

# Going for a ‘Coastal Walkabout’ on Broome’s Coast

Written by Kandy Curran, Tuesday 18 March 2014



The Coastal Walkabout App will help Broome locals to record their sightings of turtles and other marine life on Broome’s coast. *Anne Mueller*

Armed with smartphones the Broome community came out in force to hear the first Science on the Broome Coast talk for 2014. Despite being a Friday night, more than 70 locals surged through Broome Public Library’s doors on March 7, along with a troop of uniformed scouts.

Associate Professor Lars Bejder, head of the Murdoch University Cetacean Unit, explained to the enthused crowd, just how easy it is to use smartphone technology to record sightings of marine wildlife along Broome’s coast.

“If you spot a turtle on the beach or a dolphin in the water, use the app to take a picture or video of it,” Lars says.

“The app will automatically take note of the time and location before uploading the data to a website, where it can be freely accessed by anyone all over the world.”

By downloading the free app on a smartphone locals can easily become part of a growing network of citizen scientists. For people using the app in remote areas, interesting marine life observations can be recorded and then uploaded when back in mobile range.

The inspiration for this innovation was identified when researchers from Murdoch University, Duke University and Marine Ventures Foundation in the USA realised the challenges of data collection in the north-west of Western Australia.

Being a remote area, Broome and the Kimberley are popular locations for researchers investigating marine life in pristine environments, as they are mostly free from the impacts of industrial developments and urbanisation.

“Due to the vastness of the area, and the limited time and availability of researchers, accurate data sets are hard to achieve,” Lars says.

“We realised that there are many other people who use these areas too, so we’re looking to harness this existing ‘people power’ to assist environmental research.”

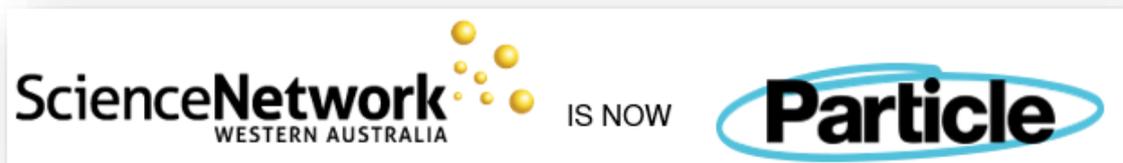
The award winning Roebuck Bay Working Group, has arranged a series of talks this year by leading scientists under the project, Science on the Broome Coast, with funding from Inspiring Australia. The Coastal Walkabout Project was the first talk in the series and aims to encourage community interest in science, as Kandy Curran from Roebuck Bay Working Group explained.

“There is so much to discover and understand about the Kimberley coastline and this is a great opportunity for budding scientists to contribute,” Ms Curran says.

The communities of dolphins that occur in Roebuck Bay and along the Kimberley coastline will be the topic of the next talk on Wednesday, April 9th at 6-7pm at the Broome Public Library.

For more information about the series of science talks go to the Roebuck Bay Working Group website [www.roebuckbay.org.au](http://www.roebuckbay.org.au)

The free Coastal Walkabout app is available at [www.coastalwalkabout.org/wordpress/](http://www.coastalwalkabout.org/wordpress/)



ScienceNetwork WA has closed its doors to make way for Particle, Scitech’s new science news and story source. Check out the latest stories at [particle.scitech.org.au](http://particle.scitech.org.au).