thick and impenetrable growth. The Estate also acted as a refuge for foxes, cats and dogs, all of which hunted the penguins (Cuttriss and Bird, 1995). In response, fences were constructed at the Penguin Parade site to reduce impact on the burrows and dunes. Then in 1955, the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife established a large reserve over the penguin rookeries near the Estate. From this time, the road leading into the Summerland Estate was closed between dusk and dawn with only residents allowed night access. The restriction of night traffic served to protect birds returning to nests at night. At the newly designated Penguin Reserve, tourist numbers continued to increase. Subsequently the concrete viewing stand was built within this area with the aim of increasing crowd control at the site.
Generally, the 1960s are regarded as a time of increasing interest in and concern about the environment. On Phillip Island there was a simultaneous interest in developing the tourism industry. Head (2000: 41) notes that “[t]he tensions between protection of the environment as a resource for tourism and facilitating increasing visitor numbers...are not new”. During this decade at the Penguin Parade the opportunity to learn more about penguins over the long term was taken up with the formation of the Penguin Study Group. The largely volunteer-run organisation began tagging the birds and recording basic biological data (Reilly, 1984).\textsuperscript{11} Also at this time, a new bridge replaced the former suspension bridge between New Haven on Phillip Island and San Remo (Figure 1.3), allowing for a greater volume of traffic and “a huge expansion in tourist activities”, especially at the Penguin Parade (Edgecombe, 1989: 63).\textsuperscript{12} Reportedly, on one Easter Sunday night in the early 1970s, more than 7000 tourists gathered to witness “these remarkable birds” (Grayden, 1993:1).

As with the discourse evident in the Visitor Centre displays and interpretation materials discussed earlier in the chapter, the Penguin Parade institution and its managerial history can also be seen to reflect ways in which the penguin has been framed over time. In particular, changes in management practice can be read as an indication of the ways in which the penguin was increasingly seen as threatened. Concern for the environment in the 1970s and 1980s led to greater interest in the Penguin Parade from a range of players, not least, State and Local Governments. As mentioned, changes in management structure at the Penguin Parade were illustrative of changing attitudes to the birds and the increasing vision of them as being under threat. As such, the following section explains how management has developed, reflecting societal needs and interests regarding the long-term survival of the penguins. It also outlines sponsors of the site whose interests may at times be seen to be in conflict with those of the animals.

\textsuperscript{11} This project continues and is the longest continual study of a bird species in Australia.
\textsuperscript{12} Currently, Phillip Island has the highest proportion of holiday homes to permanent places of residence of any Victorian tourist area (over 72\%) (Edgecombe, 1989: 22).
It was not until 1961 that management of the Penguin Parade area was formalised when the Shire of Phillip Island and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, took over responsibility from a temporary committee. This shift should be seen within the wider changes associated with resource management. As noted above, by this time, Phillip Island had suffered extensive habitat loss with associated problems for the penguin population. Prior to European settlement, the Little Penguin nested in a range of sites along the coast of Phillip Island (see Cuttriss and Bird, 1995). However habitat disturbance resulted in very restricted nesting areas, mainly in the southwestern part of the Island, from Summerland Beach to Cat Bay.

The P.I.P.R.C.M. (mentioned above) was established under Section 14 of the Crown Lands (Reserves) Act, 1978. In accordance with a management agreement determined under section 19 of the National Parks Act 1975 between the Committee of Management and the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, the Reserve was managed as a Park under the National Parks Act. As concern for nature conservation grew, further steps were taken to ensure the long-term survival of the birds both for conservation reasons and to protect their touristic earning capacity. In 1980 the Phillip Island Shire Council called a meeting to form a Scientific Advisory Committee. They began feral animal control measures and began plans for the restructuring of amenities and viewing areas at the site. In 1982 this Committee was expanded to include a representative from the Victorian Institute of Marine Science and the Ministry of Conservation. This was in response to the rapidly increasing number of road deaths and predation by feral animals. At this time the Committee consisted of representatives from the following bodies:

- Department of Ecology and Evolutionary biology, Monash University
- Esso Australia*
- Department of Zoology, Monash University
- Marine Science Laboratories
- Arthur Rylah institute
- Department of Zoology, University of Melbourne
- BHP Environmental Affairs Co-ordinator*
- Veterinary Surgeon

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• Three non-affiliated members

(* BHP and Esso are major sponsors of the Penguin Reserve, a feature discussed later in the chapter).

