CHAPTER 6

CONSUMING PENGUINS:
VISITING THE PHILLIP ISLAND PENGUIN PARADE

When you go to Victoria, you go to the Penguin Parade
(Visitor to the Penguin Parade, summer, 1996-7)

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 explained the ways in which penguins on Phillip Island are presented to the tourist population as animals deserving of protection and respect but also as a novelty and great source of entertainment. Chapter 6 serves to illuminate the ways in which visitors absorb and engage with the spectacle of the penguins. The Penguin Parade experience is one which can be seen as an amalgam of the live penguins themselves and the display facilities. These aspects work together to provide an educational and entertaining focus for tourists to the area. Visitor responses to this experience are explored using data obtained from a visitor survey run over the 1996-97 summer. The specificities of this survey and the limits of the sample are explained in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3). In addition, notes from my participant observation diary are interwoven throughout the chapter to further illuminate various tourist activities at the site.

Survey and observation work at the Penguin Parade suggests that tourists' visits to the Penguin Parade could be loosely classified into three main categories which are indicative of what I call their modes of consumption. This mode of consumption categorisation was based on a combination of visitor behaviour (observed and as reported in the survey) as well as accounts of their expectations and aspirations in terms of their visit to the Penguin Parade. Based on this data it was possible to designate three generalised modes of consumption or 'types' of visitor experiences of the Penguin Parade. These I have classified as: the theme park visit, the partial immersion visit and the indifferent visit. In designating these 'types' I do not intend to suggest that the visit categories are exclusive,
that one visitor group can be identified by only one mode of consumption. Indeed, people may assume one or all of the visit types during their Penguin Parade experience. Further, I am not suggesting that one visit type is dominant at the Penguin Parade. Rather, it appears that there is a multiplicity of visit types which may be assumed by the tourist.

The visits can be identified by various characteristics as summarised below and are referred to at times in the chapter. They provide a framework through which the various ways in which the Penguin Parade is experienced by tourists can be more clearly understood. The theme park visit is one where tourists expect to see an animal perform in a way which is regulated by humans. Time spent at the site is usually relatively short. The visit is characterised by an expectation of a wildlife ‘spectacle’, and specifically the hope that a large number of animals will be seen. If this expectation is met then gratification and excitement levels are high, as often evidenced by the recording of the met expectation by way of video or camera. The partial immersion visit is one favoured by a range of people who have a common interest in the local environment through a recreational interest. At the Penguin Parade, this visit involves a longer stay than that of the theme park visitor. The partial immersion visit is characterised by a desire to see the animals ‘in the wild’, albeit within the confines of mass tourist infrastructure, and to learn about their lives. A typical example of this would be the Penguin Parade visitor who observes the arrival of the penguins in relative silence. Participants in this form of visitation might dawdle on the boardwalk at the end of the evening, and spend more time than other visitors examining the interpretation material. The indifferent visit often involves tourists who have not specifically chosen to visit the site. These may be people brought along as part of a family and/or friends outing or people who are part of a tour group where the trip is only one part of their overall holiday package, or formal course of study. It is hard to discern what captivates the interest of people experiencing this visit type. They often appear to be as delighted by the retail opportunities of the site as by the presence of the penguins.

The first section of the chapter considers some general characteristics of the sampled visitor population and the ways they visit the Penguin Parade. This information covers such variables as age, gender and place of residence as well as some indication of the type of
visit made to the Penguin Parade. The next part of the chapter focuses on why people wanted to go to the Penguin Parade. This section draws on the open-ended questions in the survey as well as various informal conversations I had with Penguin Parade visitors and Rangers over the summer. This is an important question because in order to provide people with satisfying touristic experiences and to make appropriate environmental management decisions, tourists’ motivations need to be known.

Secondly, the chapter looks at the ways in which different visitors experienced the Penguin Parade. This part of the chapter shows that the penguin experience is certainly not the same for all people. As explained in Chapter 5 of the thesis, the penguins at the Penguin Parade are at once constructed for public consumption as a novelty, as an animal under threat and as a link to ‘the wild’. Survey responses indicated that in many instances tourists did experience the birds in these ways, as is elaborated below. The survey asked open-ended questions about what people liked and disliked about the Penguin Parade as a way of determining what people were hoping to get from the visit to the place and whether or not this expectation was met. These results are also included here.

Finally, this chapter examines the educational experiences of visitors to the Penguin Parade. Through a series of evaluation questions about learning and knowledge I sought to determine if my survey sample felt they had learnt about the penguins by visiting the Penguin Parade. I also considered people’s own ideas of what they found were useful learning media at the site. In terms of the wider literature, this final question is relevant for the illumination it can give to the ways tourists themselves feel they learn (or do not learn) about nature by visiting it. As mentioned in Chapter 2, animal tourism studies in the past have largely been based upon captive animals. As Anderson (1995) has pointed out there is a need to more deeply understand visitors’ responses to these captive animals. This chapter, in asking the tourists for their impressions of their pedagogical experiences at tour sites, attempts to redress this imbalance to a small degree. I also incorporate my own observations in relation to tourists’ use of various displays and other learning opportunities.
6.2 A Description of the Survey and Participant Observation Population

The chapter now discusses the demographic characteristics of the survey population. As noted in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3), the survey was confined only to those English-speaking visitors who passed through the main entrance into the Visitor Centre. As such, any extrapolation excludes international tour groups who arrive at the site on the tour coaches and enter through a different part of the Visitor Centre. Thus, this visitor profile is not meant to be indicative of the more general population, but simply to describe some characteristics of the subset of that population which participated in this survey. In addition, I have only described those demographics which relate to place of residence, age and gender. Place of residence information provided an insight to the popularity of the Penguin Parade for visitors throughout Australia and overseas. Gender was seen as a useful variable in trying to gain a greater understanding of the make up of the groups visiting the site. Age was seen as an important factor in understanding how different people experience the site. My survey did not take account of people’s ethnicity. Whilst obviously an important area, I felt that trying to understand a range of nationality’s ideas about nature was an enormous task and deserving of a separate study.

Table 6.1 describes the age and gender characteristics of my survey population. Some 41.2% (n=134) of the survey participants were male and 58.8% (n=191) were female. In terms of age distributions, the older adult group of 31-60 year olds comprised some 45.8% (n=149) of the total respondents with 21-30 year olds accounting for one quarter (26.5% or n=86) of the visitor population. Youths, which for the purpose of the study were considered to be people aged 0-20 years, made up 22.8% (n=74) of the sample. The most recent visitor survey carried out by the Penguin Parade is that by Varcoe et al.,(1985). Their survey did not record the gender break down of respondents. However, their research found that the majority of people who visit the Penguin Parade are aged between 26 and 45 years (56%). Further, they observed on site that most of the people in this age group were parents (Varcoe et al., 1985: 35).
My personal observations in the field suggest that many of the respondents were visiting the Penguin Parade as part of a family and/or friends group. Survey results indicating the type of visitor group of which respondents were a part, suggest that at least 85% of respondents were part of family and/or friends groups. This concurs with Varcoe et al., (1985: 33) who found that 92% of their respondents were visiting the Penguin Parade as part of a family and/or friends group. Again, my study’s exclusion of large tour groups and especially international tour groups has weighted results and so this is indicative of what would be called the ‘private visitor’ population as opposed to the total population including organised tour groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of total respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-12</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-20</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>79.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-60</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61+</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>134</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: the data in the table refers to number of respondents who answered this question.

Place of residence figures were obtained for all of the people interviewed (Table 6.2). As such, the 23.0% (n=75) of responses from ‘overseas’ visitors indicate only those respondents who came through the main entrance (usually as private tourists) and spoke English enough to participate in the survey. Again this is not in any way intended to be indicative of the general level of overseas patronage at the site, a large proportion of which come as part of organised tours and are non-English speaking. The Penguin Parade Annual Report for 1993-94 shows that the overseas market is an important source of revenue for the site with 54% of all visitors coming from outside of Australia. Of these 96.2% are from

152
Table 6.2*: Place Of Residence Of Interview Sample At The Penguin Parade, Summer 1996-97.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Residence</th>
<th>Individuals (n)</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip Island</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Victoria</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>172</strong></td>
<td><strong>52.9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstate:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.C.T.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
<td><strong>24.1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>325</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: the data in the table refers to number of respondents who answered this question.

Asian nations, particularly Japan and Taiwan (Phillip Island Penguin Reserve Committee of Management, 1993-94: 20).

The majority of visitors surveyed, (52.9%, n=172), were from Victoria. Of these, most (46.5%) came from Melbourne. In addition, another 5.8% came from other localities within Victoria. Only 0.6% of surveyed visitors were usually resident on Phillip Island, which is expected as the permanent local resident population of the Island is only predicted to be 6000 by the year 2000 (Edgecombe, 1989: 63) and the Penguin Parade (partly because of the entrance costs) is not a likely site for local leisure and entertainment. Interestingly, the official Penguin Parade survey reported that 2.4% of respondents were Island residents (Varcoe et al, 1985: 27). The basis for this discrepancy might be that the cost of attending the Penguin Parade in the mid-1990s was prohibitive for local residents and perhaps only
an activity undertaken on special occasions when friends arrive.\textsuperscript{1} Or perhaps in the twelve or thirteen years since the official Penguin Parade survey was conducted, the site has received increasing attention from organised tour groups. In this way, the Island residents may feel the Penguin Parade is less of a 'local' facility than in the past.

The next largest group of visitors to the Parade were from N.S.W. at 14.8%. Visitors from other States were fairly evenly dispersed, although no visitors were recorded from Tasmania or the Northern Territory. Interestingly, a significant proportion of the total visitors surveyed (23.0\%) were from overseas. This seems a high number in light of the fact that the main overseas group (that is organised tour groups from Asian nations) were not surveyed. Only slightly more (24.1\%) visitors were from Australian States and Territories besides Victoria.

6.3 Why Do People Visit the Penguin Parade?

One of the key questions of the thesis is to look at the reasons why tourists want to see marine animals. As such this section of the chapter illuminates the results of the visitor survey and participant observation data in relation to why people went to the Penguin Parade. It also evaluates visitor’s best and worst impressions of the place. Understanding the multiple layers of the visitor experience is important in an environmental education sense. If conservation through education is to be achieved, the site can modify its interpretation methods in response to data such as this. Consequently, this may also adjust the way nature resource managers see tourists and the role they might play at a site.

In order to try and understand visitor motives, the survey asked an open-ended question about why people wanted to see the Penguin Parade. A total of 358 responses were given to this question which is larger than the total survey population of 325 as some respondents recorded more than one reason for wanting to see the Penguin Parade. For example, a

\textsuperscript{1} Prior to 1977, only adults paid an admission fee to the site. In 1981, an adult, pensioner, child and family system of ticketing was introduced (Varcoe \textit{et al.}, 1985: 64).
person may have said that they were going to see the penguins because they were on
holiday in the area but also because they love to see nature attractions. In this case, I
recorded a response under category 2 and category 3 in Table 6.3.

A summary of tourists’ motivations for visiting the birds is provided in Table 6.3. The
many and varied responses about stated reasons for visiting the Penguin Parade were coded
thematically and then collapsed into eight key categories, the organisation of which
requires some explanation. These were decided upon based on the nature of the responses
given. After reading through all the responses and recording the answers, I found that each
response could be placed into one of eight most common categories. An important point of
clarification is the difference between category 1 and category 5. As can be seen in the
table, many people said they were visiting the site as part of a family and/or friends outing.
However, a considerable proportion of respondents made specific reference to their
children as a reason for going to the site. For them it was more than simply a group activity
and their responses, illuminated in the following part of the chapter, suggest that showing
the penguins to their children was very important to them. As a result, a distinct category
for ‘showing children’ was created to cater for what appeared to be a strong and very
specific motivation for visiting the site.

Clearly, a visitor might, if assessed objectively, fit into any number of these categories at
once. That is, they may be on holiday in the area (category 2), be visiting as part of a group
(category 1) and be there specifically because they want to share the experience with their
child (category 5). As such, in compiling the table, I recorded as many reasons for the visit
as the respondent stated. Thus as will be shown in Table 6.3, and some others in the
chapter, the total number of responses to the question is greater than the total number of
survey participants.

As can be seen in Table 6.3, a popular reason for visiting the Penguin Parade was that the
person was part of an outing with family and/or friends. A typical scenario was that such
visits involved individuals from overseas or interstate. As one respondent said, “as a family
we enjoy seeing the natural beauty of the world, and we had friends visiting from overseas
Table 6.3*: Visitors’ Stated Reasons For Wanting To Visit Penguins At The Penguin Parade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Number</th>
<th>Stated Reasons For Visit</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Part of a family and/or friends outing.</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Just something to do while on holiday in the area.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A love of animals, a desire to have a close interaction with nature, to assist in conservation.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Specific love of penguins, desire to see them unconfined.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>To specifically show and share the experience with children.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>To have fun, see a spectacle and an unusual tourist experience.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Recommended tourist site, part of a tour package or course.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>No response / don’t know.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>358</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: the data in the table refers to the number of responses to this question.

so it was a good time to come”. As mentioned, this desire to share nature with the family was mentioned repeatedly in relation to children. As category 5 in Table 6.3 shows, a notable proportion of responses (12.6%) were given in relation to the visit being specifically motivated by wanting to show and share the experience of the Penguin Parade with accompanying children. In particular, respondents with children routinely commented on the recreational and educational benefits of a visit for those children, remarking that they came:

- To show my children something spectacular (male, 21-30 years, #172).²
- To keep our children occupied and to add to their experiences and knowledge (female, 21-30 years, #114).
- To show the kids and broaden their knowledge (female, 21-30 years, #152).
- To show our children so they can appreciate penguins in their natural environment (male, 31-60 years, #57).

² Number indicates survey respondent number at the Penguin Parade.
- As a learning tool for the children (female, 31-60 years, #51).

As shown by category 2 in Table 6.3, a large number of responses (15.4%) stated that a key reason for visiting the Penguin Parade was because it was “just something to do” while the respondent was holidaying in the area. This finding indicates the existence of the indifferent visitor, one who accounts for their visit with little or no reference to the nature attraction being visited. Further, this response suggests that nature in itself is not a conspicuous part of these respondent's rationale when choosing a site to visit.

A significant proportion of responses nominated category 3 (14.8%) or category 4 (14.2%) as the reason for the visit. Combined, this suggests a notable percentage (29.0%) went to the Penguin Parade specifically to interact with nature or out of a fascination with the penguin. One person stated that he wanted to see the birds because “I love to see all wildlife. It gives me a warm feeling inside” (male, 21-30 years, #201) and another “because I wanted to know” (male, 21-30 years, #170). Several people made specific reference to the penguins. One respondent saw the visit as an “opportunity to see the penguins up close” (male, 31-60 years, #230). Another, a woman, said that she’d “always wanted to see them come out of the water” (female, 31-60 years, #112).

