Lines in the Sand:
An Anthropological Discourse
on Wildlife Tourism

By

Georgette Leah Burns

BSc(Hons), MSc, UWA

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Division of Social Sciences

Murdoch University

May 2008
A b s t r a c t

The management of wildlife tourism has been dominated by ideologies informed by western colonialism and its values of nature. These ideologies, made transparent through communicative and interpretative discourses, influence the way management policies and practices are devised and enacted. The inherent scientific and utilitarian views are supported by a doctrine of separation. This is apparent in the dualism posed, and enacted, between nature and culture that sees humans as being the sole carriers of culture that separates them from the uncultured and uncivilised world of nature into which all other animals, and certainly untamed wildlife, belong. It justifies the use of non-humans for human purposes and continues to allow us to treat non-human animals and other forms of nature in often abominable ways.

This thesis investigates two situations in which wildlife tourism occurs in Australia. Fraser Island and Penguin Island are two wildlife tourism destinations on opposite sides of the continent with very different wildlife but some very similar issues. From these two contexts data was collected through interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and from literary and documentary sources. Understanding the empirical data collected from these case studies is facilitated through a social constructionist view of discourse analysis that allows an unpacking of the messages and a stance from which to challenge the dominant ideologies that frame management and interaction.
In the thesis I demonstrate that anthropology, in its incarnation as environmental anthropology and as a team player in a necessarily interdisciplinary approach to understanding and resolving environmental issues, has much to offer. This engagement has the potential to enhance not only the sustainable future of nature-based activities like wildlife tourism but also the relevance of anthropology in the postcolonial contemporary world.

The need for a holistic framework encompassing all the stakeholders in any wildlife tourism venture is proposed. This approach to wildlife tourism is best serviced by examining perspectives, values and concerns of all members of the wildlife tourism community at any given destination. It is only through this type of holistic and situated focus that we can hope to effectively understand, and then manage, in the best interests of all parties.

More specifically, and finally, I argue for a rethinking of the way wildlife tourism interactions are managed in some settings. The ideology of separation, enacted both conceptually and physically to create maintain boundaries, is demonstrated through the two case studies and the ways in which interactions between humans and wildlife are currently managed. An alternative is posed, that by reconstructing management in settings where wildlife tourists may be more accepting of their own responsibility towards nature, a model can be developed that allows people and wildlife to co-exist without ‘killing’ the natural instincts of either.
Statement of Originality

This thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma at any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where reference is made in the thesis itself.

Georgette Leah Burns

26 May 2008
The following seven publications have arisen directly from the research undertaken during my candidature for this degree. Modified versions of these are used, and acknowledged, throughout the thesis.


I have called the final section of this thesis ‘concluding the journey’ but of course there is much to the journey that is not told throughout its pages. It has taken me on a journey that has spanned many years and many life changes. Being a student has been one role amongst many of mother, wife, daughter, sister (and other familial roles), as well as lecturer, colleague, friend (and other social roles). Because of this length, and breadth, the path travelled has touched the lives of many others whom I want to thank for their help, patience and sharing of knowledge.

My supervisors, Jim Macbeth and Susan Moore, have always unwaveringly believed in my abilities, despite my own periods of doubt, and offered support and guidance in ways beyond the academic (including the excellent beers at Little Creatures). I tell my own students how important it is to have great supervisors, and was fortunate to find such talented people for myself. As a part-time, external (and spatially distant) student I’m sure I offered additional challenges, and greatly appreciate the flexibility extended to meet at airports, homes, and outside normal work hours. My deepest thanks to you both.

At each field site I have interacted with many people, and some wildlife. It never ceases to amaze me how willing people are to talk, often to a complete stranger, about things that matter to them. I am grateful to the many on Fraser Island, Penguin Island, and beyond, who opened their doors (be they houses, tents, resort rooms, offices or buses) to me and let me briefly into their lives to share a cuppa and a biscuit and do what anthropologists do best – be nosey.
The research would not have been possible without permission from those who oversee the sites at which I worked, and the Universities at which I am based. Consequently, I wish to thank the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in Queensland and the Department of Conservation and Environment in Western Australia, as well as staff at the Kingfisher Bay Resort and Village on Fraser Island and the Mersey Point Kiosk in Safety Bay. All generously supported the research, providing permits, tickets, accommodation and many hours of their time; and I have enjoyed working with you all. Financial and technical support was also provided by Murdoch and Griffith Universities. In particular, thanks to Aubs for the great maps, Terry for the long chats, and the two Cols for the willingness to share your immense knowledge of the island you love so well.

I also want to thank all my students, undergrads and postgrads, and fellow colleagues for the inspiration they provided along the way. In particular, to Peter and Karen for sharing some of the joys of fieldwork, and publishing, with me.

Finally, and most importantly, I owe enormous gratitude to all my family who have watched, supported and assisted me on this journey. Mollie, our Awesome Nanny, your patience and laughter kept us all sane. Ian, Oscar and Taran thank you for loving and believing in me, and reminding me to focus on the important things in life. I promise I will now take time to cook more meals and kick more footballs.