With concerns regarding a decrease in penguin numbers, the State Government announced their Penguin Protection Plan in 1985. This included a program for scientific research, a management plan and the formation of the Habitat Management Working party (P.I.P.R.C.M., 1989). Prior to 1985, only one plan had been released, in 1983, which considered the management needs of the whole Reserve. In addition, with one third of the Summerland Estate sub-division developed, the Government recognised the threat to the well being of the penguins, and hence the tourist economy. As a result it began to buy back houses on the Estate, to remove them and to rehabilitate the sites. The area included 776 freehold allotments. To date, 90% of the estate has been bought back by the Government, a total cost in excess of $10 million (Edgecombe, 1989: 103; Gilchrist, 1998; Head, 2000).

In 1989 the first comprehensive Phillip Island Penguin Reserve Management Plan was released. This was a significant move towards the protection of the animals. At the same time the Penguin Parade began to attract a range of industry sponsors (see Appendix 5.1) who contributed funds to ensure the well being of the penguins, including Esso, BHP-Petroleum and BHP Community Trust. Representatives from both organisations have held positions on the Scientific Advisory Committee. The organisations each contributed $150,000 over three years from 1991 to 1993 to aid in researching the distribution and feeding patterns of penguins at sea as well as to help increase understanding about the diet of the birds. It is not unusual for groups associated with wildlife conservation to accept sponsorship. In fact, it is essential for most to do so. However, when the organisations behind the sponsorship may be seen to be at odds with the projects they are funding,

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13 Until the mid-1990s, the area known as the Phillip Island Penguin Reserve encompassed an area of approximately 340 hectares, including all public land on the Summerland Peninsula. The Reserve included large colonies of Little Penguins and Short-tail Shearwaters. Further, Australia's largest breeding colony of Australian Fur Seals (Arctocephalus pusillus) is located south-west of the Nobbies and was managed by the Reserve. The Management Plan also covered the Koala Conservation Centre. The Bass Coast Shire on the whole administered other coastal areas noted because of their natural characteristics, such as Pyramid Rock. Other Crown land on the Island came under the jurisdiction of the National Parks service, a branch of the then Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.
questions can be raised.\textsuperscript{14} In this case, the issues are fairly obvious. Both BHP and Esso run projects offshore relating to oil extraction, although not necessarily in the immediate vicinity of the Penguin Reserve. One of the constant threats to the Little Penguin population is from oil spills and the penguin hospital located within the Penguin Reserve primarily treats oil affected birds. With reference to the Penguin Parade, Peter Preuss of the Australian Conservation Foundation has stated, "if there is one major oil spill, it would pretty well wipe out the tourist industry down there" (quoted in Ricketson, 1991: 62). The effect of such disasters on sea life is well known following such cases as the Exxon Valdez spill in the North Sea. This provides an interesting example of compromise where an organisation interested in the conservation of a species accepts funding from the structures that pose the greatest threat to it. Such an arrangement may become more common in the future as conservation groups struggle to find funds and industries seek to green their public image by offering financial support.\textsuperscript{15} That these major companies have donated just $300,000 between them over three years to the Penguin Parade seems to suggest that the motive of becoming involved in the Penguin Parade is indeed public relations.

In 1996 the P.I.P.R.C.M. commissioned accounting firm KPMG to determine the fiscal value of the penguins. The ensuing report concluded that the penguins are responsible for $97 million in tourism revenue each year. Of the approximately 30,000 penguins on the Island, only 3,000 are ever seen by tourists under the lights of the Penguin Parade. KPMG calculated that these birds in particular are worth $32,300 each. The Penguin Parade's marketing manager, Mr. Wesley Head, commented that it was important to value the birds in monetary terms in order to estimate the costs of natural and other disasters. He went on to single out oils spills in particular as a problem with many hidden costs (Ryan, 1996).

\textsuperscript{14} Hooper-Greenhill (1994) refers to a similar situation in the USA. An exhibition at the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Canada, was organised as part of the events surrounding the Winter Olympic Games. The exhibition was to represent native Canadian culture. However, indigenous people were not heavily involved in the project. Specifically, the exhibition was sponsored by a multinational oil company which was at the same time involved in a battle for land rights with the native Canadians whose culture was being displayed.