Of these responses which specified an interest in the animals, it was often stated that this fascination was in seeing the birds ‘in the wild’. This is congruent with one aspect of the Penguin Parade as described in Chapter 5 of the thesis, that which presented the penguins as a ‘link to the wild’ for tourists, and is a theme elaborated upon later in the chapter. In Chapter 5, I noted how, over time, Penguin Parade managers have designed the surrounding landscape and the interpretation materials to enhance the tourist experience of the penguin as a wild animal, living in its natural habitat. Survey respondents frequently noted that that it was important to them to see the penguins in their own environment and undertaking natural behaviour unlike the way penguins are presented for public viewing in Zoological Gardens or marine theme parks such as Sea World (discussed in Chapter 4). For instance, a woman in the 31-60 years age group (#58) said she wanted to visit the Parade because “it was a chance to see penguins in their natural surroundings”. As one young man
said “I wanted to see the real nature of this animal” (male, 21-30 years, #169) and another person simply stated that she wanted “to see the real penguins” (female, 31-60 years, #170).

Despite this visitor emphasis on the ‘real’ or ‘natural’ penguin, one conversation I had with a Beach Patrol Ranger (Phillip Island Penguin Parade Ranger a, 1997) indicated that some visitors do not even see the penguins as wild animals. He felt that many visitors saw the penguins simply as a novel spectacle entirely staged for human consumption. On this evening, the Ranger had been stationed on the beach all night engaged in crowd control. The Ranger had chatted with a middle-aged North American man who had asked him how they trained the penguins to walk up the beach. When the Ranger explained that this was their natural behaviour, the tourist insisted that the birds must be trained, just like the seals and lions and dolphins he had seen in other nature theme parks. This anecdote provides an example of the gap between tourist expectations and the ‘real’ penguin. A question such as this suggests that this tourist’s view was not influenced by information presented in the Visitor Centre.

Respondents’ desire to see the ‘real’ penguin was common, suggesting that an uncaged penguin was seen to be more authentic than those in confinement. Not all people found the Parade a positive experience however. As one overseas woman visitor said, “we wanted to see penguins in their natural habitat but this ‘show’ is worse than being in the zoo” (female, 21-30 years, #240). Thus it seems that the idea of the ‘real’ penguin is not fixed. That is, even when Penguin Parade managers try to enhance the ‘real’ natural penguin for tourists such as through the construction of boardwalks above penguin habitat, there are those who find these effects and the spectacle it produces to be an affront to their nature viewing sensibilities. For others though, whose prior experiences of penguins have been thoroughly mediated or very distant, (eg. they ‘know’ the penguin only through representations), the Penguin Parade offers something ‘real’ enough. So not only is the penguin socially constructed, but there are different sets of values and expectations around what the ‘real’ version of that socially constructed animal might be. That is, rather than automatically accepting mediated versions of the animals, tourists had preformed ideas about what they
wanted to see and how they hoped the penguins would be. These did not always conform with the staged performance of the Penguin Parade managers.

On another level, Table 6.3 also indicates that for some visitors the ‘penguins’ of the Penguin Parade did not seem to matter much at all. The table shows that a number of responses indicated that people wanted to visit the Penguin Parade to have fun and experience a spectacular tourist site. 11.5% of survey responses given, nominated a desire to have fun as a reason for visiting the site. These responses may be seen to represent visitors who seek a theme park visit, a distanced encounter in which the penguin is a somewhat novel addition. A further 10.0% of responses explained that the visit was motivated by being part of an organised tour or course requirement or because it had been recommended to them. These people may have consciously chosen to visit the penguins as part of a partial immersion visit. Alternatively, the responses from tourists who were participating as part of a tour or course may have been experiencing the indifferent visit to nature if the penguins were not a focal point of that tour or course. Finally, 5.9% of responses nominated that there was no known reason why they went to see the Penguin Parade.

6.4 Tourists’ Experiences of the Penguin Parade

The introduction to this chapter suggested that the experience of the Penguin Parade is not the same for all individuals and groups, that different modes of consumption can be undertaken. The next section will look at the various ways in which the Penguin Parade was experienced by tourists involved in my survey and those I observed during fieldwork. I begin by considering survey responses to questions relating to respondents’ opinions on the best and worst aspects of the Penguin Parade experience. Pilot surveys at the Parade revealed that several visitors liked the fact that they could be close to the penguins as the animals returned to their burrows. At the same time, other responses made reference to high visitor numbers detracting from the experience of seeing animals ‘in the wild’. As such, I
was interested in understanding more widely the experiences of tourists at the Penguin Parade from their own perspective.

Table 6.4 shows the main categories covering respondents’ ideas of what they enjoyed most about their visit to the Penguin Parade. As with Table 6.3, these groupings were devised based upon the range of responses given. As before, in some cases a visitor may provide multiple responses to this question. In such cases, their answers are recorded in more than one category, hence the total number of responses in the table is 341 and again is greater than the total number of survey respondents.

As explained in Chapter 5 of the thesis, the Penguin Parade produces and sells its penguins to tourists as a source of novelty, as a threatened species and also as a link to ‘the wild’. These themes became evident in an examination of respondents’ most and least enjoyed aspects of the Penguin Parade. As will be discussed, and as shown in Table 6.4, people repeatedly indicated that the birds did hold a degree of novelty value for them and also that they were a means by which people could more closely experience ‘the wild’. On the other hand, some people’s least favourite aspects of the Penguin Parade, summarised in Table 6.5, often indicated that they saw the animals as being in some way under threat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Number</th>
<th>Most Enjoyable Aspect</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Watching the penguins leave the water and cross the beach</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Watching the penguins in the dunes and at the burrows</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The mannerisms of the penguins</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Being in close proximity to the birds</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>No response/Don’t Know</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The Visitor Centre and facilities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>341</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: the data in the table refer to the number of responses to this question.
6.4.1 The Penguin as Novelty

Penguins are easily anthropomorphised. They walk upright in what we often see as a humorous waddle. Their black and white feathers give them a dinner-suit appearance. So it is not altogether surprising that 18.7% of responses were given in relation to a favourite part of the Penguin Parade experience being observation of the mannerisms of the birds (category 3). These mannerisms range from people’s interpretations of the birds’ conversations through to the way the birds walk and interact with one another. For instance, one male respondent aged 31-60 years (#187) noted that he liked seeing the penguins’ “shyness” in relation to all the people and that he “really enjoyed watching two chicks mistake an adult penguin for their mother or father and being really angry when they couldn’t get food from them”. This is an excellent example of the way in which visitors who watch the Penguin Parade give meaning to the worlds of these other creatures by placing the observed behaviours into a recognisable narrative framework - in this case a small family drama about parents and care of the young.

On numerous occasions I observed visitors offering up imaginative and anthropomorphic stories to account for penguin behaviour. For instance the following comments by one group of observers was fairly typical: “Oh look, he’s gone home without saying goodbye to the others...just gone to his nest...oh no, he made a mistake and now he’s going back to them. Wrong house [laughter]. Oh no, he’s going on now. He was just saying goodnight to the others after all”. People also often related the birds' behaviour to their own age groups. A couple in their early twenties noted that “they stick in groups just like us”. A middle-aged man noted that they “look like they are fat men coming home in black tie!” A girl aged about three years imitated the birds, saying “Mum, where’s my food, Mum, where’s my food?” Most of these narrative interpretations added to or developed the idea of the cute, infantile, even comic penguin. The tourist viewer, in these imaginative interplays, are benign witnesses to the penguin world, one which is different but also, in its human-like qualities, readily recognised. One woman aged in her fifties, clearly unimpressed by the level of on-site management infrastructure told me that the Penguin Parade experience was
“like a concentration camp, all the lights and fences...We’re the guards watching the prisoners come up”. That is, this woman saw penguins as victims of tourism, as subjugated by the tourist gaze and turned into objects for human enjoyment. Although willingly participating in the experience, for this person the Penguin Parade did not appear to make her feel closer to the animals at all.

As can be seen in Table 6.4, nearly one third of responses (31.4%) indicated that for many tourists the greatest thrill at the Penguin Parade was watching the penguins arrive on the beach at night and tentatively make their way across the sand towards their burrows. And because visitors had often been waiting some time (perhaps up to two hours) for this arrival, it was not unusual for there to be clapping in the stands as the first penguins appeared out of the surf. The clapping of the tourists became yet another component in an event which with its grandstand, its expectant audience, and its star performers - really did feel like a piece of ‘nature theatre’. Such was the pull of the stars at this show, if there was room, people often rushed to the edges of the stands to get a better look. As one visitor (male 31-60 years, #157) observed, this was like a “real life theatre” and the setting like “an auditorium on the beach”. For some people, the most enjoyable aspect was the first sighting of the animals. One man aged 21-30 years (#278) wrote that the “anticipation of the penguins’ arrival” was the best part of the experience. For one woman aged 21-30 years (#105) seeing the penguins “coming from the water and going into Indian file” was a highlight. For another aged 31-60 years (#111) “trying to locate where the first penguins ashore surfaced” was the best part of the visit. Similarly, a man aged 21-30 years (#207) thought that “watching small creatures emerging from the sea was amazing”.

Other respondents specifically enjoyed watching the birds cross the beach. Several responses here add further credence of the Penguin Parade as a setting of ‘nature drama’. Here, the animals are again placed in a theatrical performance with its attendant highlights, as if somehow intended for the viewing audience. One man (31-60 years, #125) liked “watching them as if they were making the decision of when to start walking out of the water”. According to one woman aged 31-60 years (#230), an interesting aspect was “their grouping at the water’s edge, and keeping the group together whilst going up the beach”.

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Similarly, a girl aged 0-12 years (#224) enjoyed “watching them cross the beach and the way they waited for each other to form groups” while a man aged 21-30 years (#169) who also observed the birds’ group behaviour, concluded that “they have a close relationship”.

6.4.2 The Penguin as a Link to ‘the Wild’

Category 2 in Table 6.4 indicates that about one fifth (22.9%) of responses stipulated that the favourite aspect of the Penguin Parade was watching the penguins in the dunes and at their burrows. This evolved as a separate category from category 1. It seemed that two distinct experiences were being felt by respondents. In the case of category 1, there was much anticipation and excitement attached to the arrival of the birds from the dark sea and it seemed as if this theatrical arrival offered a significant, but quite specific part of the outing for visitors. In contrast, the answers recorded under category 2 indicated a different experience. Here people were less interested in the spotlit spectacle of the birds’ arrival and more fascinated with intimately observing individuals and small groups on the land.

Although the penguins leave the water at some distance from the stands, very close viewing of the birds can be undertaken from the boardwalks. Here, visitors could expect to be within at least a few metres of the animals. Tourists could imagine themselves to be partially immersed in the penguins’ lifestyle as they return to their burrows in the dunes. Depending on the season, visitors may see such behaviour as feeding of chicks, moulting, nest building and mating. The close viewing provided by the boardwalk infrastructure means that people can experience the smells and sounds associated with the penguins’ habits.

Clearly, respondents enjoyed this high degree of proximity to the penguins. Some of the comments relating to category 2 indicate evidence of people experiencing the immersion encounter as part of their visit to the Penguin Parade. For instance one person enjoyed “watching the Parade after most people had left – watching them in their burrows” (female, 21-30 years, #20). A woman visitor aged 31-60 years (#311) noted that a good part of the
trip was "when the penguins came up into the dunes and we could hear them talking. They purr". For other people, the "close encounter in the dunes" (female, 21-30 years, #152) was a highlight because it allowed an opportunity to "quietly watch adult penguins interact with chicks". One woman aged 21-30 years (#191) said "I loved watching them in the burrows, waddling to the young and the chicks calling to be fed". Similarly, another respondent said the favourite aspect was "watching the young being fed up in the burrows where it was quieter" (female, 31-60 years, #171). If the beach scene offered a kind of frontstage spectacle then the dunes and rookeries, accessed by the boardwalks, took the visitor into a backstage world where they could fantasise that they were really getting to meet the stars of the show (Goffman, 1959).

Some respondents explicitly nominated being close to the birds as the most enjoyable aspect of their visit, as indicated by the 12.3% of responses supporting category 4 in Table 6.4. As a male visitor aged 21-30 years (#2) said "I was impressed with how close I could get and seeing them up close in their habitat". Similarly, a female respondent aged 13-20 years (#219) was taken by the proximity noting it was "the closest I’ve ever seen them in nature and not in a closed area". Another response supporting the idea of respondents’ desire to get close to nature was given by a male respondent aged 21-30 years (#201) who said he enjoyed "the natural aspect...being close but far enough away". This latter quote provides an interesting dichotomy. Here is a tourist who is ambivalent about his presence at the Penguin Parade, in much the same way as the earlier example of the visitor who likened the experience to a concentration camp. In this second case the response indicates that he liked the intimacy and closeness that is offered through the boardwalk but is glad it is not too close. It is ‘far enough away’ for the visitor not to feel he has transgressed, uninvited as it were, into the penguins’ world.

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3 Other responses in the same vein included: Being close to them on the walk back from the information centre (male respondent, 31-60 years, #168); The penguins crossing the beach, and especially seeing them at close range on the dunes (female respondent, 61+ years, #323); Learning more by watching up close (female respondent, 21-30 years, #291); Getting close (male respondent, 13-20 years, #229); you come very close to the animals (male respondent, 31-60 years (#222); To come close at the dunes (female respondent, 31-60 years, #215).
It is in response to visitors' appreciation of this intimate/backstage experience that Penguin Parade management have recently developed a boardwalk extension. A branch of the main boardwalk it takes visitors to a viewing area both away from, and of a quite different style, to that of the spectacular grandstand (see Figure 5.5). A ranger interview (Phillip Island Penguin Parade Ranger a, 1997) revealed that, from the point of view of management, this boardwalk extension met the requirements of the "environmental types", who were not interested in the "big show". A New Zealand visitor told me that she had heard from friends that the new boardwalk was the best way to see the birds. She commented that:

It’s much better here. It’s quieter. You can hear the birds call. There are less people, less lights.

In Chapter 2 of the thesis, I posited that people might perhaps learn more about animals purely by visiting them on, or as near as possible, to their own terms. Whatever we might objectively be able to say about the wider effects on people of visiting animals 'on their own terms', it is certain that for many visitors a close encounter with the animal other sets off a certain set of reflections about the modern human self and its relationship with nature. I recorded an illustrative example of this sort of modern identity crisis from a couple in their mid-60s who were sugarcane farmers from MacKay in Queensland. They said that they liked the penguins because they were so fragile and delicate but were especially worried about their exposure to various things associated with the tourist event: the lights, the noise, the flash photography. Their encounter with the penguin led them to ponder the larger question of animal instincts: how did these penguins always find the right beach and nest at night? They told me a story about another bird they have seen close up, a bush turkey who lives near their home in MacKay. If their bush turkey builds its nest in the river bed it means there is a drought. When it builds on the hill there is invariably high rainfall that season. The man concluded with this lament:

We have lost our instincts. Only the animals have them. We spend too much time with machines and computers and forget about nature. It is good to be here and see the birds, be close to them and be close to nature.

It would seem that for some visitors the animal encounter sets off a nostalgic premodern fantasy that emerges despite all the lights, the cameras and the spectacle of the event.

