

About us

DR PETER GILL

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and

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Research summary: Pete's main research interest since 1998 is the ecology of Endangered blue whales (*Balaenoptera musculus*) in the Bonney Upwelling and surrounding waters of south-east Australia. Since 2000 his research partner has been Margie Morrice. His Ph.D. (*Ecological linkages within the Bonney Upwelling blue whale feeding area*), awarded through Deakin University in 2004, focused on the dynamic linkages between weather, oceanography, prey and blue whales in this region, using aerial and boat surveys, satellite remote sensing and deployed oceanographic instruments to demonstrate that these waters are an important seasonal feeding aggregation area for blue whales. This work has progressed into description and modelling of blue whale feeding habitat in this region. Through collaboration with the Australian Antarctic Division and the Centre for Whale Research (W.A.), Pete has also studied movements of blue whales by satellite tagging, with the dual aims of discovering patterns of movement in the summer feeding area, and where the whales migrate to during the winter breeding season. This innovative program has had its share of technical difficulties, and so far the whales' winter migration patterns remain elusive. With colleagues from Cascadia Research (USA), Margie and Pete have studied fine-scale foraging behaviour of blue whales using suction-cup-attached dive loggers. They are also involved in a project aimed at unraveling the population genetics of Southern Hemisphere blue whales with Macquarie and Flinders Universities, and in ongoing photo-identification (photo-ID) of individual whales. Photo-ID enables us to understand important aspects of whales' lives including movements between areas (we exchange our images with those of other researchers elsewhere), patterns of residency (how long whales remain in feeding areas, and whether they return over multiple seasons), associations between individual whales, and the health condition of the whales. Pete and Margie have also become increasingly involved in assessing the impacts of offshore seismic surveys on blue and other whales.

Research interests: Blue whale ecology and migration; upwelling dynamics and climate change; blue whale habitat modelling; interactions between cetaceans and offshore industrial activities.

Biography: After an earlier working life in the Australian bush, Pete Gill became involved in whale research and deepwater sailing in 1983. For many years he assisted Dr Bill Dawbin, the 'grandfather' of humpback whale research, before branching out into his own studies of humpback migration, using small sailing vessels in the Coral Sea, around New Caledonia, and off the coast of Tasmania during the 1990s. During 1990-91 he worked as Marine Mammal Researcher for Greenpeace Australia, while continuing humpback whale research. During the early-to-mid-1990s Pete also worked in a Sydney University

research program on southern right whales at the Head of Bight (South Australia) and in Western Australia. During 1989 he skippered the 20m schooner *A.V. Thistlethwayte* in the Oceanic Research Foundation's In the Wake of Flinders circumnavigation of Australia. For many years he worked as a home handyman and part-time writer and photographer to support his research and expedition activities.

He has visited Antarctica 13 times: on private sailing expeditions including *Riquita's* voyage to the Ross Sea in 1986, the Mount Minto Bicentennial Expedition in 1988, and the *Iniquity* whale survey in 1993; on whale surveys aboard the Australian government icebreaker *Aurora Australis*; and as a lecturer, boat driver and guide on Antarctic tourist expeditions with Aurora Expeditions, to the Ross Sea and East Antarctica.

Pete started the Blue Whale Study in 1998, and was joined by Margie in 2000. He lives in the bush near Portland, Victoria with his wife Susie, close to the Bonney Upwelling and the blue whales.

In 2005 he sailed to the Solomon Islands in an unsuccessful attempt to locate blue whale winter breeding grounds, and is currently planning future expeditions to locate other blue whale aggregation areas. With Margie he consults on blue whales to State and Commonwealth Governments, and to offshore industry which operates in the whale feeding area.

He is the author of Reader's Digest Explores Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises (with Linda Gibson), the Nature Company Guide to Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises (with Mark Carwardine, Erich Hoyt and Ewan Fordyce), Whale Watching in Australian and New Zealand Waters (with Cecilia Burke) and many scientific papers, book chapters and magazine articles. His photographs have appeared in many books, and he has lectured on whales, whaling and Antarctica.

Publications:

Refereed scientific papers, reports and letters

Baudinette R.V. and P. Gill. 1985. The energetics of "flying" and "paddling" in water: locomotion in penguins and ducks. *Journal of Comparative Physiology B* 155: 373-80.

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Corkeron P.J., S.R. Burnell, P.C. Gill and M.M. Bryden. 1995. Telemetry of southern right whales, *Eubalaena australis*, off southern Australia. Report to BHP Petroleum, March 1995. Department of Veterinary Anatomy, University of Sydney.