It has been an immensely enjoyable journey, and I am extremely fortunate to have shared it with such wonderful people. Thank you all.
# Table of Contents

Abstract................................................................................................................................................i
Statement of Originality .......................................................................................................................... iii
Publications Arising from this Thesis...................................................................................................... v
Acknowledgements................................................................................................................................. vii
Table of Contents......................................................................................................................................... ix
List of Figures, Maps and Tables................................................................................................................... xv

*Section One: Setting the Scene*.............................................................................................................. 1

**Chapter One: Introduction**

1.0 Introduction........................................................................................................................................ 3
1.1 Background to the Problem and Definitions of Key Terms................................................................. 5
1.2 Aims of this Thesis............................................................................................................................... 12
1.3 Significance and Outcomes of the Research......................................................................................... 13
1.4 Thesis Structure.................................................................................................................................... 15
  1.4.1 Section One................................................................................................................................. 16
  1.4.2 Section Two............................................................................................................................... 17
  1.4.3 Section Three............................................................................................................................. 18
  1.4.4 Section Four............................................................................................................................. 21

**Chapter Two: Australian Wildlife Tourism Case Studies**

2.0 A Tale of Two Islands........................................................................................................................... 23
2.1 Fraser Island......................................................................................................................................... 25
  2.1.1 Location of Fraser Island........................................................................................................ 25
  2.1.2 Fraser Island Wildlife: Dingoes............................................................................................. 25
  2.1.3 Fraser Island’s Wildlife Tourism Community......................................................................... 30
    2.1.3.1 Fraser Island managers.................................................................................................... 31
    2.1.3.2 Tourists and other Fraser Island stakeholders................................................................. 32
2.2 Penguin Island..................................................................................................................................... 34
  2.2.1 Location of Penguin Island....................................................................................................... 34
  2.2.2 Penguin Island Wildlife: Penguins.......................................................................................... 35
4.4 Wildlife Tourism and Wildlife Tourists ................................................. 94
4.5 An Anthropology of the Environment .................................................... 97
  4.5.1 Engaging Anthropology and Environmental Science .................... 107
4.6 Anthropology and Animals ................................................................. 115
  4.6.1 Anthropology and Wildlife (Tourism) ........................................... 119
4.7 Conclusion ......................................................................................... 121

**Chapter Five: The Wildlife Tourism Community**

5.0 Introduction ......................................................................................... 129
5.1 ‘Community’ – What does it mean? ..................................................... 130
  5.1.1 Anthropology and Community ..................................................... 138
5.2 Wildlife Tourism’s Community ........................................................... 141
5.3 The Host Community in Wildlife Tourism .......................................... 143
5.4 The Relationship between Community and Sustainability ............... 151
  5.4.1 People and Penguins on Phillip Island ......................................... 153
5.5 Community Perceptions of Wildlife Tourism: attitudes and values ...... 154
5.6 Community Engagement with Wildlife Tourism ............................... 163
  5.6.1 From Involvement to Participation and Collaboration ................. 163
  5.6.2 Barriers to Effective Engagement of the Wildlife Tourism Community
  .................................................................................................................. 168
  5.6.3 Potential Benefits ........................................................................... 172
  5.6.4 Problems that may arise ............................................................... 176
5.7 The Way Forward for the Wildlife Tourism Community ..................... 182
5.8 Conclusions ......................................................................................... 188

**Chapter Six: Nature and Culture: Wildlife and People**

6.0 Introduction ......................................................................................... 191
6.1 Wildlife Tourism and Conservation ....................................................... 192
6.2 The Legacy of Eurocentric Colonialism for Conservation and Wildlife Tourism Management ................................................................. 197
6.3 Constructing the Separation of People and Wildlife ............................ 203
  6.3.1 Anthropomorphism ...................................................................... 207
6.4 Conclusion ......................................................................................... 210
Section Three: Considering Case Studies and Analysing Data

Chapter Seven: Managing Dingoes and People at the Interface of Wildlife Tourism on Fraser Island

7.0 Introduction ................................................................. 215
7.1 The Fraser Island Dingo as Tourist Attraction ............... 216
7.2 History of Human-Dingo Interactions on Fraser Island .... 218
7.3 Conflict over Human-Dingo Interactions ..................... 220
7.4 Dingo Management ...................................................... 221
   7.4.1 The Immediate Cull .............................................. 224
   7.4.2 Fencing ............................................................... 226
   7.4.3 Hazing ............................................................... 228
7.5 Human Management ................................................... 228
   7.5.1 Who is the Problem? ............................................ 229
   7.5.2 Stakeholder Conflict ............................................ 232
   7.5.3 Limiting Visitor Numbers .................................... 236
   7.5.4 Education ......................................................... 237
   7.5.5 Fear ................................................................. 238
   7.5.6 Fines and Fees ................................................... 239
   7.5.7 Co-existence ...................................................... 241
7.6 Conclusion ................................................................. 242