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Lest we imagine the Penguin Parade always produced such warm and glowing reflections in visitors, it is important to note that some 11.8% of visitors didn’t know what they liked about the site. So for some the experience set off deep reflection, for others it would seem little reflection at all! Notably, only a very small number of responses (2.9%) recorded that the Visitor Centre was the most enjoyable part of the trip to the Penguin Parade. This suggests that despite the emphasis on the Visitor Centre by Penguin Parade Management (in dollar terms, staffing, knowledge) it remains a supplementary part of the Penguin Parade experience for many visitors. Even those parts of the Visitor Centre which try to bring the visitor closer still to the penguins, such as the perspex boxes in the Penguin Experience (Chapter 5) which allow a visitor to see a penguin inside its burrow, do not surpass the intimacy felt from the boardwalk encounters. Perhaps the fact that the penguin boxes bring people out of the dark night of the penguins’ world into the brightly-lit indoor setting detracts from the ambience of being near the birds outside.

6.4.3 Visitor Dissatisfaction at the Penguin Parade

For many people, the least positive aspect of visiting the Penguin Parade was the level of personal discomfort they felt. We can see in Table 6.5 that the thing most often disliked was the cold experienced by tourists in the often long wait for the penguins to appear (category 1). Category 1 shows some respondents disliked sitting or standing in the cold waiting for the penguins to arrive from the sea (26.3% of responses). Even in summer, evenings at the site can be quite cool. During the time I ran the surveys, the temperature at dusk was in the low to mid-teens. Often there was wind of varying strengths. This problem could be easily overcome by Penguin Parade Management being more specific in their

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4 As with Tables 6.3 and 6.4, this table provides a summary of survey responses collapsed into a small range of categories based on the nature of the responses given. As with the aforementioned tables, responses could be placed into one of seven most common categories. As before, multiple answers to some questions by respondents explains why the total number of responses in the table is 365 and thus greater than the total number of survey respondents.
advertising of the site, highlighting the need for visitors to bring very warm clothing and especially wind-proof jackets, even in summer.

This issue of personal comfort at the site was almost matched by the other visitor concern about other visitors interfering with their own access to the penguin attraction (category 2). Both these responses indicate a perhaps expected self interest. 20.3% of responses from visitors cited the behaviour of other tourists as a problem. In particular people made reference to other visitors pushing to get a closer look at the birds as well as people standing up and blocking out the views of others. A similarly high number of responses (18.6%) came from tourists who said they did not know what they liked least at the Penguin Parade, or they did not provide an answer to this question.

Also in relation to personal enjoyment at the Penguin Parade, category 7 in Table 6.5 represents the 6.0% of responses from people who felt that there were far fewer penguins than they expected to see. A woman aged 31 to 60 years (#170) wrote that “they did not assemble in big groups and walk...it’s not exciting if they’re not in big groups”. Clearly, it appears that a high number of penguins are preferable from the visitors’ point of view. Explanations for this trend may be various. For instance, a high number of birds may be seen by tourists as an indication that the population is in a healthy state and not being affected by tourism. More likely there is probably a ‘value for money’ logic at work. For example, one evening, I received complaints from a group of four middle-aged Spanish tourists who said they had seen only thirty penguins but had expected to see hundreds of them as described in the travel books they had been reading. They angrily suggested that they should have been charged a reduced entrance fee if fewer penguins were around at the moment. In one man’s words:

The spectacle isn’t worth $9.00. No way. And it doesn’t match this huge building. The building and the displays are great but they make you think you’re going to see much more than you end up seeing. It builds a huge expectation.
Table 6.5*: Aspects Of The Visit To The Penguin Parade Least Enjoyed By Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Number</th>
<th>Least Enjoyable Aspect</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Waiting in the cold for the penguins to arrive</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The crowds of tourists, pushing and blocking the view</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No response / don't know</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>People using flashes on their cameras</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Adverse impact on the animals caused by tourists and infrastructure</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nothing. Liked it all</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Too few penguins</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>365</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: data in the table refers to the number of responses to this question.

My logbook containing the conditions for that evening shows that it was a mild night, little wind and the tides were low. There were about 1,100 paying tourists that evening, the lowest number during my survey period. At the same time, Rangers recorded about 180 penguins coming up the beach, also the lowest number of penguins recorded during the survey period. As discussed in Chapter 5, bird numbers at the Penguin Parade have possibly been affected by a fall in the availability of pilchards in recent seasons. As explained in Chapter 5, the promotional material at the Penguin Parade tends to focus on the idea that there will be large numbers of birds and that they will move up the beach in large groups. This is not always the case with penguin numbers often dependent on the season and on usual fluctuations in the availability of food. What is evident is that some visitors expect to see penguins moving up the beach in their hundreds, and on some nights this is the case. However, it is hard, if not impossible for a visitor to clearly see all areas of the beach from one position. Thus tourists, seated in one place, are likely to see only a section of the beach and penguins using that section on their journey from the water to the dunes.
What was less expected was the level of concern about the penguins and their comfort and well being as indicated by categories 4 and 5 in Table 6.5. They are separate categories as there was a distinct response by people in the surveys and during my own observations against the use of flash photography. 11.8% of the survey responses indicated tourists' concern about this activity. The Penguin Parade has numerous signs, both pictorial and written, in the Visitor Centre and on the boardwalks, asking people not to take flash photographs. In the case of the overseas organised tours, Park Rangers told me that the tour guides on the buses stipulate that flash photography is not allowed at the site. However, the use of flash photography is still relatively common, with usually several offences each evening. Reasons for the defiance of this rule may be various. It may be that some people do not realise the activity is banned, in spite of all the warnings, perhaps because there is a language barrier for the overseas visitors. Or it may simply be a flagrant disregard for the wishes of management, because the visitor, who may have travelled a considerable distance to see the birds, cannot resist the temptation of a snapshot. One evening a Ranger (Phillip Island Penguin Parade Ranger b, 1997) suggested to me that the tourists think something like “I’m only here for one night and I want a good shot. I’ll get away with it”.

In relation to photography at nature tourism sites, Jacobs and Gale (1994) found photography to be a form of souveniring which shows the person has been to the place. Although such photography may have a damaging effect, it is in itself a sign of visitor's irresistible interest in the viewed object and their desire to authenticate their experience. Professional prints for sale in the Visitor Centre shop do not appear to fulfil the need in people to have a record that they were indeed there. That a large number of people were concerned about flash photography was evident in the survey results. For example, a male respondent aged between 31 and 60 years thought the event was spoilt by “ignorant people who take photos with flashes” and that “cameras should be banned” (#123). Similarly a female aged 31 to 60 years was annoyed by “people with cameras flashing, pushing shoving, hurrying...blocking the sounds of the birds” (#60).

5 As explained previously, visitors may provide more than one response to the question. In order to be counted in category 4 and 5 in Table 6.5 for example, respondents would have made reference to adverse impact on the birds from any number of tourism-related variable AND specifically made reference to the use of flash photography as an example of this.
On many occasions I observed Rangers intervening to stop the use of flash photography. However, in the absence of Rangers I also observed a very interesting response from the tourists themselves. The flash of a camera would often result in people turning their heads to look at and sometimes make comments to the offender. This self-regulation clearly indicated that there were people in the visitor population who were concerned about the impact of flash photography and they often functioned to scold those who disregarded the rules.  

For some visitors their idealised fantasy of getting ‘back to nature’ through a premordern encounter with the birds was shattered by the reality of the Penguin Parade spectacle. Category 5 in Table 6.5 represents the 8.5% of responses indicating dissatisfaction with the possible adverse impact of the high tourist numbers and the extensive built environment of the Penguin Parade on the animals. As discussed below, a theme of visitor guilt was apparent in relation to tourist’s ideas of their impact on the birds by visiting them. As a young woman aged between 13 and 20 years (#54) said:

It’s too touristic and too noisy. I don’t think it is a good idea to make a tourist attraction from this. The penguins are stressed and they can’t live in their real environment.

Another person was similarly disappointed. He said, "it was too crowded and I think this aspect was as bad as the lights for the animals" (male, 13-20 years, #55). This comment suggests a concern for the birds, and the quality of visitor’s experience, when large crowds are present. A woman aged between 21 and 30 years (#191) felt the Penguin Parade provided “a completely commercial view…there’s no policing of flash cameras, Rangers

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6 A good example of excessive flash photography use by tourists at the Parade took place on 18.1.97. On that night, the seated viewing stands were filled to capacity and people were standing three-deep on the boardwalks behind. It was a relatively warm evening with a brilliant pink and red sky over the water as the sunset and people awaited the arrival of the penguins. Perhaps because of the high visitor numbers that night there was a feeling of intense urgency in the viewing area. Many tourists, especially the Asian tour groups, could be seen to be running along the boardwalks, pushing and jostling for better viewing positions. As the birds arrived they were met with several flashes from across the stands and in response they repeatedly retreated to the water. Over the loud speaker, the Ranger explained (in English) that the birds were most likely hesitant in crossing the beach because of the camera flashes and reminded people again not to use them. The negative response to the flashes by many visitors was discernible at the time as well as in my survey.
just sat there”. Other people complained of the intrusive nature of the boardwalks and what they saw as the inappropriate size of the viewing stands and the use of the floodlights on the beach. Perhaps these visitors were seeking in the Penguin Parade a more intimate encounter, a non-touristic interaction with wild animals where they could forget the modern world for a time and dwell in the perceived peaceful life of the birds. Interestingly, in contrast with these concerns, 8.5% of responses were given in relation to visitors who said they liked all of the experience (category 6). Thus it appears that the experience of the Penguin Parade is very different for different visitors such that where some see exploitation, others see excitement.

For some visitors there was a sense of unease and even guilt about visiting the penguins, a feeling that their presence was not good for the birds. This anxiety about the impacts of tourism itself was surprisingly evident in visitor responses about what they liked least about their visit to the Penguin Parade. This is a recurrent theme in the surveys as evidenced by one woman’s reference to the Penguin Parade as a concentration camp, mentioned earlier in the chapter. Some of the survey responses and the conversations I overheard show that various tourists considered that the penguin was under threat, particularly by the existence of the Visitor Centre and the floodlights on the beach. For example, on 27.2.97 I chatted to a male British surfer aged 27 years who asked me questions about the penguins. He said that he felt guilty being in the penguins’ home, like an intruder. He said, “there should be some wild places where people aren’t allowed to go...us people, we stuff them up.” Similarly, on one particularly crowded evening, a middle-aged Australian woman said, “this isn’t a penguin parade, it’s a people parade”.

As introduced earlier in this chapter, one of the key questions of the thesis concerns peoples’ educational experiences at these mediated encounters with marine animals. As such, the final section of this chapter looks at ways in which various respondents felt they learnt, or did not learn, about animals at the Penguin Parade.⁷

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⁷ It was beyond the resources of the thesis to also investigate what the visitors felt they learnt at the site. This is clearly an important area of research and is deserving of further study in its own right.
6.5 Educational Experiences at the Penguin Parade

From the point of view of the environmental and conservation agenda of Penguin Parade Management, education of visitors is paramount. Often it is this outcome, above all else, which is isolated as a rationale for allowing such a large volume of visitors to be exposed to the penguins, often at quite close proximity. Of the 325 respondents, the great majority (88.9%) felt they did learn something about penguins by seeing them at the Penguin Parade. Specifically, as shown in Table 6.6, more than 80% of people in all age groups recorded a positive answer to this question. Of the people aged 61+ years, all (n=16) said that they learnt something about penguins by visiting them. It is the ways in which they felt they learnt about the animals which is the subject of the next section of the chapter.

When considering specifically how visitors learn about nature, and marine animals in particular, I felt it was important to ask the respondents for their views. By asking users of the site about their experiences there, I felt that I would be more able to efficiently determine their experiences and accounts of aspects they felt they learnt most from. As such, the following section of the chapter looks at the methods by which my survey population thought that they learnt about the penguins. Of course, this is simply a self-assessment of learning and so may not conform to findings based on other educational assessment criterion.

The Penguin Parade offers a variety of means by which people can access educational information about the birds and their habitat. At this site, there are two key ways in which people can learn: firstly through direct experience of the animals and secondly, through an
Table 6.6*: Did Respondents Feel They Learnt Anything About Penguins From Their Visit To The Penguin Parade?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Learnt about penguins</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of total respondents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-12</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>94.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-60</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: data refers to the number of respondents to this question.

indirect experience via interpretation materials. Most visitors to the Penguin Parade encounter a mix of this and so, for example, even if a visitor nominates direct experience of the animals as a central learning experience, it is unlikely that that direct experience is unmediated by the interpretive materials. That is, exposure to the interpretive materials may not register as the most important learning variable, but it may still influence the educational value visitors receive from direct exposure to the birds.

Table 6.7 shows the results of the question asking respondents to tick the way(s) they thought they learnt about penguins at the Parade from a range of options. Because respondents could provide up to seven responses to this question the combined total responses for the table (n=1140) is substantially greater than the survey population of 325. In short, it was common for a respondent to nominate a number of learning experiences. This question is an important one in the context of the overall thesis for management objectives for the Penguin Parade are, in part:

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5 Participant observation at the Penguin Parade indicated to me that most people did not spend extended amounts of time at single exhibits. This is possibly a reflection of people’s desire to secure a good vantage point outside rather than a comment on the content or style of that institution’s interpretive material.
Table 6.7*: Respondents Preferred Learning Methods at the Penguin Parade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Asking rangers</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
<th>Slides/Video</th>
<th>Looking at Dioramas</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>n</td>
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<td>Row %</td>
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<td>0-12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25.6</td>
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<td>8.6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.7</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>23.9</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>121</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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*Note: data in this table refers to the number of responses to this question.
to protect and enhance the colonies if Little Penguin and Short-tailed Shearwater and to preserve and protect the natural environment including the flora and other fauna and the landscape, geological and geomorphological features through a better understanding of the environment by the provision of particular interpretation and environmental education facilities and programs (Phillip Island Penguin Reserve Committee of Management, 1989: 9).

As such, in order to efficiently communicate conservation ideas to the touring public, Penguin Parade Managers need to understand the ways in which various tourists feel they learn about nature.

Table 6.7 shows that a high number of responses were given in relation to visitors’ feeling they learnt about the animals through direct observation of them (n= 272 or 24.0%). The actual object - the penguin - is in reality a very privileged way of learning. Such close viewing of groups of non-domesticated, non-captive animals is increasingly rare in the modern world, particularly in proximity to a major city. It seems as if actual encounters far outweigh any mediated encounter, be it offsite (e.g. a television documentary) or onsite (e.g. the pedagogical options offered at the Visitor Centre).

Following direct observation of the birds, many responses supported looking at dioramas as the next best way of learning (n=249 or 21.8%). This was then followed by reading text (n=233 or 20.4%). It is well known in evaluation of museum displays and visitor centres that picture boards are more often patronised than text-based displays. Using text in interpretation can be limited by people’s attention spans as well as due to vagaries of reading ability associated with age, language spoken, literacy and so on.