\textsuperscript{15} Other such cases which have come up recently in Victoria further illustrate this point. For example, the Transurban Scheme, an organisation responsible for the Melbourne City Link project, offered the Wilderness Society $100,000 to fund a campaign against logging in old growth forests. City Link is a series of multi-million dollar freeways designed to ease traffic congestion throughout Melbourne. Research indicates that new freeways increase traffic and air pollution, not alleviate it. The Wilderness Society rejected the offer.
Between 1992 and 1994, Esso and BHP also donated $10,000 for the production of the audio-visual display in the Visitor Centre to which I referred earlier in the chapter. This is a multi-screen video/slide show which is run constantly in the Visitor Centre in the evenings and on request during the day. The content of the program covers the life of the Little Penguin over 12 months, largely discussing their biology. Threats to the penguins are mainly shown to be feral animals, especially cats. Other more controversial issues, such as the danger from oil spills and the problems with over-harvesting of pilchards and anchovies by the commercial fishing industry are not addressed. This is interesting considering that at least 75% of chicks from the October 1997 clutches died due to a lack of food, although this was not necessarily related to the fishing industry (Phillip Island Penguin Parade Research Department, 1997).

The Phillip Island penguin historically has been framed at once as a Disney-like celebrity and as a fragile creature in need of conservation. Combined, this public image of the animal cleverly works to ensure its conservation. The novelty framing of the birds makes their lives accessible to humans and helps bridge the culture/nature binary by producing empathy and recognition. At the same time, the conservation messages seek to build a sense of responsibility within the visitor community. The next part of the chapter considers the framing of the penguin as a way for humans to "get back to nature". Here, visitors encased in a very deliberate infrastructure, can almost feel a part of the penguin's world both by being in the dune habitat and by visiting the Penguin Experience in the Visitor Centre.

5.5 The penguin as a way to "get back to nature"

Clearly, developments in management and infrastructure at the Penguin Parade reflect changes in attitudes towards the animals as well as the changing needs of the paying tourist. Under threat from housing developments and tourism, managers have created a restricted and fenced environment for the penguins, which is also often a 'no-go zone' for humans. The built environment around the Summerland Beach birds and the sense of theatre and
carnival which surrounds their nightly appearance from the sea has placed them on a pinnacle of objectification where they are at once sacred and exploited.

As the economy of Phillip Island developed through tourism during the second half of the twentieth century, visitors’ growing interest in the non-built environment at the site also grew. The history of the Penguin Parade is, in part, one of an increasing desire by folk to experience ‘nature’ but in doing so, they threaten the well-being of that which they have come to see. As I have shown, the response from the State has been to progressively introduce measures to control the impact of greater tourist numbers on the habitat and animals of the Island. These attempts to introduce management measures have been extensive and have been designed with the intention of bringing people closer to this idea of ‘wild’ nature without simultaneously destroying it, a point discussed by Head (2000) in her study of culture and nature on the Summerland Peninsula. As examined in Chapter 2, this balance between development and conservation in tourism is not easily achieved.

The framing of the penguin as a pathway to nature is more readily understood within the context of conservation initiatives across the whole Island. All of the features discussed below have been developed to simultaneously draw people to the area, protect the landscape and allow tourists greater proximity to a seemingly undomesticated or ‘wild’ nature. In the 1980s, decision-makers in the area began to look beyond the penguins to other features of the Island as a source of tourist attraction. The natural features of the Island were recognised for their aesthetic and ecological importance and their potential to draw tourists. At the Penguin Parade, it was not simply the introduction of interpretation discourse which served to frame the penguin as more than simply an observable object. The wooden boardwalks also functioned to take tourists into the penguin habitat, leading them to vantage points from which they could observe the lives of the animals in context. Hence, whereas in the 1920s, attention seems to have been on watching the birds dash from the water to the dunes, in the 1980s, greater emphasis was given to observing the penguins as a component of a wider environment. As part of this change, a series of measures to preserve these sites have been set in place, as will now be outlined.
The Nobbies at Point Grant (see Figure 1.3) have long been a popular destination for local people and tourists. Ten years ago, a major project was started under the Community Employment Program to upgrade the area by replacing concrete paths with elevated boardwalks. This site has recently undergone further alterations in a bid to highlight nature attractions on Phillip Island besides the penguins, as discussed later in the chapter. Other changes have also taken place in recognition of the environmental wealth of the Island. For example, in 1986, the area surrounding Cape Woolamai was declared a State Faunal Reserve in an attempt to protect several endangered and rare birds and in recognition of the Cape as an important nesting site for the Short-tailed Shearwaters/ Mutton Birds (*Puffinus tenuirostris*). Subsequently stairs and boardwalks have been built to minimise the impact of increased tourist numbers. Importantly, in 1987, the State Government extended the Phillip Island Penguin Reserve to encompass all the public land on the western promontory of Phillip Island from Summerland Bay isthmus to Point Grant.

