

The Scientists



Jimmy White

What interested you in science as a child?

From a very young age I have been fascinated by the sea and what lives beneath the surface. I pushed my parents' tolerances to the limits with my multiple fish tanks where I housed many wonders of the aquatic realm. It was while I was looking after these animals that I developed a love for marine biology and ecology. When I was 12 I took my first plunge into the underwater world on SCUBA and I was hooked. This fascination followed me through high school and I never had a doubt as to what I wanted to do 'when I grew up'.

What did you study at university?

I studied Marine Biology at James Cook University in Townsville. I focused my studies on fisheries management and coral reef ecology. However it was as a volunteer that I learnt what marine biology is all about. Volunteering allowed me to participate in a diverse range of fields, not only did this increase my level of experience but also provided valuable information for future directions of interest and career possibilities. I involved myself with research looking at coral reef health, shark biology and movement, jellyfish distribution, nautilus population dynamics and the affect of tourism on the minke whale population in the Great Barrier Reef.

What is your current research/career?

Currently I am completing my honours year at the University of Tasmania and in association with the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI). My project is the first application of a newly developed method for determining the age of octopus with planktonic young in a wild population. This method was developed at Tasmanian Aquaculture Fisheries Institute. I am looking closely at the Maroi Octopus, which is a economically valuable species targeted by both recreational and commercial fishermen in Tasmanian waters. This species is also significant as a consequence of its interaction with the states lucrative rock lobster fishery. Age information allows population structure of the octopus community to be investigated as well as enabling exploration of other important biological characteristics such as how fast they grow and how old they are when they reach maturity.

At present there is little management for fishing Octopus in Tasmanian waters, it is my hope that this project will provide valuable information, to advance our understanding of this ecologically important and economically significant species. Quantifying these characteristics will aid in the development of efficient management strategies, allowing for the long term sustainable harvest of this species.

What are your future aspirations?

Ever since I was young I have been awed by sharks, with their effortless movement and awesome presence. Now I want to get to know them better, as top predators these species are the first to suffer when things change in the environment. A greater understanding of these species can greatly assist our efforts to better comprehend the changes currently taking place in the worlds marine ecosystems.

What do you love about science?

The challenge, the best motivation is being told that something can not be done. Science is about challenging yourself to investigate the world around us. It can open up doors to possibilities that were deemed unachievable and yield results that are unimaginable. The things that are out there yet to be discovered and the challenge to discover them is what I love about science.