Winds rolling off the waters of Summerland Bay mean that the Ranger commentary broadcast at the start of the Penguin Parade can be difficult for people to hear. As it is, the

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9 Some people indicated ‘other’ as their preferred means of learning about the birds. When asked to elaborate, they referred to things such as books and documentary films as ways to learn about the birds, rather than only considering the options available to them at the Parade, as was intended by the question.
The current system is laborious with the loud speaker placed on the central viewing stand adding to the panoptic mood of the experience. That is, the current audio setting does not add intimacy to the event, a feature worsened by the fact that visitors are subjected to the presentation repeated in several languages one after the other. As such it is not surprising that only 140 responses (12.3%) replied that the audio commentary was a useful way to learn about the animals. This is a real concern in terms of the potential of the site for environmental education, a point I return to in the conclusion of the thesis (Chapter 9).

A surprisingly small percent of responses (10.4%, n=119) nominated the slide and video program as a useful learning tool. This is an unusual result in light of the knowledge that videos and slides are usually effective communication aids. My observation at the site was that many people entered the Visitor Centre without apparently noticing the existence of the audio-visual theatre. As such, this low response may indicate people did not see the slides and video rather than suggest that this method of learning was ineffective. Alternatively, the problem may lie in aspects of the design of the presentation. For instance, it may be that in running for approximately ten minutes, the audio visual is too long for some visitors, especially those not intending to stay long at the site. Perhaps, enclosed in a dark theatre, people feel trapped and distanced from what they had really come to see, the live penguins. Greater attempts to draw tourists’ attention to the theatre are warranted. Encouraging visitors to view the audio after seeing the penguins outside is also something Management could consider.

Finally, only a small number of responses (9.7%, n=111) were given in relation to asking Rangers questions about the site in order to increase knowledge. The Rangers represent a wealth of expertise and local information about the Island generally as well as the Penguin Parade site. They are, in my experience, an enthusiastic resource which could be more efficiently utilised by Penguin Parade Management. Tourists could be encouraged to ask Rangers questions in several ways. Rangers could wear badges indicating they are a source of information. In addition, they could be stationed at sites within the Visitor Centre before and after the arrival of the birds so as tourists could ask questions. Finally, considering the

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10 The slide show is explained in more detail in Chapter 5.
problems with the acoustics of the taped commentary on the beach, Rangers could provide short talks with question time in the theatre before or directly following the penguin viewing.

In terms of learning preferences across age groups, Table 6.7 shows that most responses nominated the preferred method of learning about the birds was by direct observation. This is congruent with research discussed in Chapter 2 of the thesis which reported that people at tourism sites learn effectively when they experience something first hand (see Marshdoyle, Bowman and Mullins, 1982; Birney, 1986; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; Anderson, 1992). In addition, all age groups indicated that their second most preferred learning method was through looking at the dioramas in the Visitor Centre. This is not surprising considering the interactive component of many of the dioramas which has been found to assist people in achieving high learning outcomes, as also discussed in Chapter 2 (see Oramas and Hill, 1998).

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of a visitor survey and data collected in a participant observation diary at the Penguin Parade over the 1996-97 summer. In particular, the chapter has looked at reasons why a section of the visitor population wanted to visit the Penguin Parade and the ways in which they experienced and learnt about the penguins. Firstly, three modes of consumption were introduced as a means of understanding the key variations in the ways the penguins are experienced at the Penguin Parade. It was explained that survey respondents and observed tourists variously appeared to consume the penguin as part of a theme park visit, a partial immersion visit or an indifferent visit. Some demographics of visitors who participated in the surveys were also presented as a means of understanding the survey population. The chapter then went on to uncover why tourists wanted to see the Penguin Parade and, once they were there, the various ways in which visitor groups experienced the site. Finally, some learning-related observations were reported and discussed.
Responses in the surveys and observations I made of the tourists tend to support some of the claims made in the previous chapter of the thesis regarding the ways in which the penguin has been socially constructed over time. Clearly, some tourists see the birds as a 'link to the wild'. That people wanted to spend time 'in nature' was a commonly repeated theme in tourists' responses in relation to their motivation for visiting the site. In particular, many tourists visited the site in order to spend time with family and friends and to show the penguins to their children. Other respondents and visitors also revelled in the novelty value of the penguins, caught up as they seem to have been in the theatrical aspect of the site. The chapter highlighted some of the comments made by tourists in relation to the perceived comical mannerisms of the penguins and their seemingly human-like behaviours. In addition, the surveys illuminated other areas of dissatisfaction within the visitor community. These largely related to issues of personal comfort such as a dislike of the cold and the time people had to wait for the birds to arrive as well as the offensive behaviour of some other tourists. Some visitors also displayed a concern for the well-being of the birds in relation to camera flashes and what they considered to be excessive infrastructure at the site.

The visitor survey results indicate that generally tourists at the Penguin Parade did learn about the animals and their habitat by visiting them. Importantly, this survey population indicated that they learnt best by observing the animals first hand. Educational opportunities within the Visitor Centre complex were also contributing factors in peoples' overall understanding of the birds.

Generally, the findings indicate that in order for this group of people to learn about an animal, they had to see it for themselves. This has important implications for ecomarine management at the Penguin Parade, and that of other environmental sites. One argument for ecotourism is that it helps to educate people about nature in the hope that they will go on and lead lives with less of an adverse environmental impact that they did in the past. However, as touched upon in the literature review of the thesis, this link remains under-researched. At the same time, the viewing of natural sites by large numbers of people can
often lead to the degradation of those sites. This apparent conflict is possibly only resolvable by strict management measures.

As noted, the second most popular means of learning about the animals was by looking at dioramas. At the time I ran the surveys, the Penguin Parade had an extensive collection of this medium. In the hype and rush of the event, it seems most likely that people could easily absorb information via a visual display. However, it is important to note that nearly three-quarters of responses (n=233, see Table 6.7) indicated that visitors found reading the display text was a preferred way to learn about the animals. There was not a large difference between the numbers of people who felt that the video and slide show, the commentary and conversations with the Rangers helped them with their learning. What might be deduced from all the results is that a combination and a variety of methods are effective in helping people learn about nature.

Overall, tourists’ experiences at the Penguin Parade indicate that the culture/nature binary is simultaneously challenged and reinforced. In some instances, the birds are anthropomorphised which may work to make the animals appear more like humans and so worthy of protection and respect. In other ways though, the framing of the penguin as novelty works to trivialise the animal, presenting it as quite separate from humans.

The next chapter introduces the multiple ways in which another popular marine animal in Australia, the dolphin, has been socially constructed for touristic consumption. In contrast to the case of the penguins, dolphins are animals which have been subject to specific and extensive social constructs and practices which identify them as creatures of great beauty, mystery and human-like intelligence. Through this other example of marine animal production and consumption it is possible to extend the more general account of society’s fascination with marine animals by way of an example quite distinct from that of the Penguin Parade.
CHAPTER 7

DELPHI REVISITED: PACKAGING WILD DOLPHINS IN PORT PHILLIP BAY.

*Flipper: The best and worst thing that has ever happened to dolphins* (Dolphin Tour Operator a, Port Phillip Bay, summer 1997).

7.1 Introduction

A close encounter of the cetacean kind is currently a popular form of Australian marine tourism. Chapter 7 takes us to the other end of the spectrum of ecomarine touristic experience discussed in this thesis (see Figure 1.2). Here, we plunge into the cold waters of Port Phillip Bay with people paying to swim with or simply sightsee bottlenose dolphins. Current technology allows even the most inexperienced tourist to enter the territory of the dolphin. Suspended in an ocean cocoon, able to see and breathe underwater, the expectant tourist is asked to experience the unusual joy of observing (and perhaps being observed by) an enigmatic entity larger, more powerful and popularly thought of as being as intelligent as ourselves. It is our desire to immerse ourselves in the oceanic world of the dolphin that marks this type of marine animal tourism as significantly different from those discussed thus far in the thesis. It suggests a shift in our attitudes towards viewing the marine animal. Now, increasingly tourists are prepared to experience some risk (e.g. swimming well away from shore) and discomfort (e.g. cold water) for the chance to see an animal in its own place. They do this in the belief that their encounter with the dolphin offers comparatively little harm to the creatures.

The popular dolphin swimming trend in tourism can be seen as a touristic expression of a much wider popular fascination with dolphins in contemporary society. This chapter begins

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1 Delphi is a famous sanctuary in Greece. As the centre of the ancient Greek world and home of Apollo, God of Light, the place was given the name of the dolphin because it was in this form that the god first appeared there.
by considering how the dolphin has become popularised in society through its role in a range of contemporary discourses, not least environmental, New Age, and Green marketing discourses. At the same time the dolphin is seen as an animal of universal significance. The chapter then introduces and provides a close reading of five selected texts which are illustrative examples of contemporary popular discourses on the dolphin. These texts work to show that current understandings of the dolphin are alert to its importance across space and time. Dolphins are at once presented as human-like beings and as creatures exhibiting an altruism and spirituality which humans would do well to emulate. After establishing the important place of the dolphin in the popular imaginary the chapter then turns to an explicit examination of wild dolphin tourism in Victoria’s Port Phillip Bay focusing exclusively on the ways in which the dolphins are variously constructed or ‘packaged’ by tour operators for tourists’ consumption. Tourists’ responses to this packaged dolphin experience are examined later in the thesis (Chapter 8).

Part of the chapter illuminates the way the dolphin is framed for tourists by tour operators via promotional brochures and onboard commentaries. Environmental impact issues associated with visiting a wild population of cetaceans are referred to in brief, these not being a key question in the thesis overall (see instead Saunders, 1996). In this final section of the chapter the level and type of educational opportunities offered to visitors are addressed in light of the information tourists receive from promotional brochures and commentaries. Special emphasis is placed on this aspect of the tours because although more general discourses frame the animals, the on-site or tour commentaries are central to shaping visitor’s attitudes and expectations. The extent to which these on-site discourses seek to fascinate or educate is an important issue in terms of the longer term well being of dolphins and marine animals generally.

7.2 Modern Re-mythologising of the Dolphin

In a plethora of ways, the dolphin is being recreated, and ultimately presented as an ideal object of consumption for the tourist. Aspects of New Ageism, environmentalism and
Green marketing have used and fed this perception of the animal to advance their own agendas, as I will show. At the same time, the dolphin has been reworked so as to appear as an animal of universal importance. They are considered to be significant across a spectrum of cultures and throughout the centuries as the chapter will show.

The dolphin has been constructed within the popular imaginary, as an animal recognised as special across time and space. It has been universalised by the contemporary texts discussed later in this chapter. It is framed, with reference to other times, places and cultures, as an unusual and important animal to various peoples of the planet. Marine populist, Jacques Cousteau (1975) for example, assumes that there is an inherent link between humans and dolphins. In referring to this “ancient friendship” he states that “[t]he bond between dolphins and humans is very old” (Cousteau, 1975: 235).

Cousteau’s (1975) Dolphins links the modern dolphin to the mythologised dolphins of the ancients. For example he explains that in the 1970s prehistoric drawings of dolphins swimming with humans were found in South Africa. Employing a global perspective, McKenna (1992) cites early Greece and Italy, Florida, the Amazon, Burma and Mauritania as places where humans and dolphins have worked together in the past and today, to catch fish. More locally, McKenna (1992) contributes to this global framing by including the example of the importance of dolphins within the culture of Australian Aborigines. She makes specific reference to the Wurunjeri, whom she points out are known as the ‘Dolphin People’ because they communicated with dolphins to gain advice on important tribal matters. This point fits in with the popular discourse surrounding Australian Aborigines. Jacobs (1994: 177) refers to Lattas’ argument which suggests that “Aborigines are simultaneously aestheticized and spiritualized, with Aborigines always depicted as being ‘in harmony’ with the land”. Hence the association of the dolphin with indigenes places these animals back in time (as ‘primitive’) but as also relevant to the ‘modern’ world. The dolphin is positioned as transcending time and is able to claim a universal significance. Further, the outlining of a special relationship between dolphins and indigenous people tends to activate a modern association that sees indigenous people as the first conservationists. Through this association the dolphin, like the indigene, comes to have a
special place in the modern environmental imaginary. Similarly, McKenna (1992) explains that in modern-day Vietnam if a dolphin drowns in a fishing net it is given a human burial.\(^2\) It is an example that places the dolphin in a league altogether apart from other animals. Jacobs (1994) closely examines the idea of the romanticising of indigenous people and their supposed connection with nature. She notes that “[r]ecent developments in environmentalism...have intensified Western desires to affiliate with indigenous people and to call upon their knowledges and experiences” (Jacobs, 1994: 169). Hence it would seem that some non-human species – like dolphins – similarly get carried into this environmental fantasy.

The significance of the dolphin, it would appear, knows no bounds. This universal creature is assumed to have an affinity with people as widespread as the oceans in which it lives. In addition, dolphins have often been associated with religions as diverse as Christianity and the spiritual beliefs of the ancient Greeks. In particular, McKenna (1992) mentions that in the early years of Christianity, as it began to spread across the world, dolphins were an emblem of speed, diligence and love. Cousteau (1975) notes that the animal came to symbolise that which guides humans through the sea of life to salvation at the port. Most commonly, however, popular discourses mention the dolphin in relation to the stories of the ancient Greeks and their various Gods. It seems that the myth-making of dolphins by humans, prevalent in the second millennium before Christ, dwindled and then was most obviously renewed in the twentieth century. Their apparent desire to help humanity endears them to us, provoking in us reciprocal desires to protect them also. Popular accounts of the dolphin encourage us to strive to see in them something of ourselves, a glimpse of the recognisable human condition, as I now explore.

As mentioned, the remythologised modern dolphin has come to play an important role in contemporary New Ageism, environmentalism and in Green marketing. In this way, the

\(^2\) This burial tradition stems from the eighteenth century when dolphins helped save some members of the Vietnamese navy. Today, fisherman commonly report similarly altruistic behaviour such as dolphins helping them by chasing away sharks and, if their vessels sink, by keeping them afloat until they can reach the shore. Clearly this reverence for dolphins is abundantly evident in Australia. At 6.40pm on 6.1.00, ABC Radio 891 in Adelaide broadcast a report about the death of three dolphins at Underwater World, Perth. Managers of the
dolphin has come to be scripted in recent times as a very special animal. This wider circulation of the re-mythologised dolphin works to embellish its own symbolic status. The special place the dolphin has in the popular imaginary, particularly in the West, is reflected in the various texts and media which focus on these aesthetically advantaged animals³ and have contributed to embellishing their place as an environmental symbol. The environmental movement, including Greenpeace, has played a significant role in the reinvention of the dolphin, using it cleverly to sell their overall cause.

The New Age movement, its roots in the counter-culture of the sixties, has a growing following in contemporary society. Generally, New Ageism is an alternative to the Enlightenment ‘project of modernity’ which has failed to recognise ecological limits within technological growth and development (Ross, 1991: 73). Ross (1991) explains that New Ageism is an “exotic subculture [which]…has made a state religion of science and technology for the collective good” (Ross, 1991: 20). It includes proponents of a wide range of interests and practices including dolphin advocates (Ross, 1991: 15). New Ageism aims to develop a new science, one with a human face, “a kinder, gentler science” (Ross, 1991: 30). Within the New Age movement, dolphins are seen to be animals of another dimension (see Reiss, 1990: 31-40), creatures living lives to be envied by us. The discourse surrounding them in this context suggests they are higher beings, and the lessons we can learn from them can work to save the human race from itself.