Gill P.C. and C.L.K. Burton. 1995. Photographic resight of a humpback whale between Western Australia and Antarctic Area IV. *Marine Mammal Science* 11(1): 96-100.

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Garrigue, C., P. Forestell, J. Greaves, P. Gill, P. Naessig, N.M. Patenaude, and C.S. Baker, C.S. 2000. Migratory movements of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) between New Caledonia, East Australia and New Zealand. *Journal of Cetacean Research and Management* 2(2):111-115.

Gill, P.C. 2000. A blue whale feeding ground off southern Australia: preliminary findings. Paper SC/52/OS 9 submitted to the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission, Adelaide, June 2000 (unpublished).

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Gill, P.C. and M.G. Morrice. 2003. The amazing feeding habits of blue whales. *Coastline*, the Coast Action/Coastcare Newsletter, VIC 28: 3.

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Morrice, M.G., P.C. Gill, J. Hughes and A.H. Levings. 2004. Summary of aerial surveys conducted for the Santos Ltd EPP32 seismic survey, 2-13 December 2003. Report # WEG-SO 02/2004, Whale Ecology Group-Southern Ocean, Deakin University.

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Branch, T.A., D.M. Palacios, K.M. Stafford, C. Allison, J.L. Bannister, C.L.K. Burton, P.C. Gill, K.C.S. Jenner, M.-N.M. Jenner, T. Miyashita, M.G. Morrice, V.J. Sturrock, R.C. Anderson, A.N. Baker, P.B. Best, P. Borsa, S. Childerhouse, K.P. Findlay, A.D. Ilangakoon, M. Joergensen, B. Kahn, B. Maughan, Y.A. Mikhalev, Oman Whale and Dolphin Research Group, D. Thiele, D. Tormosov, K. van Waerebeek and R. M. Warneke. 2006. Past and present distribution of blue whales in the Southern Hemisphere and northern Indian Ocean. Paper SC/58/SH16 presented to the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (unpublished).

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Levings, A.H. and P.C. Gill. In press. Water temperature and its effect on the life history and ecology of the southern Australian giant crab *Pseudocarcinus gigas*. In Proceedings of Conference on the effects of climate change on cool water crabs, Anchorage Alaska, March 2009.

Gill, P.C., M.G. Morrice, B. Page, R. Pirzl, M. Coyne and A.H. Levings. In preparation. Habitat use by feeding blue whales in a regional upwelling system off south-east Australia, 2002-07 (provisional title).

Gill, P.C., M.G. Morrice, and B. Page. In preparation. Seasonal variability in blue whale relative abundance and upwelling intensity in a regional upwelling system off south-east Australia, 2002-07 (provisional title).

Other publications

Bramich, D. and P. Gill. 1995. *Antarctic Whales and Dolphins*. Australia Post Philatelic Section: Melbourne.

Carwardine, M., E. Hoyt, E. Fordyce, and P. Gill. 1998. *Nature Company Guide to Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises*. Readers Digest, Sydney.

Gill, P. 1987. Antarctica - an inspiring ice continent. *Cruising Helmsman*, May 1987.

Gill, P. 1987. Riquita's Antarctic Cruise. *Australian Geographic*, 6: 23-25.

Gill, P. 1989. Natural Science. Appendix to *The Loneliest Mountain*, by L. Hall and J. Chester. Simon and Schuster: Sydney.

Gill, P. 1990. Voyage to Mount Minto. *Offshore*, August/September 1990.

Gill, P. 1990. Strangling the seas: high seas driftnets. *Australian Wellbeing* No. 41.

Gill, P. 1990. In search of seals. *Cruising Helmsman*, August 1990.

Gill, P. 1991. Why cetaceans shouldn't like humans. *Dolphin and Whale Journal* 2: 14-16.

Gill, P. 1991. Background notes on the southern right whale, *Eubalaena australis*, and the possible effects of offshore oil exploration and development in right whale calving grounds off southern Australia. Ocean Ecology Campaign Background Paper, Greenpeace Australia.

Gill, P. 1993. Japanese Antarctic whaling. In *Asia in Antarctica*, ed. R. Herr. Proceedings of the "Asia in Antarctica" Conference, Hobart 1991. University of Tasmania: Hobart.

Gill, P. 1994. In search of the last whales. *Australian Geographic* 35: 19-20.

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Gill, P. 1997. Unlucky strikes? Collisions with whales. *Cruising Helmsman*, February 1997.

Gill, P. and L. Gibson. 1997. *Readers Digest Explores Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises*. Reader's Digest Books, New York and Montreal.

