



**Marine Notice 12/2011**

## **Minimising the risk of ships colliding with cetaceans**

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

Collision with cetaceans (ship strikes) is an issue of growing concern and has become more common due to the increase in both vessel traffic and whale populations. Ship strikes can cause damage to property and increase the risk of death and injury to people and animals. Damage to vessels, ranging from minor to extreme, includes cracked hulls, damaged propellers, propeller shafts and rudders, damaged port and starboard aft strut actuators, broken steering arms and ruptured seawater piping.

Under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), all cetaceans are protected in Australian waters and the legislation applies to all vessels. Protection measures include the establishment of the Australian Whale Sanctuary that encompasses all Commonwealth waters from the three nautical mile state waters limit, out to the limit of the Exclusive Economic Zone.

Ship masters and deck officers are urged to:

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

Under the EPBC Act, if a vessel collides with a cetacean in Commonwealth waters the person in charge of the vessel is required by law to notify the Secretary of the Department of Sustainability,

Environment, Water, Population and Communities within seven days. The notice should contain specifics such as date of incident, location, outcome of the collision and contact details.

For details on how to report an incident, please visit [www.environment.gov.au/coasts/species/cetaceans/legislation/notification.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/species/cetaceans/legislation/notification.html)

The collection of collision data assists to identify hotspots for cetacean-vessel interactions, to describe trends in the occurrence of such incidences and to assist in tailoring better guidance for mitigating against future collisions.

Collision information will also be 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 on page 2 identifies the location and time that the five whale species currently listed under the EPBC Act as nationally threatened are found in Australian waters. Several dolphin species also inhabit coastal waters all year round, so constant watch is encouraged.

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Chief Executive Officer  
19 August 2011

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Species	Where	When
Blue whale (endangered)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Australian waters</li> <li>• Primary aggregation areas off the Perth Canyon, WA; Geographe Bay, WA; and Bonney Upwelling, south-east South Australia to western Victoria.</li> </ul>	Migration patterns are poorly known.
Southern right whale (endangered)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recorded in all Australian waters, except off the Northern Territory.</li> <li>• Primarily found off the southern coasts from Perth, WA around to Eden, NSW.</li> </ul>	May to November
Humpback whale (vulnerable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Australian waters, except off the Northern Territory</li> <li>• Migration occurs along the east and west coasts of Australia.</li> </ul>	May to November
Sei whale (vulnerable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recorded in the waters of Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and Queensland.</li> </ul>	Migration patterns are poorly known.
Fin whale (vulnerable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recorded in the waters of Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Queensland.</li> </ul>	Migration patterns are poorly known.