Internet searches relating to New Ageism and dolphins reveal a large community of people making a connection between the two. In Australia, the Dolphin Society run Dolphin within encounters with the animals in Sydney Harbour. This New Age organisation uses an electroencephalogram machine to monitor changes in peoples’ brainwave patterns, mind body and spirit following a dolphin encounter. Other people (see for example Sananjaleen,

³ Dolphins may be seen as aesthetically advantaged in that they have physical characteristics to which humans can equate. For instance, the upward curve of the dolphin’s mouth has the appearance of a smile. That their teeth are not exposed, as sharks are, also contributes to their non-threatening appearance. The strong and streamlined shape of their bodies affords them great grace and beauty in the water and the ability to practice aerial acrobatics whilst their eyes are uncannily similar to that of humans. The five texts discussed in this chapter work to feed and entrench this idea of dolphins by the mass exposure they provide them with.
1991) discuss their ability to channel information from dolphins to people, a common feature claimed by New Age consciousness. In addition, many texts exist on the subject with titles such as Michell and Michell’s (1994) *Dolphin Love: Sixty Ways to Live and Love Like a Dolphin* (in addition, see for example New Age texts by Miller, 1989; Nielsen, 1994; Gold, 1996).

The “mystical affinity with nature” (Ross, 1991: 69) inherent within New Ageism “has played an important role in shaping the social and cultural activism of the ecology movement” (Ross, 1991: 69-70), although environmentalists are often loathe to consider New Ageism as an ally (Ross, 1991). The humanising and the pure status given to dolphins has been recognised and used widely within environmentalism and Green consumerism. In recent years we have also seen the advent of ‘dolphin friendly’ tuna, a response to the E.N.G.O.-driven public outcry about the number of cetaceans being caught in tuna drift nets. In no other case is the environmental symbolism and emotional novelty of the dolphin clearer. By buying ‘safe’ brands of tuna, the public can feel they are actively helping the cause of wildlife. Drift net fishing is responsible for tonnes of by-catch including birds, sharks and turtles, yet it is the dolphin which has drawn public sympathy, and the eye of the public relations staff.

Since the 1960s, cetacea, especially the large whales, have been adopted as the universal symbol for the environmental movement. It has been suggested that these animals are emblematic of the future of all creatures on earth. It was the anti-whaling campaigns spearheaded by Greenpeace which threw these apparently placid ocean mammals back into the public imagination where they have remained ever since. The merchandise of the international group is resplendent with images of dolphins and whales. Further, cetaceans feature in endless examples of jewellery and souvenirs unrelated to but stemming from the symbolic use of the animals by E.N.G.Os.

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4 Ross (1991: 37) explains that “trance channelling culture [is the practice where]...the medium basically channels communications from elsewhere, whether from deceased spirits, ancient entities, or the Universal Mind”.

5 For a comprehensive examination of the global drift net industry see Bonanno and Constance, 1996; and for the policy of the Australian Government see Commonwealth of Australia, 1989.
In Green marketing, the dolphin is repeatedly depicted on a range of consumables, such as dishwashing liquid, implying the product is environmentally benign. A well-known example in Australia and New Zealand is the *Down To Earth* range of cleaning products. With images of dolphins prevalent on packaging and sporting logos from the Sea World Research and Rescue Fund and the New Zealand Whale and Dolphin Trust, consumers can choose this product and, according to the packaging, do their bit “for a cleaner world”. At the same time, the presence of a dolphin on the packaging implies the product is safe for humans to use. If the chemicals in the product do not harm the animal we have mythologised as ‘pure’, or their ocean environment, then surely they will be safe to use in the home and around our children.

The special status afforded the dolphin partly as a result of its popularisation in New Ageism, environmentalism and Green marketing has also been noticed by the tourism industry. Before people board a dolphin tourist boat it is likely they will have at least some notion of what they think dolphins are and what they represent. There are certain ways this may have come about. The dolphin has been mediated in many ways, which in turn has helped create the modern idea of the dolphin and encouraged the great interest in the animal by tourists around the globe. In order to illustrate this mediation I have chosen five texts which perform as examples of how dolphins have been re-created as important in the modern day.\(^7\) I will now introduce these books before examining how they work to frame the dolphin today as humanised and as a utopian other.

Flipper is possibly the most famous of all dolphins in contemporary popular culture. Ric O’Barry was the trainer of the dolphin television and film star. His book, *Behind The Dolphin Smile* (1988) (Figure 7.1) provides an account of his time as a dolphin trainer and his reflections on dolphins in captivity. His book is used in the thesis to recount the significance of this character in the popular mind. The book tells the story of O’Barry’s life

\(^6\) See for example David Day’s (1987) *The Whale War* which looks at how cetaceas have been used as a symbol of the ecology movement and have become emblems of the fate of all other species on Earth.
as trainer of the *Flipper* dolphins (there were five of them in the series) and his eventual belief that these animals should not be kept in captivity for the purpose of entertainment. The drawcard of a television family adventure series directed by James B. Clark for Star Productions, *Flipper* brought dolphins into the world of children for decades. Between 1952 and 1998 a series of film and television programs followed the adventures of Flipper and his human friends, Sandy and Bud (Appendix 7.1). In 1996 the major feature film *Flipper* was released starring Australian Paul Hogan. The introduction of *Flipper* to a new generation of Australian children was powerful in its reinvention of the myth of dolphins.

The vast popularity of *Flipper* marked just one, albeit mass circulated, way the modern dolphin has been mediated and mythologised. Alongside this television series sits a vast array of books, often ‘coffee table’ style, which depict the fascinating world of the dolphin. By way of illustration, I will now look at four of these books with a view to providing flesh to the figure of the modern dolphin mythology later in the chapter.

Virginia McKenna’s ‘coffee table’ book *Into the Blue* (1992), (Figure 7.2) published by The Aquarian Press, is replete with glossy images of dolphins interspersed with poetry and quotes. Like O’Barry, McKenna’s own journey to the dolphin has been by way of filmic media. An actress, she is most well known for her role in the film *Born Free* (1966), a true story about the saving and raising of a family of wild lion cubs in Africa.

Following his work with patients suffering mental illness, Dr. Horace Dobbs’ *Dance To A Dolphin’s Song* (1990) (Figure 7.3) acclaims the “magic healing power of the dolphin” (Dobbs, 1990, title page). In subsequently producing a range of television films in an

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7 These particular texts have been selected for the roles that they, and sometimes the careers of their authors, have played in the popularising of the dolphin. They are important for the impact they have had on popular culture in creating the dolphin as special and beautiful.

8 The reality for many dolphins caught by O’Barry was a far cry from the carefree life of television’s *Flipper*. His somewhat harrowing account of the capture, training and captive lives of these dolphins defies the popular image of the carefree, laughing animals in the series. O’Barry’s dolphins ended up in aquariums, carnivals, zoos, scientific labs, travelling circuses, shopping centres, in side-shows at gas stations and as football team mascots in tiny collapsible pools. One *Flipper* dolphin, Susie, was carted around in a trailer as part of a political campaign in Europe while others ended up as pets in private chlorinated swimming pools.

9 The *Flipper* series received distribution across the world and is still periodically run today. In addition, a search for *Flipper* in the Internet reveals a history of the dolphin’s celebrity achievements.
attempt to show the animals to a wider audience, Dobbs has taken his ideas to another level in the re-mythologising of the dolphin.

An examination of social constructions of the ocean world and dolphins would be incomplete without reference to Jacques Cousteau, scientist, co-inventor of the AQUA-lung and ocean documentary maker. He has made a remarkable contribution to both scientific and popular knowledge about marine life. His book Dolphins (1975), (Figure 7.4) written in conjunction with journalist Philippe Diole, has explicitly contributed to popular understanding of the dolphin. Through his television documentaries and adventure films Cousteau is responsible for bringing the ocean into the living rooms of millions of people. Since the 1950s he has produced more than seventy documentaries for television, and three full-length feature films, including Voyage to the Edge of the World (1976). Cousteau has also written, in collaboration with various co-authors, over fifty books, including The Silent World (1953) and World Without Sun (1965), which have been published in more than a dozen languages, an indication of his influence world-wide.

Finally, as mentioned, the environmental movement has embraced dolphins as symbols of their campaign to protect all of nature. In 1990, Greenpeace, the world’s leading E.N.G.O., published The Greenpeace Book Of Dolphins, edited by John May, (Figure 7.5) which evidenced the critical figurehead status being placed on these animals.

The introduction to this chapter noted that the contemporary re-mythologisation of the dolphin is composed of two themes. The five texts mentioned above give some indication of the way the dolphin has been re-mythologised in the contemporary moment. The logic of this contemporary re-mythologisation is composed of two themes discussed in the chapter: the dolphin as humanised and the dolphin as a utopian being. Firstly, these discourses frame the dolphin as an animal positioned as somehow apart from other animals, as an extraordinary animal which is understood to be close to us (humans). The humanising

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10 As stated, the dolphin has long been a part of the mythologised folklore of a number of cultures (for example see work by Slijper, 1962; Lockley, 1979; McNally, 1981; Connor and Micklethwaite Peterson, 1994). However, the main concern of my thesis is with the modern re-mythologising of the animal into a specific place within the 'green imaginary'.

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BEHIND
THE
DOLPHIN
SMILE

Richard O'Barry

WITH KEITH COULBOURN

The trainer of the television star "Flipper" tells about his life with dolphins and why they should be left free in their ocean environment

Figure 7.1: Cover of Ric O'Barry's Behind the Dolphin Smile

(Source: O'Barry, 1988)
Figure 7.2: Cover of Virginia McKenna's (1992) *Into the Blue*

(Source: McKenna, 1992)
Figure 7.3:  Cover of Horace Dobbs' (1990) *Dance To A Dolphin's Song*

(Source: Dobbs, 1990)
Figure 7.4: Cover of Jacques Cousteau's (1975) *Dolphins*
Figure 7.5:  Cover of John May's (1990) *The Greenpeace Book of Dolphins*

(Source: May, 1990)
of dolphins entails isolating and applauding particular characteristics of the animal that humans can relate to as being like themselves. Secondly, and somehow counter to the view that dolphins are ‘like us’, dolphins are frequently positioned as utopian, as ‘pure’ and altruistic beings. They are framed as being somehow better than us, as uncorrupted by the modern world. They have come to stand as a symbol of a way of being in the world which is innocent. It is to the ways in which the above texts contribute to this romanticism that I now turn.

7.2.1 Humanising of the Dolphin

In many ways, the five texts mentioned in the introduction to the chapter work to humanise the dolphins. Certain characteristics of the animal are explained in these accounts which show evolutionary links between them and us. For instance, in all cases we are told that dolphins are mammals who, like us, breath air, suckle their young and live in family groups. As Cousteau (1975) says:

[m]uch that has been written and said about dolphins tends to set them apart from other animals, to locate them somewhere outside the animal kingdom. The public look on them as less than human, but as nonetheless in the process of becoming our equals (Cousteau, 1975: 177).

The discourse surrounding dolphins is like that of no other animal. Perhaps one of the key reasons for the attention they are afforded is the knowledge that, as with all life, they initially evolved from the sea. An early ancestor of cetaceans once lived on land before finally returning to the water once more. This fact has been much used in various texts implying a “kinship” (McKenna, 1992: 97) between dolphins and humans. So the dolphin is constructed as an animal which even in its return to the ocean continued to share characteristics with homo sapiens, such as the ability to breathe air, to bear live young, and to live within family groups. A graphic connection between ‘us and them’ is made by
Cousteau (1975) when he explains the skeleton of a dolphin shows traces of its terrestrial days with the flippers containing “all the bones of the hand, the wrist, and the arm” (Cousteau, 1975: 118; and see also Williams, 1988: 10-11; O’Barry, 1988: 90-91).

In contemporary popular dolphin discourse, dolphins are habitually anthropomorphised. By attributing human characteristics to them, we can further find ways to relate to them and see them as close to us. A good example of this is the so-called dolphin ‘smile’. Cousteau (1975) correctly asserts that it was the Flipper series which “popularised the photogenic smile of the dolphin; and, by now, there is no scientific argument which could possibly persuade the general public that Flipper’s expression is not, in fact, a smile” (Cousteau, 1975: 88). Throughout his book, O’Barry (1988) also contributed to the idea that dolphins are like us. For instance he writes of one dolphin who “opened her mouth in a laugh” (O’Barry, 1988: 30). Even the laugh from the dolphin ‘smile’ is human made and quite literally dubbed in. For instance, the chattering sound made by the dolphins in the Flipper series as they lifted their heads excitedly out of the water, was Mel Blanc who also made the sounds for animated characters, Bugs Bunny and Woody Woodpecker.

That dolphins appear to play and enjoy having fun is another characteristic linking them to us. Cousteau (1975: 176) writes that dolphins:

by the powers of observation they display and by the ingenuity they show,

lead us to attribute to them a behavior not unlike our own. Perhaps it is

because they show signs of a sense of humour while playing.

Later he records that “[d]olphins also love to surf, and they allow themselves to be carried on the crests of waves, just as human surfers do...And, like humans, they wait for a

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11 Four hundred years before Christ dolphins were thought to be big fish, until Aristotle Historia Animalium recorded that the animals had lungs, gave birth to live young and were indeed mammals. However, it was not until the eighteenth century that dolphins were officially classified as separate from fish (Slipper, 1962).
12 It should be noted that I am not attempting to suggest dolphins cannot laugh or doubt the interpretations of a man who has lived his adult life with these animals. Rather, my point is to show how this most well-known dolphin trainer has contributed to the story of the dolphin as an exceptional being, perhaps closer to humans than to any other species.
13 Tourists during my fieldwork imitated this chattering on occasion as they tried to gain the attention of dolphins swimming near the vessels.
particularly big wave" Cousteau (1975: 177). This adds to the view that dolphins are, like humans, “highly sociable and gregarious” (May, 1990: 22).

Another vector of the humanising of the dolphin comes by way of their reproductive behaviour. That the dolphin is, like humans, a mammal draws a special link between these sea-based animals and humans. Many contemporary dolphin discourses stress this equivalence, extending it to modes of mothering. For example, Cousteau (1975: 110) records that it is known in dolphin communities that “[f]emale dolphins...are devoted mothers” and that they mutually care for their offspring and assist one another in giving birth. Williams (1988: 47) adds, “should anything untimely happen to it, its mother will support her calf upon her back until it disintegrates”, a theme echoed by Cousteau (1975: 173) and O’Barry (1988: 55).

