

When near a declared 'special interest whale', for example 'Migaloo' the white humpback whale:

- boaties and jet skiers must remain at least 500 metres away
- aircraft must not fly closer than 600 metres.



Migaloo, the white humpback whale, breaching.

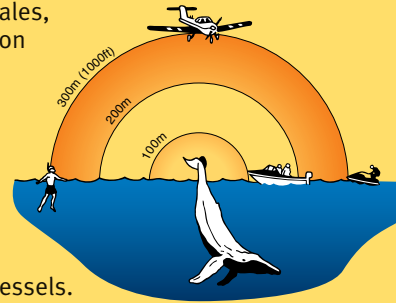
Management

Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) staff manage human activities in the vicinity of humpback whales through regular vessel patrols, education programs, research and enforcement.



Approach distances to whales

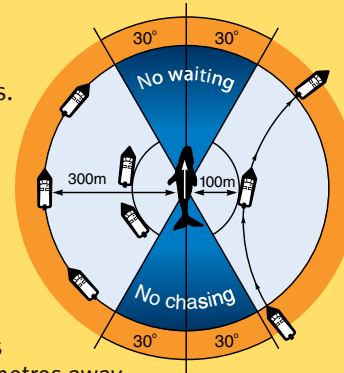
While in the vicinity of whales, skippers and passengers on recreational craft must adhere to whale watching rules and guidelines.



Skippers should also maintain radio contact on VHF marine channels 16 and 73, to make their intentions clear to other vessels.

Key points

- Keep a sharp lookout for whales and whale watchers.
- Slow down or stop to see what direction the whales are travelling.
- Do not approach from directly in front or behind.
- Stay at least 100 metres away (jetskis 300 metres).
- If there are 3 or more boats (at 100 metres), stay 300 metres away.
- If possible, stay on the landward side of the whale.



For further information

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Safety guide

Whale watching

Southeast Queensland waters



Toward 
Tomorrow's Queensland

 Queensland
Government

Tomorrow's Queensland: strong, green, smart, healthy and fair

Explore

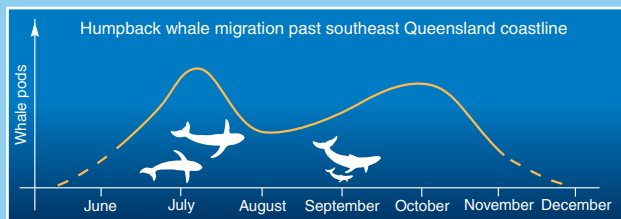
Humpback whale

Ecology and conservation

Each year humpback whales *Megaptera novaeangliae* migrate from Antarctic to the subtropical coastal waters of western and eastern Australia and South Pacific islands where they give birth and mate during winter and spring.

At least 12 000 (as of 2010) humpbacks migrate approximately 6000 kilometres to Australia's eastern coast each year. From late May the whales can be seen passing the southeast Queensland coastline on their journey to the waters of the Great Barrier Reef.

Around August the whales commence their migration south to Antarctic waters. Many pods (groups of whales) stop for a short period in bays along the Australian coastline. Many of these are mother and calf pods that require protection. Most humpback whales have left Queensland waters by late November. The waters of southeast Queensland are important to this migration as indicated by long term studies showing that 89% of the population travel within three nautical miles of North Stradbroke and Moreton Islands — closer than any other region in Australia.



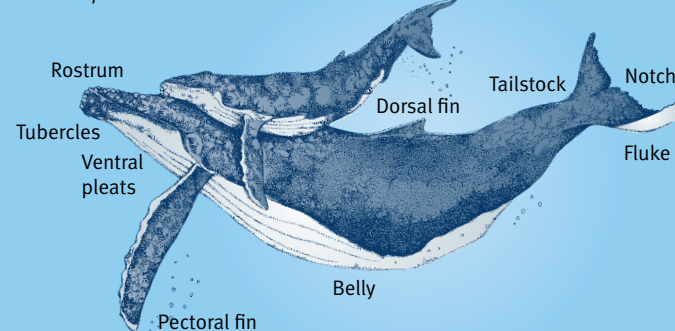
Protection

In the past, people have used their knowledge of the annual humpback whale migration to their advantage. Whaling stations existed locally on Moreton Island and also at Byron Bay in the 1950s. In 10 years, the east Australian humpback population was hunted from at least 30 000 animals, possibly much more, to a few hundred. Whaling stopped when the stations closed in 1962. Research indicates humpback whale numbers are now increasing steadily at approximately 10% per annum. Current population estimates are at least 12 000 (as of 2010).

Today, changed attitudes and legislation ensure the species is conserved. All whaling within 322 kilometres (200 miles) of Australia's coastline is banned under federal law. Australian citizens and vessels are prohibited from involvement in whaling anywhere in the world.

The continued successful reproduction and nurturing of young is critical to the recovery of the humpback whale population. Whale migratory routes, along with their breeding areas, are protected for this exclusive purpose. With both human and whale populations on the east coast of Australia increasing, there is greater potential for interactions that put the welfare of the animals and the safety of people at risk.

The humpback whale



Regulations and guidelines for whale watching have been developed with the prime objective of ensuring that the whales' natural behaviour is undisturbed, while allowing safe and enjoyable whale watching experiences.

Ignoring these guidelines and disturbing a whale could cause:

- disruption of their behaviour (e.g. nursing, breeding, migrating, and other social activities)
- injury to whales through boat strike, particularly calves as they are not able to dive for long periods and are not as agile or experienced as adults
- stress through crowding by vessels and excessive boat noise
- potential stranding or entangling in shark nets as a result of herding towards the shoreline
- avoidance of or displacement from important habitat areas (e.g. resting, breeding and calving areas).

Getting too close can also mean risking injury or death to you!

Be safe and be whale-friendly — if possible position your vessel on the landward side of a whale. This gives the animal freedom of movement seaward, away from threats such as shark nets and sand banks.

By observing regulations and following the guidelines you are assisting in the protection of these magnificent creatures and the recovery of the humpback whale population.

Regulations and guidelines (key points found on back page)

Ensure you do not:

- touch or feed a whale
- make a noise that is likely to attract or disturb a whale
- swim closer than 300 metres to a whale.

If a whale surfaces closer than 100 metres to your boat:

- place your gears in neutral and when safe to do so move your boat at no more than four knots until the whale is at least 300 metres away.



Operate your boat to ensure:

- whales are not caused to alter direction, speed of travel or behaviour
- members of a pod of whales are not separated, especially mothers with calves
- whales are not herded towards shores.

Aircraft

- All fixed wing aircraft must stay 300 metres away or an altitude of 1000 feet.
- Aircraft must not fly closer than 600 metres to a 'special interest' whale.
- Helicopters must stay 1 kilometre away or at an altitude of 2000 feet.