



NEWSLETTER OF THE SAPPHIRE COAST MARINE DISCOVERY CENTRE

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Fun Facts

Whales! Whales!! Whales!!!

Well we all know this area is renowned for the huge number of whales we see at this time of year, but this season has been one out of the box. Humpback whales in large numbers have made an early appearance in our waters and thrilled whale watchers with some acrobatic behaviour whilst feeding on huge schools of krill. We've even been lucky enough to host some Southern Right Whales recently – and given the relatively small population of this species, things are certainly looking up.



What makes it all the more thrilling for those involved with the Discovery Centre is that we have been lucky to host the SURFAH Research Team for just over three (3) weeks whilst they carry out some ground-breaking new research techniques on these very whales. SURFAH stands for "Surface and underwater research on Feeding Australian Humpback whales". The team is led by our longtime friend, marine mammal expert David Donnelly and PhD student Kylie Owen with a support team consisting of Scott Sheehan from marinemammalresearch.com as well as five (5) students from all over the globe.

(left: PhD student Kylie Owen with one of her admirers behind)

On board research vessel 'Krillseeker' Dave, Kylie and Scott headed out at every possible opportunity to take biopsy samples and deploy a 'DTag' to monitor the behaviour of these majestic animals. Over the 3 weeks they were here, they managed 12 good weather days in the field, 3 D-tag deployments, 10 focal follows, 19 biopsy samples, 25 CTD casts, 6 prey samples and thousands of photos.

The team at SCMDC wishes to thank all involved for constantly feeding back amazing images and updates and for giving the community an informative presentation on their work. This is what we are all about – bringing research and community together.

(Above right: Beautiful "Bruce" the whale, pec slapping on a 2 hours focal follow that took Krillseeker nearly ten miles offshore. Photo courtesy of SURFAH)



While on the subject of whales!

Many different whales visit the Sapphire Coast during their annual migration, generally between April and November. While humpback whales are the most common visitors to the area, it is not unusual for people to see Minkes, Dwarf minkes, Southern Rights, Bryde's, Orcas, False Killer Whales and Sperm whales – to name but a few!

Positive identification of whale species is something SCMDC – with the help of our visiting researchers – wants to encourage and teach our community members. Confirming the identification of whale species depends on a number of factors – for example, each whale species has a different 'blow', their behaviour is different and their habitat can vary. Novice 'whale spotters' sometimes confuse one species for another – this is not difficult to do if you are inexperienced but we are keen to help you to learn!

Southern Right Whales (SRW) are one species often mistaken for Killer Whales. If you look carefully, an SRW pectoral fin viewed side on can look very much like the tip of a large Killer Whale dorsal fin. If there is confusion, other means of identification are often called for, e.g. where is the whale – deep or shallow water? Is it alone or in a pod? How is it behaving?

Our friends at SURFAH, marinemammalresearch.com and ORCCA are currently working on methods to help the general public understand the differences so that they can pass on robust research data. They are particularly keen to learn of sightings of SRW and Killer Whales, two species that occur in much smaller numbers than Humpbacks.

Below are some illustrations that may help with SRW identification:

a) Twin blows from the Southern Right whale



b) SRW 'spyhopping' – poking his head above the surface for a look



c) Large, short and flat – the characteristic pectoral fin of the SRW

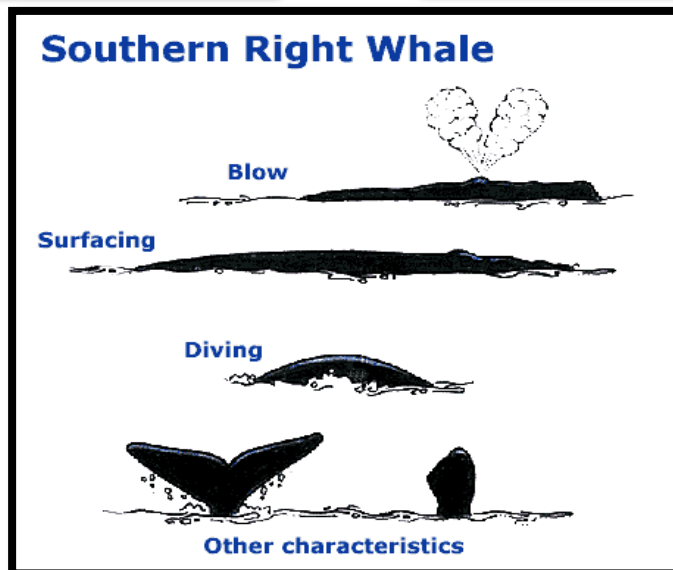
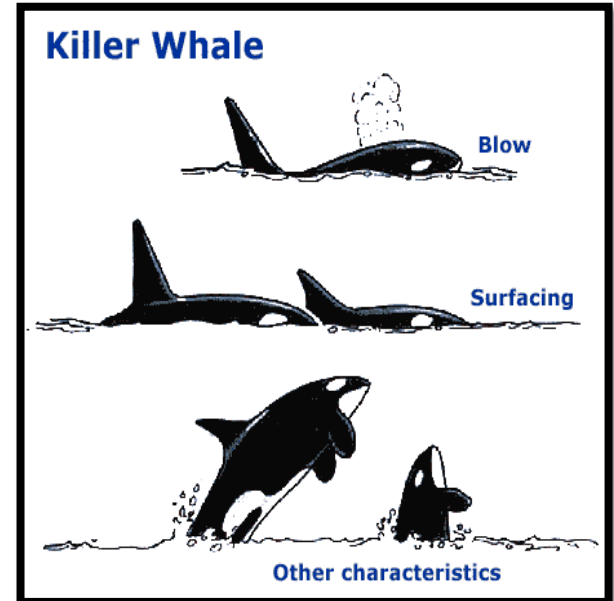
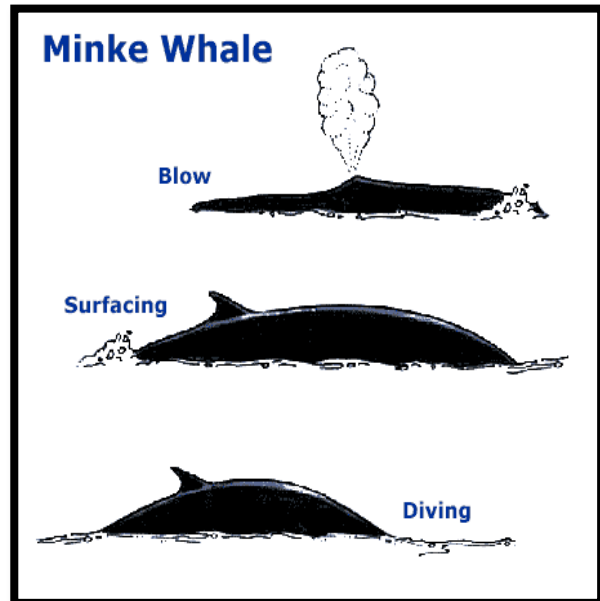
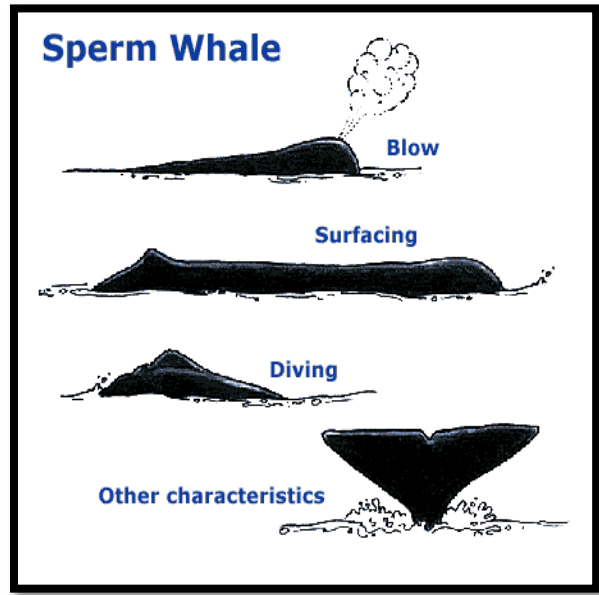
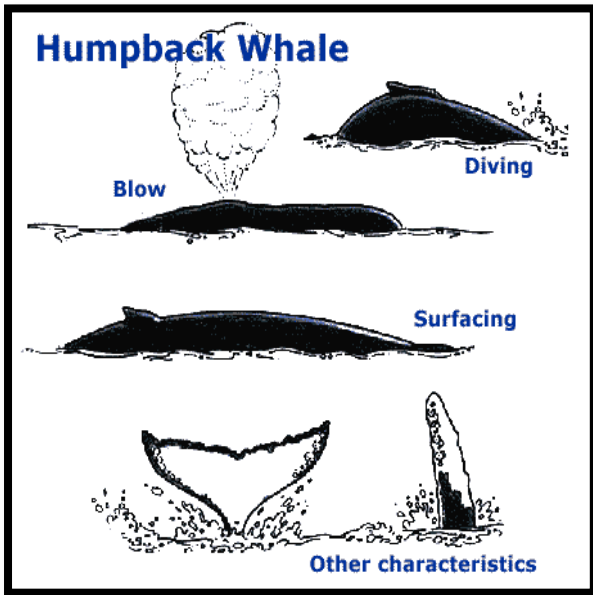


d) the tail end of the SRW whale



Southern right whale

**These guides will help you better your knowledge of 'what whale is that?'
Aren't we lucky we have so many of them visiting our shores?**



Illustrations courtesy of Tony Pyrzakowski, © Commonwealth of Australia 1989



DON'T MISS THIS YEAR'S FESTIVAL!!

