

Seahorses Down Under

Seahorse tagging is among the most recent examples of the versatility of our Visible Implant Elastomer (VIE). In 1996, the year *Project Seahorse* was founded, little was known about seahorses. Since then, *Project Seahorse* researchers around the world, like Dr. Keith Martin-Smith, based at the University of Tasmania, have studied these fascinating creatures to learn about their habits and how they are affected by exploitation. Seahorses were first tagged with “necklaces”, but the effects of these tags were unknown, and they had to be readjusted as the animals grew.

Dr. Martin-Smith turned to VIE tags for mark-resighting experiments to evaluate the population

structure and movements of seahorses in the wild (Woods and Martin-Smith, 2004). Seahorses can be tagged underwater, and by using combinations of tag colors and locations, Dr. Martin-Smith and his team can track hundreds of individuals. His research has shown the importance of artificial structures, such as shark netting, for seahorse habitat in Sydney Harbour. In Tasmania, adult big-bellied seahorses have been resighted more than 2.5 km from their tagging locations suggesting this species is far more mobile than previously thought. *Project Seahorse* uses research such as this to provide science-based solutions for marine conservation (www.projectseahorse.org).

Woods, C.M.C. and Martin-Smith, K.M. 2004. Visible implant fluorescent elastomer tagging of the big-bellied seahorse, *Hippocampus abdominalis*. *Fisheries Research* 66: 363-371.



Left: A seahorse tagged with Visible Implant Elastomer. **Right:** Dr. Martin-Smith surveys artificial structures for seahorses. Photos courtesy of J. Clark-Jones, *Project Seahorse*

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