On July 3rd 1996 the Victorian State Government announced the dedication of 2500 hectares of Phillip Island as a Nature Park (Figure 1.3). This was a major feature of the Coalition’s “Clean and Green” Conservation and Environment Policy. It was to be Victoria’s first Nature Park and part of a State-wide plan to increase the nature tourism aspect of Victoria. Of interest is that in 1994 the Land Conservation Council had recommended that Phillip Island be named a State Park. However the Government’s desire to see the Nobbies area developed for tourism meant that the Island received Nature Park status. By definition, a State Park has restrictions on construction and tenure of developments. In the case of a Nature Park, all conservation areas are managed under one strategy. Private consortia can lease land for development, such as is the case at the Nobbies (see Appendix 5.2). In potential contrast with its name, a Nature Park provides the opportunity for private developments that are not available under a State Park. This move was consistent with the then Premier Kennett’s desire to create local jobs through tourism and to alleviate some of the tourist pressure being placed on the Penguin Parade.\(^{16}\) This decision would seem to be in keeping with Phillip Island’s Committee of Management’s

\(^{16}\) The then Kennett Government had a penchant for integrating private capital in public space elsewhere in Victoria, such as its plans to ‘develop’ Wilson’s Promontory National Park and the Twelve Apostles site.
1994-95 Annual Report which encouraged, "complimentary privately funded attractions and associated infrastructure" (Phillip Island Nature Park Committee of Management (formerly P.I.P.R.C.M.), 1995: 34). As such, when the Nature Park was declared, Seal Rocks was added to it, as were Cape Woolamai, Pyramid Rock, Churchill Island and Rhyll Inlet and wetlands.

As already discussed, the impact of humans on the penguin population at Summerland Bay this century has been extensive. In response, the area containing the penguin rookeries has undergone extensive infrastructure changes in an attempt to preserve the animals and the income derived from them. At the same time, these changes reflect an attempt to bring tourists 'back to nature' by allowing them a significant level of proximity to 'the wild' without causing further damage.

Developments at the site illustrate changes in environmental understanding over the last 65 years. For instance, the infrastructure design reflects Management's philosophy about the site and its animals. In recent years Management has been concerned that the Visitor Centre did not blend in with the environment. This is certainly the case with the colosseum-like structure from which the penguins are viewed. Management have also changed their philosophy towards the idea of "putting back into the environment what you take out" (Phillip Island Penguin Parade Ranger, 1996). The concrete viewing stand of the 1960s, although unsightly, provides a sound way to manage up to several thousand people at a time. Rangers are stationed along the beach during the Penguin Parade. They prevent visitors from getting too close to the birds as they leave the water and make their way to the burrows. Management also tries to stop flashes being used on cameras, although this has proven hard to control, as I discuss in Chapter 6.

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17 Previously, the P.I.P.R.C.M. managed the Summerland Peninsula and the Koala Conservation Centre. The Shire administered coastal areas and the rest was managed by the National Parks Service, a branch of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The Nature Park Committee remains answerable to the Minister for Conservation and Environment. Members of the Committee include representatives from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the local community, the Shire, tourism bodies and wildlife experts, as approved by the Minister of Conservation and Environment.
As shown in Figure 5.5, the viewing stand is in two sections, overlooked by the panoptic Ranger tower.\textsuperscript{18} Penguins leaving the water at dusk, move up towards the dunes to their burrows. Those that walk up between the stands pass through a weigh station which monitors weight changes in individual birds as a means of assessing population health. In more recent years, the boardwalk has been extended to include access to a smaller viewing area where high numbers of penguins pass by. This new boardwalk and viewing area is narrower than the main pathway and designed to allow small numbers of people a more intimate experience with the animals. The area is closed by Rangers before it becomes over-crowded. As discussed in the next chapter, the experience for tourists in this section is designed to be markedly different from that in the main viewing area.