Eden Whale Festival

29-30 October | Snug Cove Eden NSW

Old Tom and his killers are back in Eden

2011

OKA

Laser Light Show

**STREET PARADE
EVENING LASER LIGHT & SOUND SHOW
MARKET STALLS
ENTERTAINMENT
COMPETITIONS
LIVE MUSIC**



www.edenwhalefestival.com.au



Photos courtesy of Ros Butt, Cat Balou Cruises, Eden
Laser Light Show photo on poster courtesy of Joel Strickland

NEW FACES

Operations Assistant Kerryn Wood has been busy over the last few weeks training a number of community members to become Volunteer guides and assistants at SCMDC.

Our new Volunteer Program offers a comprehensive training session – or more if needed – on what we do, why we do it, how we do it and more. A huge welcome to all new Volunteers – we hope to ensure your work with us is rewarding and lots of fun! If you want to join us and help out, please contact Kerryn on kerryn.wood@sapphirecoastdiscovery.com.au or call us on 6496 1699.



Another very welcome new face in the Centre is

Jillian Riethmuller, Marine Education Officer

Jillian and her husband Mike have moved down to the coast from Canberra to join us and Jillian comes with a string of great qualifications. Jillian has actually been with us before – as a work experience student whilst completing her Degree in Global & Ocean Sciences at ANU.

She added to her skills after graduating by completing a Diploma in Science Communication and went on to become part of the exciting Questacon Science Circus team. She later joined the Questacon Smart Moves Program so is perfectly qualified for her work with SCMDC, where she is tasked with what she knows best – how to bring science to life and make it an exciting career choice for young people.



(Above – L to R: Jillian Riethmuller, Technical Officer Sheree Epe and Operations Assistant Kerryn Wood. The ladies are pictured at the recent Mitre 10 Open day where they took a display and entertained and educated the children with live marine creatures in the touch tank.)

Jillian joins our team of Sheree Epe (Technical Officer), Kerryn Wood (Operations Assistant) and Jenny Robb (C.E.O.).

New MUREX SHELL DISPLAY

Constantly evolving, the Sapphire Coast Marine Discovery Centre is always undergoing change and growth – new displays are being established on a regular basis and the latest is a spectacular display of Murex Shells.

Whilst not found in our region, they are so spectacularly beautiful it was deemed appropriate to give others a chance to see them and learn about them.

We owe a huge thanks to Libby Hepburn, former Director of SCMDC and Volunteers Liz Allen and Alan Scrymgeour for making it all happen. Libby donated the collection to SCMDC some time ago and now that we have a purpose-built cabinet they are now proudly on display for all to enjoy.



Murex is a genus of medium to large sized predatory tropical sea snails. These are carnivorous marine gastropod molluscs in the family Muricidae, the murexes or rock snails. Murex Shells feed on bivalves by boring a hole into the animal and inserting their proboscis to feed. They come in a range of colours and blend in with their surroundings. These shells are highly prized collectors items with their winged and pungent spines. Some look like walking skeleton shells.



Found on coral and rocky reefs on sand and rubble areas often well hidden amongst rocks, they are widespread in the Indo-Pacific region. The word murex was used by Aristotle in reference to these kinds of snails, thus Murex is arguably one of the oldest classical shell names still in use by the scientific community. Also known as Murex Shells, Branched Murex Shell, Branch Murex, Ramose Murex, Ram's Murex and Ram's Murex Shell.



WEB CHECK

Check out these great web sites
(hover your mouse over the link for instructions)

[Marine Discovery Centres Australia](#)
[The Australian Museum](#)



follow @ facebook

Or Tweet us on [Twitter](#)

VOLUNTEERS...volunteers...VOLUNTEERS...volunteers...VOLUNTEERS...

Volunteers are a special and integral part of any community based not-for-profit organisation, not least the SCMDC. Aware of the need for a well planned, organised and professionally trained, committed and energetic group of people, we will soon be conducting volunteer recruitment, orientation and training for new and existing volunteers.

If you would like to join us & for further information, please contact

Kerryn Wood on 02 6496 1699 or email at kerryn.wood@sapphirecoastdiscovery.com.au

DID YOU KNOW?

If threatened, some sea cucumbers will spew out their intestines from their anus, which they can then regrow.

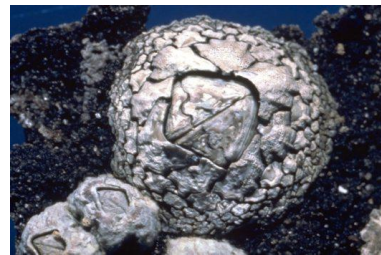


Snot Cucumber

Leptosynapta dolabrifera

DID YOU KNOW?

Barnacles are hermaphrodites - they have both male and female sexual organs



Acorn Barnacle

Chthamalus antennatus