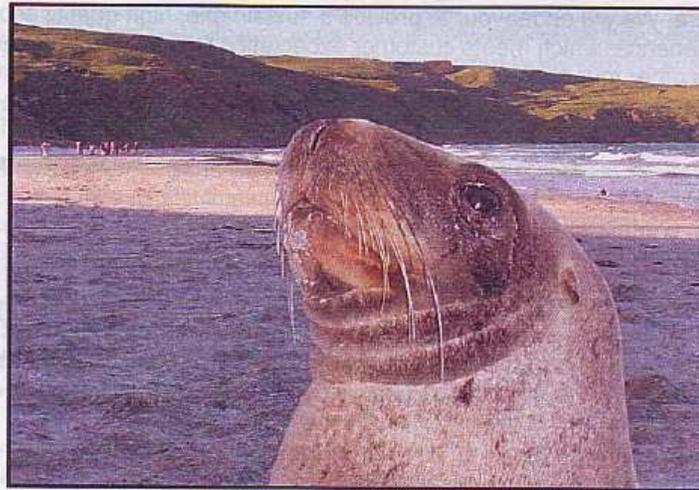




Prepared from material provided by Elm Wildlife Tours
for Green Globe Asia Pacific - January 2004

GREEN GLOBE 21 BENCHMARKED COMPANY

**ELM WILDLIFE TOURS
NEW ZEALAND**



GREEN GLOBE 21 Category: Company

GREEN GLOBE 21 Sector: Tour Operator

BACKGROUND

Elm Wildlife Tours comprises two tourism operations - a backpacker accommodation and a wildlife viewing tour operation. Elm Wildlife Tours achieved Benchmarked status under the GREEN GLOBE system in July 2002 in the sector *Tour Operator* with accommodation as an additional element in the process. The accommodation business has been operating for 17 years and the tour business for almost eleven.

Elm Wildlife Tours is located in Dunedin in the south east of New Zealand's South Island and arranges tours for visitors in a private conservation area to enable them to experience close encounters with nature and wildlife. The tours are centred around Otago Peninsula and Dunedin city, where it is possible to see endangered and exotic species congregate. The area visited is home for two rare species - the Hooker sea lion and the Yellow-eyed penguin. The area itself is an adventure, comprised of farmland, remote areas and rugged coastline.

The operation has won many awards for its environmental awareness and performance. In 1999 and 2000, Elm Wildlife Tours was recognised as New Zealand's best eco-tour and has won or been runner up in the NZ Tourism Awards in four of the past five years.

BENCHMARKED PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL POLICY

Elm Wildlife Tours' Environmental Policy:

"Elm Wildlife Tours recognises the importance of conducting our business responsibly toward the environment and in the communities where we operate. The nature of our business means that we must ensure our activities have the least possible negative impact on the environment, now and in the future. We will endeavour to provide a sustainable, high quality eco-tour experience, which meets customer expectations. We are committed to working with other tour operators to raise awareness in the environment and to develop and demonstrate good practice by operating in a sensitive and considered manner. We have clear policies for responsible tourism."

Elm Wildlife Tours are committed to:

- Upholding the interests and reputation of New Zealand as a quality destination for visitors and travellers by offering friendly, hospitable service.
- Providing high quality eco-tours for clients while keeping wildlife disturbances to a minimum. This is achieved by viewing some species from 'hides' constructed for this purpose; providing all guests with binoculars; and, viewing from appropriate distances in other situations.
- Ensuring the impact on both the physical and cultural environment of the Otago Peninsula is minimised through adhering to good practice.
- Continuing the creation of unobtrusive structures and walkways to protect the dune and other sensitive land areas that are crossed during tours. Mostly the walks take place across farmland and sandy beaches causing no negative effects.
- Maintaining the strong positive impact on the Yellow-eyed penguins' terrestrial environment through habitat enhancement, nest site creation and predator control programs, and ensuring that trampling of planted areas is minimised.
- Endeavouring to control or reverse the problems created by the introduction of exotic flora and fauna, and continuing to maintain a high level of environmental integrity, by monitoring for any adverse effects the operation may have on the environment.
- Reducing energy consumption (fossil fuels) by introducing a range of vehicle sizes in the fleet, thereby allowing for the selection of vehicles to best suit the size of the tour groups. Endeavouring to use diesel fuel only, and limit fuel purchase to companies who demonstrate that they operate in an environmentally friendly manner.
- Maintaining clean safe beach areas for the animals by removing seaborne rubbish and encouraging 'local boaties' and fishermen not to throw any rubbish in the ocean.
- Continuing to post plastic rubbish, where the manufacturing address is visible, back to the manufacturer with a letter outlining where it was found and the dangers it could cause wildlife in the hope that they and their customers may become more environmentally informed and aware.

ENERGY

At the accommodation facility:

- Dual flush toilets are used.
- Electric heating has been installed.
- Long life energy saving light globes have been fitted.
- Time switches will be installed to minimise wastage.
- Notes are mounted next to all light switches encouraging staff and patrons to conserve electricity.

During the tour operation:

- Elm Wildlife Tours has managed to reduce fuel consumption by purchasing vehicles that match the amount of people they take out to the viewing areas.

WATER

In order to reduce the potable water consumption in the accommodation facility, the operation has installed fine shower nozzles on the showerheads.

All vehicles are cleaned using water only; the operation does not use any chemicals for car washing. The cleaning chemicals used at the accommodation facility are all biodegradable.

WASTE

Elm Wildlife Tours has a limited amount of waste, as the operation makes minimal purchases. Solid waste incurred on trips is sorted and recycled or composted where possible.

AIR QUALITY

Elm Wildlife Tours encourages all transport organisations and operations to plant more trees to sequester carbon, as trees are an investment in more ways than one.

When Elm Wildlife Tours started the eco-tours almost 11 years ago, they were aware of the amount of carbon which would be created through the reliance on motor vehicles. To offset this, they made a commitment as an organisation to begin planting trees to enable the carbon produced to be sequestered in the trees. Today, the operation's small woodlot - 12 hectares in all - sequesters more carbon than the operation produces.

ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Elm Wildlife Tours is an organisation that relies heavily on the environment and its ecosystems to provide the wildlife that clients pay to see. The operation regards itself as being fortunate to have two rare species (Hooker sea lions and Yellow-eyed penguins). Since the operation started, Elm Wildlife Tours have tried to improve the environment for the penguins by maintaining stewardship over their terrestrial environment. This involves predator control by trapping, replanting of lost habitat, and the assistance of injured or sick penguins. This threatened species requires all the help it can get to stave off extinction. Elm Wildlife Tours will continue its efforts in this regard and promote to guests the knowledge that their efforts will help.

While the main focus is viewing wildlife and ecosystems, an important aspect is the message that everyone must assist the planet and its residents. It has been very easy to convey this message recently, as guests can see first hand the major problems caused by weather and ocean temperature extremes, which have resulted in die offs of species, including large numbers of cormorants and penguins.

SOCIAL COMMITMENT

- Staff are promoting care of the environment and assistance to wildlife on a daily basis through eco-tours.
- All employees are local.
- Purchases are made from local suppliers where possible.
- Elm Wildlife tours makes regular donations to the Heart Foundation, Lions Club of Dunedin and other worthy charities.

A number of Elm Wildlife Tours employees are scientists and conduct research on the Otago Peninsula and the Southern Coast. General Manager Brian Templeton noticed the difficulty they experienced finding finances to assist their research and so has funded the setup and operation of the Sea-Lion Trust, which seeks sponsors and funding towards this research. Much of Elm Wildlife Tours finances contribute to the research, protection and care for the endangered Hooker's Sea Lion species.

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