

welcome the whales

Southern right whales are protected and visit our coast because they feel at home. Please be quiet when whales are close to the shore. Be aware of the guidelines for whale watching. Swimmers, boats and aircraft must keep clear of the whales.

safety first

Cliffs are great lookout points but they can be dangerous. Freak waves occur along the coastline. Keep clear of breaking surf and where waves can surge up sloping rocks. *Please take care.*

dune care

Coastal vegetation is fragile. Please use walkways to get to the beach and park in car parks provided.

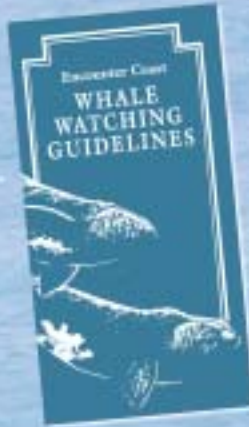
share the experience

Please be considerate of other whale watchers and local residents.



Photo: Les McDiarmid

further information



Pick up a copy of the Whale Watching Guidelines for more information on whale watching.

Please contact

National Parks Office,
Victor Harbor, SA
Phone 08 8552 3677

Whale Information Hotline
Phone 1900 931 223
Calls charged at 75c per minute.
Pay phones and mobiles higher
rate - Telads

SA Whale Centre
Victor Harbor
Phone 08 8552 5644

SA Museum,
Adelaide
Phone 08 8207 7404

Environment Shop
Department for
Environment and Heritage,
Phone 08 8204 1910
Visit our website
www.whales.sa.gov.au

Front cover photo
Stephen Burnell
"In the Dreamtime"
Reference:
Southern Right
Whale brochure
DELM March 1993



Photo: Les McDiarmid

The Journey of the Southern right whale



The Journey of the Southern right whale

from hunting...

World population, reduced from more than 100 000 to less than 4000, southern right whales are now on a journey of recovery from near extinction. Over 26 000 southern right whales were killed in Australian and New Zealand waters.

- 1791 First whale (sperm whales) taken in Australian waters by the crew of Britannia after unloading cargo and convicts from Britain.
- 1804 So common in the Derwent River, Tasmania, they were a hazard to small boats.
- 1830 Whaling industry on mainland Australia underway with small onshore stations.
- 1835 Southern right whales were considered the right whales to hunt. They come close to shore, float when dead and yield many barrels of oil.
- 1845 Very scarce, no longer profitable to hunt. Nearing extinction.
- 1872 Whaling station set up by the South Australia Company, at Victor Harbor ceased operating.
- 1931 Protected in South Australia.
- 1935 Internationally protected through the League of Nations.
- 1978 All whaling in Australian waters ceased, the last whaling station being in Albany, Western Australia.
- 1990s Great Australian Bight Marine Park and whale sanctuary established, providing a haven for southern right whales visiting Australian waters.

...to conservation

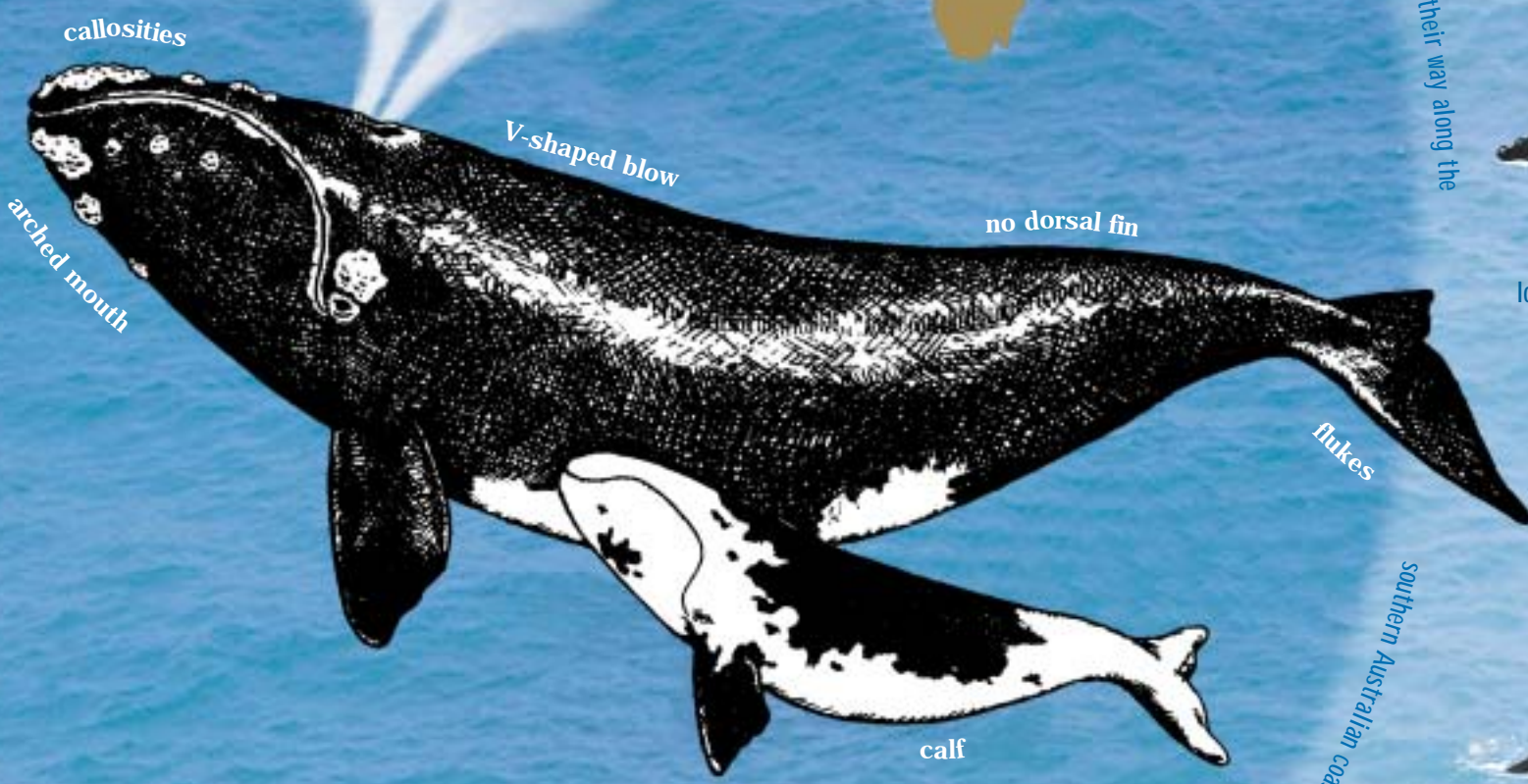
Whale watching promoted as an ecotourism opportunity.