Contemporary dolphin discourses also work to bring the dolphin close to the human by implying they sometimes prefer our company to that of other dolphins. To various extents, each of my five texts explores cases of apparent friendship between dolphins and humans. For example, in considering the idea of an affinity between dolphins and people, Cousteau (1975) explains that in captivity, dolphins have been known to prefer the company of humans to being alone. He notes that “the presence of a human being, who caresses and cares for the dolphin, inspires trust in the animal” (Cousteau, 1975: 60). Stories from Pliny which tell of friendships between children and dolphins (see Cousteau, 1975: 245-246) are repeated today, some two thousand years hence, such as the cases of “Opo” the dolphin in New Zealand and “Bubbles” in Wales (see Lockley, 1979). On his many ocean voyages, Cousteau (1975: 163) recorded that when he and his crew came across pods of dolphins, it was like “meeting friends or relatives”. O’Barry (1988) echoes this theme also. Swimming with wild dolphins led him to say that “[i]t was as if I had been one of them” (O’Barry, 1998: 54), as if such for some reason a wild animal had chosen to commune with him, and that this was something extraordinary and most rare.

Cousteau (1975: 73) contributes to the Flipperisation of dolphins when he says:

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14 See also Lockley, 1979: 22-25.
We know that a certain number of dolphins, living at freedom in the sea, seek out the company of humans, become attached to them, and persist in returning to the places where they have encountered swimmers – and especially where they have encountered children. And we know that dolphins are fun-loving and dependable creatures who, upon occasion, act as lifesavers.

Dobbs (1990) recounts in detail several tales of voluntary interactions between humans and wild dolphins. In his description of his work with the Flipper dolphins, O’Barry (1988) also elaborates on the close friendships with the animals in his care. Cousteau (1975: 71-103) goes on to discuss at length many instances where dolphins appear to have chosen human company over that of their pod. In itself, this is an extraordinary idea. Such stories surely fuel the public imagination into thinking dolphins are intelligent, can feel emotions such as loneliness, that they strive for a more interesting life among humans. Simultaneously, the individual people specifically sought out by these animals can think of themselves as somehow special for being ‘chosen’ by this beautiful, wild, and enigmatic animal.

The fabrication of a dolphin called Flipper has a lot to answer for in relation to the belief in a bond between humans and dolphins. As O’Barry (1988) explains:

Flipper was one of the friendliest creatures on earth. He was always laughing, smiling through any adversity or pain. He never complained, either. He was intelligent, helpful, enterprising, and lovable – and sometimes positively psychic. It might seem, therefore, that all dolphins have an inviolable love affair with human beings (O’Barry, 1988: 203).

The idea of Flipper is one of a wild animal choosing human company over that of its own species. Here we see an animal capable of caring for and communicating with humans in much the same way other animal TV stars such as Lassie, Black Beauty and Skippy the Kangaroo have done. As O’Barry (1988: 193) explains:

Storywise, Flipper was a free dolphin. He lived in the ocean but he came to the Rick’s home on the lagoon because he wanted to.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} In the world of television and film, Flipper is portrayed as a male dolphin but all dolphins trained for the programs were female.
Briefly, the plot of the television series involved a widower and his two sons, Sandy and Bud Ricks, who lived on the Ranger Station at Coral Key Park and Marine Preserve in the Florida Keys. Their house faced a lagoon joined to the ocean where Flipper, the intelligent and honest hero of the show, lived. As the dolphin befriended the boys, this “dolphin of genius” (O’Barry, 1988: 118) solved their weekly problems, “with a high-pitched, staccato giggle and a lighthearted flip of his tail” (O’Barry, 1988: 118).

Thus it was in this way that a fabricated version of a wild dolphin initially came into our world as a fun and faithful creature, always friendly and loyal, capable of talking to his human friends, warning them of and protecting them from danger. That is, we are presented with the morally good dolphin as opposed to the sometimes corrupt human. Further we are given a clear connection between the innocence of childhood and the innocent, altruistic friendship of a dolphin. O’Barry (1988) readily acknowledges that “Flipper was an illusion, an elaborate fabrication...all to create the legend of a fabulous creature, a creature combining both actual and imaginary delphoid powers with that of a family pet specially blessed...with human intelligence” (O’Barry, 1988: 117).

Dolphins are also seen as different from other animals and as close to humans because of their ability to communicate and their high level of intelligence. May (1990), while questioning the scientific basis for this, agrees that “a persistent dogma holds that dolphins are among the most intelligent of animals and that they communicate with one another in complex ways” (May, 1990: 28). McKenna (1992) does little to dispel this idea. For instance, she writes that “[t]he brain of the dolphin is large, and the area that ‘thinks’—the cerebral cortex—is, on average, even larger than the same area of the human brain” (McKenna, 1992: 53). Further, she provides the comparison with humans that “[t]he dolphin’s large ‘thinking’ area of the brain is the equivalent part that, in humans, gives us the ability to enjoy art and music” (McKenna, 1992: 52). Pliny (in Cousteau, 1975) also found that dolphins were friendly towards people and that they responded well to music and other sounds made by humans. Cousteau’s own work at sea has shown that dolphins have been attracted by the sound of his crew playing their guitars (and see O’Barr, 1988: 54-56). Overall, not only are dolphins framed as willingly befriending humans, but also as
having a certain moral quality. It is to the idea of the morally good dolphin that I now turn.

7.2.2 The Dolphin as a Utopian Being

A popularly held view of dolphins is that they lead lives somehow more pure and moral than our own. They are depicted in the aforementioned texts as outside of modernity, as living more gentle and peaceful lives than that of moderns. May (1990, publisher’s blurb, front sleeve) in the Greenpeace Book of Dolphins states that the animals “have always held a magical fascination for humans, being seen variously as symbols of grace, innocence, intelligence and eroticism”. McKenna (1992) refers also to the way dolphins:

“live in harmony with most of the other ‘finny’ inhabitants of the deep, [that these are] ‘[m]agical animals’. Trusting. Friendly. ‘Altruistic’” (McKenna, 1992: 58-59).

The apparently innate altruism of the dolphin is often expressed by dolphin commentators with reference to their pod behaviour. Each of my five texts makes mention of the fact that dolphins are renowned for their propensity to help their own species. Although wary of misinterpretation, May (1990) discusses the instance of pod-mates who:

come to the aid of injured or restrained companions, placing themselves between a capture vessel and its target animal, attempting to remove holding lines or support a distressed comrade by actually lifting it above the surface of the water at regular intervals (May, 1990: 26).

Stories of the ways dolphins have worked co-operatively with humans, seemingly of their own free will, such as I mentioned in Chapter 4 in relation to Vietnamese fishermen, contributes to the idea that they are kind and generous beings. In the 1996 feature film Flipper, the dolphin befriends a young teenager, Sandy, who saved him from being shot by a fisherman. As the story unfolds, we come to know Flipper as a loyal, pretty, happy, brave and friendly dolphin. He is highly intelligent, capable of understanding Sandy, imitating people, and collecting coins and balls on command. When attacked by a Hammerhead
Shark, Flipper and his dolphin ‘family’ protect Sandy from harm. With a 1990s touch, the script deals with evidence of toxic waste dumping at sea and the poisoning of the local fish populations. It is Flipper, carrying a video camera in his mouth, who films this as evidence for the police.

Several aspects of the Flipper series reinforce the idea of the dolphin as an unconditional friend to humankind. Here is a dolphin who is gentle and cheerful and allows children to ride on his back. When his dolphin friend is shot, Flipper lifts him to the surface to breathe. When Sandy is in trouble at sea, Flipper comes to his aid. As if able to read peoples’ minds, Flipper cheers up solitary children, pushes ‘bad’ people such as the toxic waste dumper into the sea, and in the final scene finds Sandy on the ferry reluctantly leaving the island and leaps and flips for his amusement.

The discourse surrounding dolphins also frames them as symbols of a better way of living, as having that sense of community around which moderns often feel nostalgic. McKenna (1992) suggests that “as some people reject the materialistic and scientific mood of the late-twentieth century, they rediscover in the dolphin a spiritual dimension that reflects the approach of our ancestors” (McKenna, 1992: 15-16). Cousteau (1975) cites Pliny’s Natural History thus:

[Dolphins] are solicitous for each other’s well being...young dolphins are always accompanied by an older dolphin, who serves as a guardian. And witnesses have seen a dolphin carried by his companions so that he would not fall prey to the monsters of the sea (quoted in Cousteau, 1975: 243).

Dobbs (1990) is a key text in the growing field of dolphin assisted therapy (D.A.T.). Here, dolphins are seen to possess some sort of ability, beyond the comprehension of science, to help humans though emotional hardship. For example, in his Dance To A Dolphin’s Song Dobbs (1990) describes an encounter between a clinically depressed man “living in what he described as a black pit of despair” (Dobbs, 1990: 15) and a dolphin. The author records that “[o]n the day he met the dolphin a pin-prick of light appeared in Bill’s darkness” (Dobbs, 1990: 15). Whether or not dolphins can improve our physical or emotional lives is
hard to quantify. What is of interest in relation to this thesis is that, particularly over the past decade, a growing number of texts are being published on the topic (for example see Cochrane and Callen, 1992; Tenzin-Dolma, 1997; Hoegel, 1997). That the dolphin has been chosen as a human saviour in lifting “the debilitating burden from depressives” (Dobbs, 1990: 27), and that people claim that in the presence of human swimmers they radiate “pure love” (Dobbs, 1990: 29) illustrates a very strong aspect of the re-mythologizing of the animal. In part, it is this re-creation of the dolphin as special which draws people from cities into the oceans. Even Cousteau, (1975) with his efforts to maintain the distance of science, allowed that “[i]t is the peculiarity of the dolphin that it is the animal which most excites popular admiration and interest” (Cousteau, 1975: 29).

Clearly, dolphins remain highly visible in Western and other cultures as a subject in art and literature, and more recently as an object of wonder and observation within the tourist experience. The dolphin has become known across time and space as an animal simultaneously sharing human characteristics and as exhibiting behaviours of a utopian nature. New Ageism, environmentalism and Green marketing have both utilised and helped cement the idea of the dolphin as special and to be revered. One way in which this reverence is manifested is through ecomarine tourism.

7.3 Contemporary Dolphin Tourism in Australia

The preceding sections have outlined the importance of the dolphin in the contemporary popular imaginary. This significance is manifest in part through political action to protect the species. But it is also apparent in new desires to visit and experience this animal. That is, the modern fascination with dolphins has, especially under contemporary circumstance

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16 Over the last fifteen years or so demand by tourists to see cetacea 'in the wild' has grown in Australia. There are many places where people can specifically watch the larger whales from the shore at certain times of the year. Three main species make up the industry in Australia. They are humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) whose annual migrations take them up the East and West coasts of Australia, southern right whales (*Eubalaena australis*) who migrate from Antarctica to southern Australian waters in winter and inshore bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). As mentioned in Chapter 2 of the thesis, Elizabeth Reid's Ph.D. at the University of Adelaide examines the whale watching industry in southern Australia.
of consumption culture, resulted in dolphin tourism. Australia is no exception and has an established cetacean-based tourism industry.

Commercial tours to see wild dolphins are a global tourism innovation brought about by the demands of tourists for a new type of experience. Where once marine animals were taken from the ocean and housed in urban aquaria for public viewing, today people are able to travel to the habitat of the animals and see them there. Tourists now want to come as close as possible to the marine life attractions. The practice of tourists visiting dolphins on boats and sometimes entering the water to swim with them is of course an excellent example of this new intimate immersion tourism.

In Australia, income derived from dolphin and whale-based tourism has risen substantially in recent years, from A$2.3 million in 1991, to A$5.17 million in 1993 and A$8.9 million in 1994 (Anderson et al., 1995). Generally, people visiting dolphins make up almost half of all visitor numbers to cetacean tourism sites and 40% of the total direct income from the industry (Anderson et al., 1995). On the whole, these are bottlenose dolphins, although common dolphins (Delphinus delphis) are sometimes seen as are indopacific humpback dolphins (Sousa chinensis). The wild dolphin tourism industry consists of a broad range of encounters. For instance it is possible to hand feed populations who come close to shore, to visit the animals on a sightseeing vessel or to swim with them.

There are two places in Australia where people can ‘officially’ hand feed dolphins: Tangalooma, on the west coast of Moreton Island, Queensland (for details see Orams and Hill, 1998; Spanner, 1996); and at Monkey Mia, in Western Australia (for details see Wilson, 1994). In contrast there are many sites where tourists can simply view the animals in an organised setting, but not feed or swim with them. Such places exist in all Australian states. These encounters are generally managed by tour operators and are legislated for under the Wildlife (Whale Watching) Guidelines 1990 (see Appendix 7.2), part of the

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17 In New Zealand, for example, twelve operators work under a permit system (see Constantine and Baker, 1996; Amante-Helweg, 1996). In Japan a 'how to' of swimming with ocean dolphins manual has been published (see Bashomatu, nd) and a similar guide is available for Hawaii (see Walker, 1998). While this is...
Wildlife Act 1975. The Act is enforceable by government officials.\textsuperscript{18} That guidelines specifically relating to cetacea did not appear in Australian legislation until 1990 reflects the recentness of the increased touristic interest in cetacea. In yet other places, interaction between dolphins and tourists is without regulation.\textsuperscript{19}

In what follows I will examine in detail the way in which commercial dolphin tour operators working in Port Phillip Bay frame this experience and the dolphins which are the object of tourist consumption. The data is drawn from my work with the tour operators and tourists who visited dolphins in Port Phillip Bay over the 1996-97 summer on the \textit{Moonraker}, the \textit{Polperro} and the \textit{Looking Good}. The section begins with a description of the study site, and the history of commercial dolphin tours in the Bay. The nature of the various tours is then explained with particular emphasis on the ways in which the individual operators package the dolphin for tourist consumption. The industry is a relatively new one and has not been without management problems, as is briefly alluded to. The final section of the chapter considers education at the site and other examples of how education may change tourists' behaviour around dolphins. The tourists' experiences of and responses to the dolphin swim and observation is dealt with in Chapter 8.

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\textsuperscript{18} In the case of Victoria's Port Phillip Bay discussed in this chapter, there are too few officials for the area requiring monitoring (Dolphin Tour Boat operator, pers. comm, 1997).

\textsuperscript{19} As mentioned in chapter 4, in early 1998 I visited several sites of marine tourism along Australia's East Coast. One such place benefiting from cetacean visitors is the town of Tin Can Bay, North of Noosa Heads, Queensland. Here, at the local boat ramp, tourists are attracted by the presence of several indopacific humpback dolphins. A nearshore tropical water dolphin, the Tin Can Bay mammals are drawn to the boat ramp in the hope of receiving fish. A nearby kiosk sells buckets of dead fish to tourists who then wade into the water to feed the dolphins, to pat them and possibly much worse when not under observation. Speaking with the kiosk owners it became apparent that up to 300 people at any time may be found in the water with the animals, yet there is no signage of an educational nature relating to the protection of the animals. In Australia it is illegal to feed wild dolphins or for a swimmer to approach within 30m of them (A.N.P.W.S., 1988, and see Appendix 7.2). However, at Tin Can Bay at least, the money the dolphins bring to the local community continues to outweigh the very real threats they face from tourists and marine traffic around the ramp. N.P.W.S. Rangers, observing the spectacle from their vehicle, explained that they were not able to stop people feeding the animals because the water was under the jurisdiction of the Fisheries Department and the boat ramp the domain of the Coast Guard. Further, the Local Council and the Chamber of Commerce favour the practice for the significant numbers of tourists it attracts. The impact on the dolphins however is likely to

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7.4 The Bottlenose Dolphins of Port Phillip Bay

Port Phillip Bay houses thousands of species of marine flora and fauna, including a resident population of approximately 100 bottlenose dolphins. On the whole, very little is known about this population. For example, it is unclear as to exactly how many there are, where they go at night, how they spend the winter months or the details of their energy budgets. This latter point is important in terms of the impact that tourist interaction may have on the animals. In the summer months, the Southern end of the Bay appears to have the highest density of dolphins. These animals, visited by the tourism industry, spend at least some of their time residing in the waters along the Mornington Peninsula between Rye and Point Nepean National Park (Weir et al., 1996).\textsuperscript{20} It is while in these waters of Port Phillip Bay that the dolphins come to be incorporated into tourism initiatives based on people viewing and swimming with dolphins.

