



Marine Notice 15/2016  
Supersedes 12/2011

## Minimising the risk of collisions with cetaceans

### Purpose

The purpose of this Marine Notice is to provide guidance to shipowners, operators and seafarers to reduce the risk of collision with cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises), in accordance with IMO Circular MEPC.1/Circ.674.

Ship collisions with cetaceans is an issue of growing concern internationally and with the increase in the number, size and speed of ships, the threat of such collisions may also increase.

Collisions with cetaceans can increase the risk of death or injury to both people and animals and can damage vessels, including to hulls, propellers, shafts and rudders.

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) Chapter 5, Division 3, protects whales and other cetaceans in the Australian Whale Sanctuary, which encompasses all Commonwealth waters from the three nautical mile state waters limit, out to the limit of the Exclusive Economic Zone.

To minimise the risk of collisions seafarers are urged to:

- maintain a look out for cetaceans, especially during the times and locations mentioned overleaf;
- warn other vessels in the vicinity using all appropriate means of communication, if cetaceans have been sighted;
- consider reducing vessel speed in areas where cetaceans have been sighted; and
- consider modest course alterations away from sightings.

Under the EPBC Act, if a vessel collides with a cetacean in the Australian Whale Sanctuary, the person in charge of the vessel is required by law to notify the Secretary of the Department of the Environment within seven days of becoming aware of the collision. The notification should contain specifics such as the date of incident, location, outcome of the collision and contact details.

For details on how to report an incident, please visit:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/marine-species/cetaceans/notification-interactions>

The collection of collision information can help to identify hotspots for cetacean-ship interactions and assist in tailoring better guidance for mitigating against future collisions.

Collision information is provided to the Australian Marine Mammal Centre and the International Whaling Commission, to be included in national and international ship strike databases, respectively.

The table overleaf identifies the locations and times that the five whale species currently listed under the EPBC Act as nationally threatened species are found in Australian waters. Several dolphin species also inhabit coastal waters all year round, so constant watch is encouraged.

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Species	Where	When
Blue whale (endangered)	<p>Australian waters as far north as Scott Reef, the Kimberley and Pilbara regions of north-west Australia, and as far south as south-west Australia, across the Great Australian Bight, and to waters as far east as off Tasmania.</p> <p>Feeding grounds are known to occur in the Perth Canyon off southern Western Australia, and the upwelling system of the eastern Great Australian Bight and adjacent waters off Tasmania.</p>	November to May
Southern right whale (endangered)	<p>Occur along the southern coastline including Tasmania, generally as far north as Sydney on the east coast and Perth on the west coast. There are occasional occurrences further north, with the extremities of their range recorded as Hervey Bay, Queensland and Exmouth, Western Australia.</p> <p>Large aggregation areas include the Doubtful Island Bay and Israelite Bay areas in Western Australia and Head of Bight in South Australia; smaller aggregation areas include Yokinup Bay in Western Australia and the Warrnambool region in Victoria.</p> <p>The migratory paths between Australian waters and feeding areas to the south of Australia are not well understood.</p>	May to November
Humpback whale (vulnerable)	<p>Migrate along the east and west coasts of Australia, with their core range including all Australian waters, except those off the Northern Territory.</p> <p>Known calving areas include the Southern Kimberley between Broome and the northern end of Camden Sound in north-west Western Australia; and the Great Barrier Reef between approximately 14° S and 27° S.</p>	May to November
Sei whale (vulnerable)	All Australian waters.	Migration patterns are poorly known
Fin whale (vulnerable)	The full extent of their distribution in Australian waters is uncertain, but they occur within Commonwealth waters and have been recorded in most state waters.	Migration patterns are poorly known