



# How do you do it, dugong?



INTERESTED: Biologists plan to study the sex lives of dugongs

**GOLD COAST** — Queensland biologists are getting up close and personal with some of Moreton Bay's wild dugongs in an ongoing study monitoring their health and sex lives.

Workers from the Gold Coast's Sea World and the University of Queensland hope to capture and release 17 dugongs during a week-long study in Moreton Bay, home to one of Australia's densest dugong populations.

Research team leader Janet Lanyon said the animals would be brought on to the research boat and examined for about 30 to 40 minutes.

The biologists will look to blood, urine, faecal and exhaled air samples, as well as tears, to assess the health of the animal, checking for illness or disease, as well as its reproductive capabilities.

"Assessing the health of these animals is a valuable tool in determining the fitness of wild-life populations," Dr Lanyon said.

"And once we understand seasonality and timing of reproductive patterns, we will be able to develop useful models of population dynamics for vulnerable dugongs."

The marine mammal, a protected species in Australia, is in decline across the globe with fears human interference is largely to blame. — AAP