In Port Phillip Bay, recent controls have been put in place to limit the number of tourists visiting the dolphins at any one time. In 1995, a voluntary Code of Practice (Appendix 7.3) was developed by the tour operators, the then Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the then Dolphin Research Project as a means to provide guidelines for human-dolphin interactions in the Bay. The Code was based on the Wildlife (Whale Watching) Guidelines 1990 mentioned above. The development of the Code is a positive sign for the dolphins and in itself represents a wider concern for the animals' safety.\textsuperscript{21} Under the Federal Whale Watching Guidelines, any motor powered vessel cannot approach cetacea within 100m, approach the animals head-on, or drop anchor within 300m of the animals. In addition, within 300m of a whale or dolphin, boats should slow down, not make

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\textsuperscript{20} As mentioned in Chapter 3, research is being carried out on the dolphins of the Bay. The work, under the banner of the McDonald's sponsored Dolphin Research Institute (D.R.I.) (formerly the Dolphin Research Project), is looking at the ecology of the animals, creating an identification database as well as trying to assess the impact of tourism on the animals (see Weir et al., 1996). In a separate study, Carol Scarpaci of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University is carrying out PhD research into the effect of boat traffic on the dolphins.

\textsuperscript{21} During my time in the field I was told anecdotal stories about interactions between members of the public in private craft and the dolphins in the Bay. These included such things as people jumping onto the animals' backs, trying to 'ride' on them holding the dorsal fin, and putting cigarette butts into the animals' blowholes.
any sudden shifts in position, move away if the animal appears disturbed and not make any attempt to feed the animals or make noises that could disturb them.

Since the early 1990s, it appears that the well-being of whales and dolphins in the tourism arena has been an increasing priority for the Victorian State Government. Steps taken by the Government to educate the public via brochures as well as legislative change are most likely due to the intensive lobbying efforts of a small group of people concerned with the long-term well-being of the animals, most notably Judy and Troy Muir and other crew members from the Polperro. In 1992, the then Department of Conservation and Environment published a general education pamphlet entitled 'Whale Watching in Victoria', which by implication included dolphins and explained access restrictions to cetacea as recommended by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (1989). However, in 1995, as greater pressure was placed on the dolphins by tour operators and private craft, the Flora and Fauna Branch of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources published "A Guide to the Do's and Don'ts of Dolphin Watching in Port Phillip Bay" (Appendix 7.4). The brochure relates to all boat users in the vicinity of dolphins, not specifically tour operators. The following year, the same Department produced an updated version of the pamphlet entitled “Dolphin Watching in Victoria: regulations and guidelines 1996-97” (Appendix 7.5). The publications were distributed to private craft owners and tour operators. They represented an acknowledgement by the Government of the importance of the dolphins in the public’s mind as well as clearly indicating the increasing pressure that was being placed on the animals. At the same time, and in relation to my project, these initiatives indicate people’s greater desire to see the wild dolphins and their wish for ever increasing close proximity to them.

Research by Orams and Hill (1998) discussed in Chapter 2 of the thesis in relation to tourist interactions with dolphins, raises important issues for the management of the dolphin tour

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22 The Australian Federal Government recently announced fines of up to $110,000 and two years’ jail for anyone found injuring or killing a dolphin. This action was in response to the shooting of two dolphins in Adelaide’s Port River. The fine increases to $550,000 for an individual and $5.5 million for a corporation found guilty of harming a member of a dolphin species which has threatened status. These fines are all the more interesting considering the estimated 14,000 dolphins drowned in Taiwanese shark gill nets in southern Australian waters during the 1980s (Strong, 1998; Coorey, 1998).
industry in Port Phillip Bay. While permits and regulations may serve to protect the animals to an extent, they should not be seen as the only answer. As explained in Chapter 1, presently in Sorrento, there is no opportunity for visitors to receive formal, systematic education about the animals. As elaborated upon below, interpretation is left up to individual operators and the agendas they house. Thus, depending on the boat the tourist boards, the dolphin is framed variously as an unusual subject of great scientific and conservation interest, through to an object of recreation and fun. Orams and Hill (1998) have shown that in packaging an animal as sacred, a formal education program led to a positive voluntary change in people’s behaviour.

Commercial dolphin swim tours have been running in Port Phillip Bay since 1986 from the Polperro. For a short period in the late 1980s, this boat was engaged by the Dolphin Research Institute (hereafter D.R.I.), which was interested in looking at interactions between tourists and dolphins. At the time of my fieldwork, the industry has grown to five boats which operated from Sorrento pier in the summer months (see Table 7.1). I conducted surveys on three of these boats (see Chapter 3 and Table 7.1) and references made to the activities of tour operators in this chapter refer to these boats only, unless otherwise stated. Although it is an important area, an analysis of the impact of tourist activity on the animals is beyond the scope of the thesis. As stated, this chapter concerns itself only with the ways in which the wild dolphins of the Bay are presented to tourists by these operators.

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23 At least one vessel also operates dolphin tours from Queenscliff but does not form a component of my thesis.
24 In addition to attempting to show dolphins to the tourists, the vessels often incorporated other animals into their itinerary. Most operators spent time at Pope’s Eye which is home to a population of Australasian Gannets (Figure 8.3) as well as a popular dive and snorkel location. Seals are also a reliable ‘fall-back’ animal if the dolphins are absent or disinterested in spending time with the boats. There is also a resident population of fur seals on an old navigation platform known as Chinaman’s Hat (Figure 8.2).
25 Some examples of work concerning the impact of tourism on dolphins have been carried out by Australian Nature Conservation Agency (1995), Weir et al., (1996), Cramer, et al., (1992), Wilson (1994), and Saunders (1996). A report by Weir et al., (1996) from the D.R.I. suggests that occasional instances have been observed where the presence of tourists has led to stress reactions in the dolphins. Saunders (1996) refers to comments by a Fisheries Officer regarding one incident where the dolphins were herded and chased by private craft, some tour operators, jet-skis and swimmers for several hours (and see Neales, 1996). Anecdotal accounts from tour operators include reports of people trying to climb onto the dolphins from private craft. Importantly,
Table 7.1: Dolphin Tour Operators Located at Sorrento Pier, Summer 1996-97

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tour Operators</th>
<th>Type Of Tour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Moonraker</em></td>
<td>The <em>Moonraker</em> runs a range of tourist activities including diving, fishing as well as swimming with the dolphins and seals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Polperro</em></td>
<td>The <em>Polperro</em> specialises in taking tourists on trips to swim with the dolphins. This is the longest running of all the businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Looking Good</em></td>
<td>Dolphin Discovery Tours, based on the yacht the <em>Looking Good</em> are affiliated with the Dolphin Research Institute. These tours are dolphin observation tours only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorrento-Portsea-Queenscliff Ferry</td>
<td>The two ferries run between the towns of Sorrento, Queenscliff and Portsea several times a day over summer. During the peak holiday season, they also become a Dolphin Watch and take tourists to see dolphins as part of their usual route.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Dolphin Swims</td>
<td>The <em>Wild Dolphin</em> trips include the opportunity to swim with or observe dolphins.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Tour boats on which my visitor surveys were run.

Any early summer morning on the Sorrento Pier small groups of chatting tourists can be found, emitting a mixture of excitement, expectation and perhaps some anxiety. Before they board one of the tour boats, they will be issued with a wetsuit if they are intending to swim that day.\(^26\) The challenge of actually getting into the suits over, people gingerly step aboard the boats, hoping that the money they have just parted with will yield them a glimpse of an animal that some say they have wanted to see all their lives. Once on the vessel, the experiences available for the tourists differ markedly. For instance, the *Looking Good* on which Dolphin Discovery Tours are run, is a 20.1 metre steel ketch providing tourists with the opportunity to experience the Bay under sail. The *Polperro* is a wooden three level former fishing and diving boat while the *Moonraker* is a modern fibreglass cruising vessel capable of high speeds and licensed to carry up to forty tourists at a time.

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\(^26\) Trips cost about A$60.00 to swim with the dolphins and about A$35.00 to participate as a sightseer.
The following is a summary of how tours are run on each of these boats. In particular, the section illuminates the ways in which the operators frame the dolphin for consumption by tourists by way of either pre-tour promotional brochures or on-board commentaries. Both discourses provide ways of assessing how dolphins are produced and framed for tourist consumption. The following section is not intended to provide comment on the quality of the tours or to suggest comparisons between them. My primary interest in this instance is to examine how the individual tours are organised and what stories about the dolphins are being told to the tourist population, particularly in light of the remythologising of the animals explained earlier in the chapter.27

7.4.1 Promotional Brochures

The most eye catching aspect of the Moonraker brochure is the large, red lettering of the name of the vessel across the centre of the page (Figure 7.6). Essentially, the colourful brochures promoting the Moonraker tours do not have an obvious environmental or conservation focus. The words ‘conservation’, ‘education’ and ‘environment’ do not appear on the brochure at any point. In contrast with the promotional material of the Polperro and the Looking Good discussed below, on the Moonraker the animals are presented in a playful, comic and anthropomorphic format. The brochure text begins with the fantasy of interacting with animals of popular culture as it exclaims, “Just imagine swimming with dolphins and seals that are as curious as you are”. The brochure also includes photographs of the Moonraker on various trips. Interestingly, these images all include pictures of the vessel and in only one of them is a dolphin present suggesting that on this tour the luxurious boat is at least as great an attraction as the dolphins are. In this instance the focus is on the high level of proximity to the animals with the caption reading that “the dolphins swim within feet of the Moonraker”. The Moonraker brochure also promotes another attraction, that of the seals. In also promoting the seal tours this brochure seeks to take the

27 As stated, this study has concentrated on the social construction and the touristic consumption of marine animals. The findings do have management implications and these are referred to in the concluding chapter (Chapter 9).
emphasis away from the dolphins as the sole attraction of the tour for, on rare occasions, the animals are not found by operators.

On the *Moonraker*, the Operators have not sought to frame the dolphin in a conservation context. In this case, it appears the Operator’s intention is to give clients the opportunity to observe dolphins and seals from onboard and in the water as part of a wider adventure on the Bay. The tourist is largely left to interpret and understand the animals and the experience as they will.

The owners of the *Polperro* use colourful photographs of the dolphins to portray their idea of the Bay and highlight the presence of the dolphins in it (Figure 7.7). Here, using blue, large sized text, the *Polperro* brochure insists that the tour is about “Wild Dolphins” and that people can feel assured that the tour will not “impinge on the dolphins’ natural lifestyle” (emphasis in original). Of the seven images, all illustrate dolphins and only one includes the tour vessel, the material reminder of human intrusion into the dolphins’ space.

In addition, one photograph is of the animals underwater, an enticing image for tourists, perhaps inducing a desire to visit this magical other world of the dolphin. In this instance, the emphasis is on providing people with a safe “marine adventure of a lifetime” while at the same time preserving the dolphins’ environment and integrity. The brochure highlights the fact that the tour is legitimate in an ecotourism sense due in part to the endorsement of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and its successful participation in the Victorian Tourism Awards. The cabin of the *Polperro* houses many professional underwater photographs of the dolphins, seals and gannets taken by crew, giving people a chance to see the animals while they are out on the sea. In addition, a video can be played aboard the boat showing footage of the animals in the Bay. Thus on the *Polperro*, the dolphin is presented to the tourist as something special and beautiful, an untamed animal worthy of our respect and deserving of strict protection. At the same time the dolphins, clearly the highlight of this tour, are strangely ‘other-worldly’ as they float through the green sea catching rays of sunlight on their backs.
Promotional brochure from the Mooneraker

Figure 7.6

(Source: MacKinnon and MacKinnon, nd)
Polperro Dolphin Swims offer you the unique opportunity to swim and interact with the wild Bottlenose Dolphins of Port Phillip Bay. Polperro, a fully crewed vessel, offers highly trained staff and divemasters who ensure you the Marine Adventure of a Lifetime… excitement and adventure with an emphasis on safety. The operation is held in high regard by the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources. Our intention is to highlight the presence of these beautiful creatures and preserve their environment. In no way do we impinge on the dolphins’ natural lifestyle.

Polperro has all facilities including change areas, full galley, on-board toilet and hot shower. All gear is supplied including wet suit, mask and snorkel. Between swims, refreshments are served. While on board you can view the dolphins as they swim around the front of the boat, and bow ride. The photo opportunities are endless so don’t forget your camera. Polperro Charters offer you a wide range of services including bay cruises, informative and historical tours of Port Phillip Bay, fully catered charters or a charter of your personal design.

Departures: We depart Sorrento Pier daily at 8.30am and 1.30pm, and other times by arrangement. Bookings are essential.

Polperro
DOLPHIN SWIMS
P.O. Box 11 Blairgowrie, Victoria 3942
Mobile: (018) 174 160 Phone: 03 5988 8437

Figure 7.7: Promotional Brochure from the Polperro
(Source: Muir, nd)
Printed in black and white, the *Looking Good* promotional brochure appears to be promoting a more academic image than the other vessels (Figure 7.8). It clearly indicates the extent of the business’ association with the research carried out by the D.R.I. and their commitment to protecting the dolphins through education. The “voyage of discovery” they offer is depicted through five photographs, four of which include dolphins, obviously a focus of this tour. In addition, the educational value of the trip is supported with a statement from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.\(^{28}\) Interestingly, the brochure also boldly promotes the *Looking Good*’s politically correct position on dolphin swim tours by proudly stating that “we do not swim with the dolphins!”\(^{29}\) This is in addition to the company’s declaration of the fact that they won environmental tourism awards in 1995 and 1996.

In the cabin of the *Looking Good* tourists can look through albums containing photographs of the various animals and environments of the Bay. At times, videos are played showing past trips and the ‘real time’ movement of the animals beneath the yacht. The brochure highlights the use of their Underwater Video Camera as a means through which people can learn about the dolphins. In promoting the benefits of environmental education the *Looking Good* brochure links long-term environmental sustainability with community action and participation. On the *Looking Good* the dolphin is packaged as a subject of scientific research and beauty within the context of the wider Bay environment.

### 7.4.2 On-Board Commentaries

In direct contrast with the *Polperro* and the *Looking Good* (discussed below) tours on the *Moonraker* are significantly less focussed on the educational and conservation aspects of the experience. Apart from the distribution of a general information card and an initial

\(^{28}\) They also publicise their school-based trips through their “Dolphins and the Classroom: A Creative Approach” brochure.