SRWS migrating from subantarctic waters to the southern coasts of Africa, South America, New Zealand and Australia, staying the cooler months before returning

Australia



breeding



feeding

Antarctica

observing whale behaviour

Breaching
Raising most of the body out of the water, twisting and crashing back into the sea. This gives the whale a better view of surroundings and dislodges parasites.



Tail Lobs
Lifting the tail out of the water and slamming it down onto the surface making a loud noise. This is a way of communicating with other whales.



Blowing
Surfacing to breathe through two nostrils (blowholes) located on the top of the head. When exhaling, a V-shaped spray called a blow forms.

Spy Hopping
Pushing the head vertically out of the water to observe the surroundings.



Body Rolls
Sometimes rolling near the surface, females avoid male advances and calves wanting to suckle.



Tail Lifts
Holding the tail just above the surface using the flippers for support. The tail acts as a sail.



Southern right whales can be seen making their way along the southern Australian coast during the cooler months from May to October

The Journey of the Southern right whale

Whales have captivated people for generations. Their immense size, appearance and behaviour are of interest to people all over the world. It is a privilege that in South Australia, each winter southern right whales can be viewed from the shore.

Enjoy your whale watching experience taking advantage of this brochure and the whale trail while helping to protect the whales and coast.

in the dreaming

Aboriginal peoples along the South Australian coast have featured whales in their dreaming stories for generations. Kondole the whale is one story. *One hot day, many Aborigines gathered at Encounter Bay for a large ceremony. The participants wanted to hold the ceremony through the night, but they did not possess any fire to enable them to see at night. Two messengers were sent to find Kondole, a large and powerful man who owned fire. Kondole, was only invited to the ceremony for his fire. Kondole hid his fire, however, and thus infuriated the other participants. They determined to obtain the fire by force, but no-one dared approach him. Finally Rilballe decided to wound him with a spear and take the fire from him. Rilballe threw the spear and wounded Kondole in the neck. The participants laughed and shouted after this and most were then changed into different animals. Kondole ran into the sea and became a whale, and now blows water out of the wound in his neck.*



Photograph courtesy
The Advertiser/Sunday Mail



Aboriginal shelter constructed from whale bones, painter George Angas French, 1822-1886

Photograph courtesy
SA Museum



Try-pot used for boiling blubber.

Photograph:
Sue Gibbs

whales

Whales belong to a group of marine mammals called cetaceans, which includes all whales, dolphins and porpoises. The name cetacean comes from the Greek word for whales, 'Ketos'. For many years whales were incorrectly thought to be fish, but they breathe air like us.

southern right whales

Southern right whales (*Eubalaena australis*) are baleen whales which were hunted almost to extinction. Today, there are about 800 southern right whales in the Australian population, many visiting the coast during their winter migration. Coming very close to shore, the whales may be seen by whale watchers from vantage points along the coast.

recognising individuals

Callosities are raised whitish patches of thickened skin encrusted with marine lice and barnacles.

The growths on the head and face are present from birth. Each whale has a unique pattern which is used by researchers to identify individuals.

starting the journey of life

Migrating north to warmer waters in winter, southern right whales calve, nurse their young and mate close to the southern coast of Australia. Born weighing about a tonne and measuring about 5.5 metres in length, they may reach 80 tonnes and 17 metres as adults.

A calf is born

- tail first, and is guided to the surface for its first breath
- black and white, turning black later
- with little blubber (an insulator and fat store) so are unable to survive birth in the cold subantarctic waters.

Calves gain about 90 kilograms per day, suckling on thick milk containing 40% fat.

They stay in close contact with their mothers until weaned at about twelve months. Female southern right whales usually give birth every three years following a gestation period of about one year.



Open mouth showing baleen.

Photograph:
Stephen Bunnell



Krill

Photograph:
Steve Nicol

life in the subantarctic

Although giants of the ocean, amazingly southern right whales feed on some of the smallest sea animals. Their diet includes crustaceans such as copepods and krill. An adult may consume a tonne of food in one day.

They eat by straining mouthfuls of water through baleen, (horny plates growing from the upper jaw) up to two metres long. The primary feeding grounds are in plankton-rich subantarctic waters. In Australian waters they feed very little.