Gill, P. and C. Burke. 1999. *Whale watching in Australian and New Zealand Waters*. New Holland and Australian Geographic, Sydney.

Gill, P. 2000. *The Little Guide to Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises* [consultant editor]. Fog City Press, San Francisco.

Gill, P. and C. Burke. 2004. *Whale watching in Australian and New Zealand Waters*. New Holland, Sydney (new edition).

Gill, P.C. 2008. Sei whales. Pp 796-797 in *Mammals of Australia*, eds. S. Van Dyke and R. Strahan. New Holland Press, Sydney.

Gill, P.C. and M.G. Morrice. 2008. Blue whales. Pp 799-801 in *Mammals of Australia*, eds. S. Van Dyke and R. Strahan. New Holland Press, Sydney.

M.G. Morrice and P.C. Gill. 2008. Killer whales. Pp 860-861 in *Mammals of Australia*, eds. S. Van Dyke and R. Strahan. New Holland Press, Sydney.

Gill, P.C. In press. The fin whale. In *Threatened species of Queensland*.

Conference and workshop presentations

September 1990, Humpback Whale Conference, Queensland Museum: 'A humpback whale survey along the coast of Western Australia: comparison of visual and acoustic methods.'

July 1997, New Zealand Marine Sciences Society conference, Auckland, New Zealand: "A program of cetacean research in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary".

September 2000, Humpback Whale Conference, Queensland Museum (with Paul Hodda): "Observations of humpback whale behaviour in Antarctic waters".

November 2000, Bass Strait Forum, Launceston, Tasmania: "Blue whales in western Bass Strait".

May 2001, Southern Hemisphere Marine Mammal Conference, Phillip Island, Victoria: "Ecology of blue whales in the Bonney upwelling region of southeast Australia".

November 2001, Biennial Marine Mammal Conference, Society for Marine Mammalogy, Vancouver, Canada. (Abstract presented but unable to attend the conference): "A blue whale feeding ground in a coastal upwelling off southern Australia".

June 2002. Workshop presentation, Conservation Assessment of the Bonney Upwelling, Melbourne.

July 2002, Australian Mammal Society Annual Conference, Warrnambool, Victoria: "Blue whales in the Bonney Coast upwelling".

May. 2003. Conway, C., L. Lyons, R. Sears, J., P. Gill, and B. Population structure of the blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) based on nuclear genetic variation. Poster presentation for 15th Biennial Marine Mammal Conference, Greensboro North Carolina, December 2003.

April 2004. APPEA conference, Canberra: “The distribution and behaviour of cetaceans during petroleum exploration: a recent case study on the Southern Margins” (with John Hughes, Santos Ltd).

May 2004. Cetacean Research Partnerships Workshop, Ballina NSW: “Blue whales in the Bonney Upwelling” (with M.G. Morrice).

May 2004. Cetacean Research Partnerships Workshop, Ballina NSW: “The distribution and behaviour of cetaceans during petroleum exploration: a recent case study on the Southern Margins” (with John Hughes).

July 2004. Seminar for review of guidelines for conduct of seismic surveys in relation to large cetaceans, Melbourne: “The distribution and behaviour of cetaceans during petroleum exploration: a recent case study on the Southern Margins” (with J. Hughes, M.G. Morrice).

September 2004. Fisheries Ecosystem Symposium, Australian Society for Fish Biology conference, Adelaide, South Australia: “Blue whales in the Bonney Upwelling and adjacent waters”.

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Möller, L.M., Attard, C., Jenner, C., Gill, P., Kanda, N., Jenner, M., Morrice, M., Bannister, J., LeDuc, R., Beheregaray, L.B. 2007. Population genetic structure of two Australian blue whale feeding aggregations. Blue Whale Workshop, 17th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals, Cape Town, South Africa, November 2007.

Morrice, M, Calambokidis, J., Gill, P., Schorr, G. and Jarman, S. 2007. Blue whale foraging strategies: responses to a dynamic prey field in southern Australia. AMSA 45th Annual Conference, Melbourne, July 2007.

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Gill, P.C. and M.G. Morrice. 2009. Blue whales in the Bonney Upwelling and adjacent waters. Seismic and whales workshop, hosted by Department of Environment, Water, heritage & the Arts, Fremantle, April 2009.

Gill, P.C., M.G. Morrice, B. Page, R. Pirzl, M.Coyne and A.H. Levings. 2009. Blue whale seasonal distribution and habitat, Bonney Upwelling & adjacent waters. Australian Marine Sciences Association annual conference, Adelaide, July 2009.