As already mentioned, boardwalks were initially constructed across the rookeries as a way to protect penguin burrows and simultaneously allow greater numbers of visitors close access to the birds. Fences line these walkways ensuring people are restrained (Figure 5.6) while the animals are free to move around unrestricted. The design of fencing along the boardwalk is such that it is usually unobtrusive and does not block the visitor’s view of the birds. Overall, it does prevent tourists touching the birds, although observation evidence suggests this is not an entirely foolproof measure and that the occasional tourist will reach through the fence and try and touch the birds. The tightly strung wire is one way in which people can be controlled while still presenting the impression that the barrier between human and animal is limited. This is in contrast to other materials which may have been used such as wood slats which would create quite a different impression for viewers.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the establishment of infrastructure across the Penguin Parade landscape. Firstly, it has allowed for over 500,000 people to see the animals each year while keeping erosion at the site to a minimum. Clearly, if the boardwalks and stand had not been erected, and revenue from the tourists not put back into the Reserve, the rookery would not exist today. The design of the boardwalk is a reflection

\textsuperscript{18} As also alluded to in relation to the Fish Bowl in the new Melbourne Aquarium (Chapter 4), a parallel may be drawn between the Ranger Observation Tower at the Penguin Parade and the construction of Louis XIV’s menagerie around Versailles which is said to have inspired Bentham’s Panoptican prison (see Anderson, 1998: 29).
Figure 5.5:  The Viewing Stand and Ranger Tower at Dusk

(Source: P.I.P.R.C.M., 1992: 7)
Figure 5.6:  Fenced Boardwalks Control Visitor Impact and Allow Controlled Proximity at the Penguin Parade

(Source: Phillip Island Nature Park, 1997: 8)
of an attempt by Management to naturalise the space and the tourist’s experience. Specifically, the use of dim lighting along the walkway creates a feeling of belonging in the penguins’ twilight world. The walkway is made of wood, raised above the dunes allowing access for the birds and simultaneously immersing tourists in the dense coastal vegetation of the site.

These developments are in stark contrast to the 1960s emphasis almost solely on the spectacle of the birds leaving the water under floodlights. Thirty years on, it seems thinking has shifted from looking at their world to looking within it, or at least attempting to create the illusion of this. Tourist experiences at the Penguin Parade are discussed in Chapter 6. The need for the infrastructure may also in part be seen to be a reflection of consumer demand. Across the globe, interest in nature tourism has escalated as discussed in Chapter 2. So, as more people wanted to visit the site, there was a need to accommodate them. Over time, visitation expectations have changed and it appears that more and more tourists want a close encounter with wild animals.

Finally, the development across the rookeries is a clear illustration of changes in our understanding of human impacts on the environment. From the free rein of the 1920s, a tightly controlled landscape has emerged reflecting a developing knowledge that ‘resources’ are finite and viable for the long term only if managed carefully. Part of this careful management has involved the removal of houses from the Summerland Estate, mentioned earlier in the chapter, and in controlling tourist activity at the site through the use of infrastructure and formalised education. In this way Head (2000: 36) argues that, “[m]anagement strategies [have constructed] nature around an ideal of human absence”. In restoring the landscape (Head, 2000), much replanting has occurred across the rookery and concerted efforts made to control feral animals and weeds, features adding to the image of the site as ‘natural’ and ‘untouched’ by humans.

As well as the outdoor work which has been undertaken in order to bring people back to the animals’ world, the Visitor Centre provides tourists with another opportunity to understand human and nature connections. For example a popular display at the time of the survey was
the sea/land column, a three dimensional free standing cube containing life-like models of penguins swimming underwater as well as on land. This allowed tourists to access part of the penguin’s world not accessible from the boardwalks or the viewing stands. Most notably there is one section of the Visitor Centre which has attempted quite self consciously to immerse humans into the lives of the little-known world of the penguins. This display is the Penguin Experience.

5.5.1 The Penguin Experience

On reaching the final part of the Visitor Centre self guided tour, visitors are able to become immersed in the realm of the penguin. As they enter the Penguin Experience, visitors can imagine that they are a penguin moving from the beach into the sea. This display attempts to bridge the idea of the objectified penguin variously positioned as novelty, threatened and a link to wild nature, inviting the visitor to see the world as a penguin might see it.\textsuperscript{19} As I will show, this display presents as an important shift for tourists towards greater immersion into the world of the animal.