Chapter Eight: Deconstructing Dingo Management on Fraser Island

8.0 Introduction ................................................................. 245
8.1 Assumptions Underpinning the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (FIDMS) ..................................................... 247
   8.1.1 Natural Places and Cultural Spaces ....................... 248
   8.1.2 Unnaturally Aggressive or Aggressive Naturally? .... 249
   8.1.3 Who Should Fear Whom? .................................... 250
8.2 Management Strategies ................................................ 251
8.3 Implications ............................................................... 256
   8.3.1 Recognising and Acknowledging Constructions .......... 256
   8.3.2 Making Management Consistent with Constructions ... 258
8.3.3 Challenging Constructions ................................................................. 261
8.4 Conclusion ................................................................................................. 264

Chapter Nine: Managing Wildlife Tourism issues on Fraser Island and Penguin Island

9.0 Introduction ................................................................................................. 267
9.1 The Case Studies .......................................................................................... 268
9.2 Valuing Wildlife ........................................................................................... 269
9.3 Human-Wildlife Interactions ....................................................................... 270
  9.3.1 Fraser Island .......................................................................................... 271
  9.3.2 Penguin Island ....................................................................................... 272
9.4 Management Issues: Changing perceptions and management adjustments .... 274
  9.4.1 Fraser Island .......................................................................................... 274
  9.4.2 Penguin Island ....................................................................................... 278
9.5 Comparing the Two Case Study Areas ......................................................... 282
9.6 Conclusion .................................................................................................... 285

Chapter Ten: From Separation to Coexistence

10.0 Introduction ................................................................................................. 289
10.1 Boundaries and their Maintenance ............................................................ 290
10.2 The Role of Anthropomorphism ................................................................. 293
10.3 Reconstructing People and Wildlife: Reconstructing Management ......... 298
10.4 Conclusion .................................................................................................... 308

Section Four: Concluding the Journey ............................................................ 313

Chapter Eleven: Conclusion

11.0 Introduction ................................................................................................. 315
11.1 Environmental Anthropology and Tourism .............................................. 316
11.2 Wildlife Tourism’s Community ................................................................. 319
11.3 Social Construction of Wildlife Tourism .................................................. 321
11.4 Coexistence of People and Wildlife in Wildlife Tourism Settings .......... 323
11.5 Recommendations and Future Research ................................................... 327
11.5 Conclusion .................................................................................................... 333
Appendices
Appendix One: Tourist numbers on Fraser Island .................................................. 403
Appendix Two: Tourist numbers on Penguin Island .............................................. 405
Appendix Three: Wild dogs of Fraser Island ......................................................... 407
List of Figures, Maps and Tables

Chapter Two
Figure 2.1: The Relationship Between Wildlife, People and Management in Wildlife Tourism Settings................................................................. 24
Map 2.1: Location of Fraser Island in the Great Sandy National Park, Queensland................................................................................................. 26
Figure 2.2: A Dingo, *Canus lupus dingo*, on Fraser Island (photographer: G. L. Burns).............................................................................................. 29
Figure 2.3: A Schematic Representation of the Numerous Stakeholder Groups that Comprise the Wildlife Tourism Community for Dingoes on Fraser Island........ 31
Map 2.2: Location of Penguin Island in the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park, Western Australia......................................................................................... 35
Figure 2.4: A Little Penguin, *Eudyptula minor*, on Penguin Island (photographer: G. L. Burns)......................................................................................... 36
Figure 2.5: A Schematic Representation of the Various Stakeholder Groups that Comprise the Wildlife Tourism Community for Penguins on Penguin Island..... 38

Chapter Three
Figure 3.1: Making Contact with Participants Through Snowball Sampling...... 53

Chapter Four
Figure 4.1: An Avoidance Relationship............................................................... 78
Figure 4.2: Tourism as a System........................................................................... 83
Figure 4.3: The Relationship Between Nature-Based Tourism, Ecotourism and Wildlife Tourism............................................................................... 95
Figure 4.4: The Relationship Between Tourism Forms When Wildlife Tourism is Based In, Rather Than On, Nature......................................................... 96
Figure 4.5: The Five Subfields of Anthropology Including Environmental Anthropology as a Part of Applied Anthropology........................................... 102
Figure 4.6: Environmental Anthropology as a Subset of Applied Anthropology in the Four Traditional Subfields of Anthropology.............................................................. 102

Figure 4.7: Environmental Anthropology at the Interface of Anthropology and Environmental Science................................................................. 111

Figure 4.8: Why Anthropologists Should Study Tourism........................................ 123

Chapter Eight

Table 8.1: The Seven Strategies Within the Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy (EPA 2001b:7-14)................................................................. 251

Chapter Nine

Figure 9.1: A Dingo and Picnickers on a Fraser Island Beach (photographer: Karen Hytten)..................................................................................... 275

Figure 9.2: A Dingo Image on the Side of a Tour Bus (photographer: G. L. Burns).............................................................................................................. 277

Figure 9.3: The Penguin Island Discovery Centre (photographer: G. L. Burns). 280

Chapter Ten

Figure 10.1: The Cycle of Discourse.................................................................................................. 294

Figure 10.2: Human Versus Non-Human Spaces.......................................................... 299