



A baby humpback whale breaches east of Montgomery Reef in the Kimberley before embarking on its first great migration to the Antarctic.



Murdoch University PhD student Alex Brown and team conduct photographic identification of coastal dolphins at Cygnet Bay. Pictures: Simon Allen

# Marine study set to unveil secrets

■ Glenn Cordingley

The first stage of a multimillion-dollar study into the remote Kimberley marine environment has begun with research scientists arriving to begin their five-year mission, which is expected to uncover discoveries of new species.

The Western Australian Marine Science Institution (WAMSI) is conducting the \$30 million Kimberley Marine Research Program — the first of its kind into the iconic but largely unknown regional waters.

The WAMSI research will mean better management within the new State Government initiated marine parks and increase the chances of their success while providing a baseline of information for future coastal or offshore development proposals.

The research program includes studies on whales, dolphins, dugongs, turtles, currents, sea floor communities (including coral), ecosystem processes, reef formation, links between rivers and marine environments, climate changes, human aspirations for Kimberley uses and traditional knowledge. Scientists believe the research

provides an opportunity for “true discovery” because the Kimberley marine environment is one of the last great unstudied wildernesses of the world.

The area covers more than 600,000sqkm with 12m tides, uncharted reefs, strong currents and dangerous animals, making research challenging.

“It’s great to see this major fieldwork stage get under way with researchers heading out into the Buccaneer Archipelago, King Sound, Collier Bay and Camden Sound,” WAMSI chief executive Patrick Seares said.

“It’s been a challenging program to bring together, both because of where it is, and because it really is the first study of this kind and scale in the Kimberley.”

Some of Australia’s best scientists are taking part in the program, which involves more than 120 researchers from nine Western Australian Marine Science Institution (WAMSI) partner organisations, working on 24 integrated projects.

Indigenous ranger groups are participating in the field, and traditional owners’ knowledge of the Kimberley will be added and considered alongside the west-

ern science being developed.

These types of partnerships are widely regarded as important in the development of the jointly managed marine protected areas planned for the Kimberley.

“We’ll see a number of world firsts in species and how ecosystems operate through this work,” Mr Seares said.

“It’s such a fantastic opportunity to deliver a program that will both directly contribute to how the environment is managed, but at the same time allow true discovery of the unknown.

“I believe this will draw the eyes of the world to the Kimberley, and also to the growing expertise of Western Australia in marine science.”

The program was initiated by a \$12 million investment by the State Government through the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy launched by Premier Colin Barnett in 2011 with \$18 million coming from WAMSI partners UWA, AIMS, CSIRO, Curtin, Edith Cowan and Murdoch universities, WA Museum, the Department of Fisheries and the Department of Parks and Wildlife.



The as-yet-unidentified miniature spinner dolphin found off James Price Point and now reported from other parts of the Kimberley coast will be investigated by researchers.



## What's on the horizon

### SAFETY

#### Important – clear trees and vegetation

With cyclone season now upon us, it is extremely important that all trees and bushes are trimmed to a minimum of three metres from powerlines to reduce the risk of power interruptions, fires or other serious accidents. If you haven't already done this, please do so urgently.

It is your responsibility as a resident to hire a licensed contractor to trim trees on private property, even if you are not the homeowner.



### ENERGY EFFICIENCY

#### Air conditioners

With the onset of the wet season, we remind you to ensure your air conditioner is serviced as recommended by the manufacturer, and the fan and reflective surfaces are clean of dust and fluff to keep it working as efficiently as possible. For more energy efficiency tips visit [switchthefuture.com.au](http://switchthefuture.com.au)

#### Win an iPad 2

Kids, Horizon Power is giving you the opportunity to win an iPad 2. There are two iPads to win and to enter, simply visit the new Horizon Discovery Zone website at [hdz.horizonpower.com.au](http://hdz.horizonpower.com.au)

Terms and conditions apply



### PARTNERSHIPS

#### Horizon Power Broome Sports Awards

Nominations are now open for the Horizon Power Broome Sports Awards to be held at the Broome Civic Centre on Friday 22 November. For more information, or to nominate someone, please email [dean.holder@dsr.wa.gov.au](mailto:dean.holder@dsr.wa.gov.au)

### WORKS

#### Upgrades to Broome Senior High School

We recently completed an upgrade at Broome Senior High School to provide electricity to the new buildings at the school on Frederick Street. Additionally, we removed two bays of overhead conductor and a pole near the entry to the busy carpark, improving the aesthetics of the area significantly.

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