In this display visitors moved down a sandhill ramp bordered by a painted wall showing penguins at dawn climbing down the dunes to the sea. An imitation kelp curtained doorway was used to mark the entrance to their underwater world. Once tourists were ‘underwater’, they experienced an interactive simulation of the penguins’ life in the ocean. On the left of the ‘ocean’ was a detailed diorama illustrating habitat and predators (Figure 5.7). Here, interactive displays allowed people to elicit a response from their actions such as looking in holes to find out about the penguins’ lives, spinning wheels to understand the working of the Penguin Reserve, and using equipment which helped illustrate penguins’ vision and their use of flippers in the water. Soundscape and effects lighting added to the atmosphere. In particular, sounds from the “penguins’ underwater environment” such as movements of the water, whale songs, shrimps clicking, bubbles and boats passing by, were played,

\textsuperscript{19} The Penguin Experience discussed in the thesis was the display in place prior to the 1997 renovations (see Appendix 5.3).
Figure 5.7: Tourists Having a 'Penguin Experience'

(Source: P.I.P.R.C.M., 1992: 6)
further adding to the aquatic atmosphere. Video footage showed the birds “flying” underwater and live pilchards (the penguins’ main food source) swam in an aquarium nearby.

The second part of the Penguin Experience included taxidermed penguins in a coastal photographic backdrop indicating that the penguins and hence the tourist, had moved to the interface between sea and land. This section also contained wooden penguins set at a height accessible to children. On opening the front of the model penguins the insulation properties of the birds’ feathers were demonstrated. Observation experience suggested that this was a popular display with visitors, especially children. The third part of the display included another diorama showing penguins’ life cycles on sand and in coastal vegetation. Audio-effects triggered by the movement of visitors allowed them to hear the varied range of the penguins’ calls.

The final section of the Penguin Experience contained written information about the history of the Penguin Parade and threats to the penguins. A series of breeding boxes for the penguins (discussed further in Chapter 6) with perspex windows lined the wall. These allowed visitors a close view of life in a burrow. The final display had a strong scientific theme, as it showed a Ranger at work with the penguins using a radio antenna for tracking. Again visitors were able to experience a degree of interaction with this display.

Throughout the Visitor Centre a theme of science and conservation was evident in the interpretation material. This was apparent in text which explained the penguins’ biology, their role in the maintenance of healthy ecosystems and in issues which impact on the well being of the birds. That this was a dominant component of the interpretation material is not unexpected, given the years of research into penguins at the site. The language used however was accessible to the layperson, providing they were able to read and understand English.20

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20 The new spoken word versions via the Rangers on the computer screens, with various language translations, are infinitely more appropriate to many people, especially children and non-English speakers.
That science and conservation were major themes of the interpretation text is a positive finding. What remains unclear is the vexed relationship between this science and the commercial touristic purposes of the site. So while research is an integral and valuable part of the Penguin Parade, it is also able to validate the objectification of wildlife for the tourist dollar.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an account of the framing of the penguin at the Phillip Island Penguin Parade. In exploring this animal construction the chapter has investigated the history of the site in relation to changes in management and interpretation as the Summerland Peninsula developed into a major tourist attraction in Victoria in the 1900s. Over time the penguin has been presented variously as an animal which is a novelty star of an event, as a treasured but threatened natural asset, and as a focus for humans wanting to “get back to nature”.

These often contradictory framings of the penguin have been influenced by changes in the wider community and government policy. In addition, various sponsors have also helped to shape the image of the Little Penguin. The bird has been used effectively as a form of entertainment since early this century. More recently, as its numbers dwindled measures have been taken to restore its habitat and create an environment which allows humans to observe this non-domesticated animal at close quarters. At the same time, a comprehensive interpretation program has been established which offers visitors a chance to know the penguin through science and in ways that relate to their own lives.

The chapter shows the Penguin Parade to be a place of advanced commodification of marine nature. Here, a government-owned institution has worked to conserve an animal by creating a spectacle for large numbers of tourists. Using the legitimisation of science and the birds’ human-like characteristics, the Little Penguin is now exploited for the massive revenue it brings to the State. The packaging of the site as a place of environmental
education and family fun is clearly evident. Whether or not the tourists see it in the same light is, in part, the subject of the following chapter.
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Author/s:
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Title:
If Descartes swam with dolphins: the framing and consumption of marine animals in contemporary Australian tourism

Date:
2000-05

Citation:

Publication Status:
Unpublished

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/39470

File Description:
03_Ch4-5

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