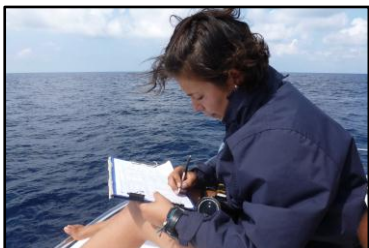




# national science week 2015

## Elena Fontanesi

**Marine Biologist, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies**



The ocean and all its creatures have intrigued me since I was a child. I loved spending my summer days swimming around in the Mediterranean sea and discovering colourful fish, octopuses, sea stars and algae. Friends and family remember me saying 'I want to become a marine biologist!' when I was in primary school.

I've always been fascinated by dolphins and whales, and you can't imagine how excited I was when I first saw a pod of common bottlenose dolphins swimming so free in the sea. For all these reasons I became a scuba diver and started a science degree in Italy after high school. As final project for my Bachelor of Science degree I studied the distribution of different species of dolphins and whales in the surroundings of a submarine canyon, and saw amazing creatures like fin and sperm whales, striped dolphins, sea turtles and sharks. Every new sighting was such a joy!

Then, I started Masters in Marine Biology and decided to spend one year in Tasmania to study at the well-known Institute for Marine and Antarctic Science, where I had the opportunity to be inspired by lots of fellow students and great Professors. I am collaborating to a project on dwarf minke whales, trying to understand their migratory routes around Tasmania using satellite transmitters attached to the animals. These beautiful whales aggregate every year in the Great Barrier Reef during Winter to breed and calve and



then migrate to the cold Sub-Antarctic waters before Summer where they find their favourite food: krill and small fish. Before this study started, it wasn't sure where the whales moved and spent time when not in the Great Barrier Reef, so it's really exciting trying to answer some of these questions. Hopefully, I'll go to Lizard Island in July 2015 to attach satellite devices to some dwarf minke whales' dorsal fins ... and come back with interesting photos and experiences to share!

I love doing marine science because it involves spending time in the ocean and getting close to lots of amazing creatures! Moreover, I hope what I am doing will help protecting this so important and threatened environment.

**For more information:** [www.imas.utas.edu.au](http://www.imas.utas.edu.au)