

Case Study - Gippsland High Country Tours

GIPPSLAND HIGH COUNTRY TOURS

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Advanced Ecotourism certified since 1997, Gippsland High Country Tours (GHCT) is an ecology based tour operator that offers a range of ecotours and walks featuring a high level of environmental interpretation. The company has been operating since 1987, but since 1991 has been focusing on showing participants the unique and varied environments of East Gippsland as well as giving an insight into the ecology of these environments in hope of fostering an understanding and appreciation of nature.



ROLE OF CERTIFICATION

We believe that one of the important components of ecotourism is that the tourism operation should have tangible benefits to the natural environment it visits and should be committed to providing such benefits through ecological research.

GHCT was in its infancy having only been established in 1991 and we had a desire to offer more than just a regular tour. Reading about the certification program and “ecotourism” was just what we had envisaged doing - it gave us the confidence to alter our focus and develop our products into true ecotourism products. We were very proud to be amongst the first batch of 13 tour operators in Australia to receive Ecotourism Accreditation in April 1997 under the NEAP program.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

The development of specific wildlife research projects in conjunction with various ecotours commenced in 1995 and have developed through a number of research projects like ongoing surveys and threatened species studies and monitoring.

Under the supervision of qualified staff members, visitors have participated in surveys, assisting with setting, checking and collecting traps, and data recording on captured wildlife and habitat description.

GHCT believes participation is a valuable educational tool, by providing a hands on insight into the work involved in monitoring threatened species, the significance of habitat values and ecology. It also provides an introduction to lower profile wildlife species such as rodents while dispelling myths about little known species such as micro bats.

Projects are developed in consultation with Parks Victoria, DSE Flora and Fauna, wildlife consultants and other relevant wildlife experts, and respond to the need to fill gaps in Wildlife Atlas records or the need for specific threatened species monitoring. The ongoing nature of the survey activities has also yielded valuable wildlife population information and monitoring in the years following major fire events. One of the surveys we conducted in 2006 led to the rediscovery of the Smoky Mouse in the Alpine National Park.

Our Forlorn Hope project in the Alpine National Park was aimed at increasing wildlife records and was a real success: there were only 5 wildlife species listed on the Atlas of Victorian Wildlife for an area of 88sq km and this has now increased to 97 species. In addition, valuable species ecology and monitoring data has been collected on three threatened species: Alpine Water Skink, Alpine Spiny Crayfish and Broad-toothed Rat.

Get in touch with us

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