
Emeritus Professor Helene Marsh



Emeritus Professor of Environmental Science

James Cook University

Emeritus Professor Helene Marsh is the world's premier authority on the ecology and conservation biology of dugongs. She is the most cited researcher in the world on dugong ecology and is internationally recognised for her extensive research on their life history, reproductive ecology, population dynamics, diet, distribution, abundance and movements. Marsh received her PhD from James Cook University and is currently Emeritus Professor of Environmental Science at James Cook University. Marsh pioneered novel aerial survey methods to study the distribution and abundance of dugongs at spatial scales of tens of thousands of square kilometres across northern Australia and established that dugongs are the most abundant marine mammal in the coastal waters of northern Australia. She applied histological techniques adapted from human studies to the study of the ovaries of stranded whales. The result is important because it provided a novel test of life history theory and of the evolution of social behaviour and senescence. Her research has informed major changes to dugong management and protection by both the Commonwealth and Queensland government. Marsh makes major contributions to research training at international, national and local levels and has an outstanding record of mentoring early career researchers, especially as a role model for early career women. Marsh has made an enormous contribution to the science, ecology and conservation of Australian marine mammals and megafauna over the last 40 years. Her drive and dedication to informing conservation with science and applying novel approaches and solutions to her research make her a deserving recipient of the AMSA 2019 Jubilee Award.