\(^{29}\) In the mid-1980s the D.R.I. conducted swims with the dolphins for research purposes from the *Polperro* and were in support of the development of a dolphinarium in Victoria (Dolphin Tour Operator b, 1997). In addition, when it first began operating in 1992, the *Looking Good* catered for people who wanted to swim with the dolphins (Saunders, 1996).
Having won Environmental Tourism Awards in 1995 & 1996, Dolphin Discovery Tours combine luxury sailing, onboard Underwater Video Camera and the opportunity to learn about the Dolphins from Dolphin Research Institute Guides. We Do Not Swim With The Dolphins!

Come to picturesque Sorrento and board Looking Good and join us on a voyage of discovery on the sheltered waters of Port Phillip Bay.

Looking Good is Victoria's first and only underwater video equipped charter vessel. This means you will have the opportunity to encounter some of the world's most fascinating marine animals from above and below the water.

Bottlenose Dolphins inhabit the Bay during Summer and we give you the opportunity to see them feeding, nurturing their new born calves and playing in and around Point Nepean National Park, Australia's most visited Park and Reserve.

Your fully qualified crew are owners, Jim & Colleen Godfrey. Jim has a Master Five rating as Captain. Tours Manager, Philip Tubb is a member of the Dolphin Research Institute. He has extensive field experience in dolphin research and has been scuba diving in Port Phillip Bay for over ten years. Trained guides from the Dolphin Research Institute are also on hand to answer your questions and assist you.

Looking Good is a 22.1 metre steel ketch with full marine board survey. Fitted with state of the art navigation and safety equipment. Looking Good is also very stable and is comfortably appointed, with wood paneling throughout, two toilets & bathroom. Covered areas on deck provide shade & below decks you can enjoy video presentations in the spacious main salon. Free tea and coffee is provided. Light refreshments also are available.

We are always mindful of the need to protect the dolphins and do not interfere with their natural behaviors.

While every effort is made to locate the dolphins, because they are a free and wild population, there may be a few occasions when we might not see them.

"Dolphin Discovery Tours offer an opportunity to enjoy the attractions of the Bay while gaining a valuable appreciation of its ecology and abundant wildlife."

-Spencer Mr. Brian Dooner, Acting Visitor Services Manager, Dept. Of Natural Resources & Environment.
commentary covering the day’s schedule, use of equipment and safety issues, virtually no environmental information about the Bay or its animals is given, although clients are free to ask questions of the crew. At the time of my field work, tourists were given fins as well as the mask and snorkel on the Moonraker. The crew said that this was largely for safety reasons. However, the use of fins also gives people more opportunity to pursue the animals in the water. This vessel did not use mermaid lines\textsuperscript{30} (Figure 7.9) and so in this way swimmers were freer to move towards the dolphins. At times, an underwater scooter\textsuperscript{31} was used to move the dolphins towards the surface and nearer to the tourists. These features of the Moonraker experience reflect a desire to fulfil tourists’ desires to get within close proximity to the dolphins. At the same time, they do not make explicit an obvious concern for the well being of the animals.

Tours aboard the Moonraker also visit the seal and gannet populations of the Bay. The fact that the operators of the Moonraker do not provide a commentary about these animals is surprising considering the increasing emphasis on conserving the dolphins by the Victorian Government. This lack of educational provision leaves considerable space for tourist fantasies to flourish, perhaps built around the remythologising of dolphins discussed earlier in the chapter. Hence, on this vessel, there does not appear to be any fixed, predetermined endpoint, such as environmental education. Rather, it is simply an experience of getting close to wild dolphins, the motives and effects of which remain opaque.

Tourists aboard the Polperro gather in the stern of the old fishing boat as the vessel leaves the pier. Here they are introduced to crew and researchers,\textsuperscript{32} listen to a commentary from the Tour Operator covering issues such as the running of the boat, swimmer safety, principles of ecotourism, the animals of the Bay and problems associated with the management of the animals. For example, the Tour Operators’ voluntary Code of Practice

\textsuperscript{30} Since the introduction of the Tour Operator permit system in 1998, all dolphin swimming vessels are required to use mermaid lines. These are buoyed ropes extending for about ten metres from both sides of the stern of the vessels (see Figure 7.10). The lines function to contain tourists away from the animals, and to give them a reference point to the boat.

\textsuperscript{31} The use of the scooter contravenes the Australian Whale Watching Guidelines.

\textsuperscript{32} The three vessels which allowed me space on their tours to run my surveys are active in their support of post graduate research students.
Figure 7.9: Free swim on the *Moonraker*, Summer 1996-97

(Source: Christina Jarvis, 1997)
for behaviour around the dolphins is introduced and people encouraged to read it in detail
in the cabin.

As the Polperro is predominantly a swimming tour vessel the commentary also focuses on
the way swimmers should behave so as to cause as little disturbance to the animals as
possible reinforcing the idea that the dolphins are important creatures, sensitive to
disturbance and deserving of preservation. For example, the following instructions are
given to clients:
* Do not wear excessive amounts of sunscreen in the water as it will wash off and may
harm the animals.
* Do not take flash photographs of the dolphins, seals or birds. It is thought that the flash
can act to disorient the animals.
* Slide, don't jump into the water. This will ensure that there is no risk of people landing on
a dolphin and is less likely to frighten the animals.
* Do not try to touch the dolphins. Some research has suggested viruses may be passed
from humans to dolphins via touch. In Australia it is illegal to touch a dolphin. In addition,
the animals have come to trust people associated with the Polperro and the crew do not
want this trust to be broken.
* Stay within the mermaid lines. They are to contain swimmers away from the animals and
provide people with a reference point to the boat.

Each of the above points relates directly to the well being of the dolphins and how tourists
should behave near the animals in order to preserve their well being. During the summer I
spent observing tours on this vessel, I did not witness any deliberate breaches of these
instructions by clients. Perhaps there is an element of respect for the animals, an acceptance
that dolphins worshipped by the environmental movement, enlivened by Cousteau, deified
by the ancient Greeks and personalised by Flipper, should be seen but not touched,
imagined but not harmed in any way. Alternatively, clients on the Polperro are part of a
small group of tourists and so any inappropriate actions would be easily noticed by staff or
peers. In either case, the crew of the Polperro strictly regulate the behaviour of the people
on their tours, with commentary about the animals continuing intermittently throughout the
tour.

The reference to the Operator's Code of Practice and the minimal impact procedures listed
above illustrate a ritual which draws tourists into the idea that they are joining a responsible
eco-tour experience. The implication here for the tourist is that the experience of visiting
the animals in an apparently low-impact manner places them in a position above that of
other tourists and other ways of visiting animals. Here, there can be a feeling of superiority,
of interacting with 'the wild' without simultaneously causing it damage. This small group
of people, being taken out on the Bay in a highly personalised fashion, have the opportunity
to experience wild dolphins at sea, surely the stuff of which dreams are made. Qualified
and knowledgeable staff are on hand for one to one conversations. These are people who
unknowingly present their own romantic appeal as 'people of the sea', tanned and fit, able
to identify individual dolphins on sight, and with seemingly bottomless knowledge about
the animals, their habits and personal encounters with them over the years.

In addition, on the Polperro, information is provided about the biology of the dolphins,
they way they communicate as well as likely behaviour people can expect to see from the
animals. As with the operators of the Looking Good, the language of these commentaries
has a conservation and science basis, clearly packaging the ecotour as more than simply
recreation and entertainment. Neither the Polperro nor the Looking Good appeared to
overly romanticise the dolphins, although the animals were sometimes called by name
implying a certain familiarity and even friendship. In some cases, the animals were
humanised by commentators referring to the family structure of the animals and their
protective treatment of offspring.

On visiting other animals during the tour, such as the seals and gannets, additional
environmental education talks are given. These focus on the biology of the animals, their
day to day lives and impact of human activities on them. At the end of the talk, clients who
are to swim with the animals choose a mask and snorkel. On this tour, swimmers are tightly
controlled by the operators. They are not given fins and are told to stay within mermaid

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lines which are dropped from the back of the boat (Figure 7.10). Managers of the Polperro usually limit tourist numbers to about sixteen per trip to ensure that all visitors receive adequate time with the dolphins and to reduce impact on the animals. Usually, there are 8 swimmers in the water at any one time, accompanied by a dive master, and at least one crew on board for observation. The low number of paying tourists and the high staff-client ratio further represents the way in which this Operator sees the dolphins and the importance they place on causing as little disturbance to them as possible. Their concern for the animals would certainly be noticed by clients, perhaps igniting their own thoughts about the special status being given to these animals.

Crew on observation yacht the Looking Good see true ecotourism as belonging to the visual not the visceral in that tourists on this boat are seeking to see the dolphins but not swim with them (Figure 7.11). In this tour, people are first introduced to the crew and researchers, given a brief talk about the schedule for the day as well as safety and etiquette aboard the vessel. The boat then begins its three to three and a half-hour tour of the Bay. The focus of the commentary on this tour is the local environment and concerns for its conservation. At times, the Tour Operator explains the history and ecology of the Bay. Comprehensive historical and biological information is given about the seals at Chinaman's Hat, Bronze Whaler sharks near Mud Island, and South Channel Fort, an area noted for its early defence role in the Bay. As with the Polperro and the Moonraker, the tour also visits Popes Eye Marine Reserve where the Australasian Gannet Rookery provides people with a close view of the migratory birds. At Popes Eye, the only human-made breeding structure for this bird in the world, clients are told the history, behaviour and biology of the birds. The yacht then travels to Nepean Bay along the old Quarantine Station. It is here that dolphins are often sighted on tours. If dolphins are present, visitors are provided with a comprehensive description of the lives of the animals. The content of this description is generally in scientific terms, understandable by the layperson. It includes information about the biology and social lives of the dolphins. As with the seals and birds

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33 The Polperro is licensed to take out twenty-five tourists per trip.
34 During the summer of 1996-97, the Looking Good also provided space for researchers from the Dolphin Research Institute with which the yacht is affiliated.
Figure 7.10: Swimming from the Polperro using Mermaid Lines, Summer 1996-97

(Source: Christina Jarvis, 1997)
Figure 7.11: Sightseeing on the *Looking Good*, Summer 1996-97

(Source: Christina Jarvis, 1997)
mentioned above, the talks emphasise science and conservation\textsuperscript{35} over using the animals as a form of entertainment alone. Fortunate tourists will see the mammals riding on the bow of the yacht and skimming along just below the surface.

A medium available only on the \textit{Looking Good} is a camera mounted on its hull which films the dolphins as they zigzag across the bow. It is a very effective way to show people the underwater behaviour of the animals with a minimum of impact. The camera plays an interesting role in the framing of the dolphins for the tourists. On the screen people may see the underwater behaviour of the dolphins at very close range. Usually, the footage is ‘live’,\textsuperscript{36} adding much excitement to the experience. Here, where staff portray swimming with the dolphins as detrimental, clients can feel an intimacy with the animals without disturbing them. To the tourist, this experience is very real, as opposed to watching a pre-recorded video. That clients view the screen from below the deck perhaps inadvertently adds to the feeling of immersion and closeness with the animals.

The operators of the \textit{Looking Good} also made clear to the tourists their opinion on swimming with the dolphins, openly criticising the swim tour boats in the commentary. Generally, the activity, which they felt was “not ecotourism” was seen to be detrimental to the animals, and considered unnecessary in light of the close proximity to the animals of sightseeing vessels. In reply to one person who asked how swimming might harm the dolphins the commentator replied:

\begin{quote}
Well, they should be allowed to live their lives. What if they are feeding...how would you like someone to fall through the roof of your house in the middle of the family dinner?
\end{quote}

With reference to a recent ABC documentary on wild dolphins, the commentator said on one tour:

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{The Looking Good} regularly takes out groups from Friends of the Zoo and the Double Helix Club. All tour boats in my study take out school and university groups at times, some with more structured educational programs than others.

\textsuperscript{36} Similarly, at the Seal Rocks Sea Life Centre on Phillip Island the main attraction is live footage of seals from an offshore colony. A similar method is used at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.
The more I learn about bottlenose dolphins the less keen I am to put people in the water with them. They can be aggressive and dominant. What if they stop and take notice of us?

Their promotional brochures also proclaim their ethical stand in this area as discussed earlier in the chapter.

Hence, there is a component of the marine animal, and specifically the Victorian dolphin, tour industry which has taken a position at the far end of the spectrum of mediated human-animal interactions. Whereas some, such as Sea World, endorse the keeping of captive dolphins, encouraging people to swim with and pet their animals, others, such as the Polperro and the Moonraker suggest that to immerse ourselves in the dolphins world is far preferable to interacting with them in captivity. Alternatively, people such as the crew of the Looking Good consider that it is enough to simply see the animals from a vessel without intruding into their space entirely. There is an implicit assumption here that the dolphin deserves a level of peace and distance from tourists that is not evident on the other vessels, or indeed within the general philosophy of the aquaria industry.

7.5 Conclusion

Chapter 7 has explained the historical basis for people's current interest in dolphins. Used by environmentalists, New Age proponents and Green product marketing staff alike, the encasement of the dolphin in the public psyche is responsible for selling everything from ocean conservation campaigns to souvenirs and supermarket products. Dolphins are also increasingly valued for the tourism dollars they so readily attract.

Using the example of Wild Dolphin Tours in Port Phillip Bay, the chapter has examined the ways in which dolphins are framed for tourist consumption. This occurs in several ways, but most directly for the tourist through the agendas of private tour companies. The philosophies of these groups towards the dolphins, partially evident in the information present or absent from their tour commentaries and publicity brochures, have been
examined in the chapter. At the same time, the existence and nature of government regulations in Victoria have worked to confirm the dolphin as special. Hence, there are now (much needed) regulations in place to protect the dolphins, while there is not a specific equivalent for the seal, gannet and other marine animal populations in Port Phillip Bay.

The chapter has taken us to the end of the path of producing the marine within the thesis. Unlike the safe, distanced viewing of marine animals at Sea World, or the staged wild of the Penguin Parade spectacle, the dolphins of Port Phillip Bay are experienced as near as possible on their own terms. With the dolphin framed through the ages as a gentle guardian of seagoing humans, current images of the animal play on this mystical and mythical status. To this specialness is now added a conservation ethic consolidated and legitimated by government’s regulatory frameworks. Now the dolphin is primarily sold through a lens of science and conservation to a growing number of tourists who tolerate personal discomfort for the chance to see and be seen by this ancient friend. Approaching the third millennium, the tourist, with more money, time, and education than ever before, is choosing to go to the animal rather than extracting it from its own habitat for more sanitised human viewing.

The nature of the time spent immersed in dolphin habitat from the perspective of the tourist is a little researched area. Hence, Chapter 8 of the thesis offers such an account based on data collected on the Moonraker, the Polperro and the Looking Good in the summer of 1996-97. Illuminating tourists' expectations and level of contentment with the experience, the chapter also reports peoples' impressions of the educational features of the tours.
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