

Humpback whale/paikea

How to identify a humpback whale

Humpback whales grow up to 16 m long. They have blackish bodies but are largely white underneath, particularly under the tail and fins. Their pectoral fins (front fins) are extremely long, like big wings, with knobby bits along the forward edge. These bumps can also be found on the head and tip of the lower jaw.

When and where to see them

They are frequent visitors to the coastal waters of New Zealand when they undertake seasonal long-distance migrations (710,000 km each year) between summer feeding grounds in Antarctica and winter calving and breeding grounds in tropical or near-tropical waters. They travel mainly along New Zealand's east coast and Cook Strait during winter and return along the west coast during spring.



Photo: Whit Welles



Blue whale

How to identify a blue whale

Blue whales are the largest animals ever to have existed. Pygmy blue whales, the most common in New Zealand waters, reach 24 m long, compared to the 30 m Antarctic blue whales. Their distinctive mottled grey-blue bodies taper towards the tail. They have a flat, u-shaped head with a ridge running from the blowhole. Their small dorsal fin is well back on the body, and only visible when the whales dive.

When and where to see them

We are still learning how often, for how long, where and how many pygmy blue whales use New Zealand waters. They have been recorded in the South Taranaki Bight in summer, but have been seen all around the country.



Photo: Leigh Torres

Marine mammal illustrations: *Lisa Paton*

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New Zealand Government

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468
Report any safety hazards
or conservation emergencies
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

Have you seen me?

Report marine mammal sightings
to the Department of Conservation



R155584



We urgently need your help to look out for these rare species around New Zealand, take some details and photos, and send them to the Department of Conservation.

How you can help

If you see a southern right whale, Māui dolphin, humpback whale or blue whale, or any other marine mammals, please **report it to DOC as soon as possible**.

- phone **0800 DOC HOTline** (0800 36 24 68)
- go to www.doc.govt.nz/marine-mammal-sighting-form
- email your sighting information to marinemammals@doc.govt.nz

Take photos

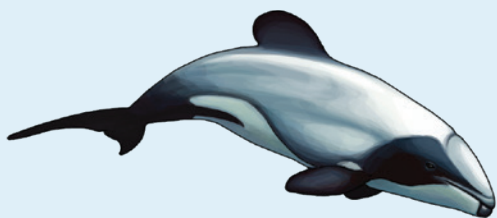
Please make taking photos of the animal a priority. Photos can be used to identify individual animals, and help us to identify the correct species or the location.

Tell us what you saw

It is important that you also record and give DOC staff the following information:

- the date, time and location of the sighting (GPS coordinates are ideal)
- the number of adults and juveniles
- their behaviour
- a description of the animal if the species is unclear (think about size, colouring, markings and shapes)
- your contact details.

This information will be entered in our national database of marine mammal sightings, and is useful in helping with decisions on conservation strategies for many species.



Māui and Hector's dolphins/ popoto

How to identify a Māui dolphin

Māui and Hector's dolphins look identical and can only be differentiated through genetic testing. Identifying them from other dolphins, however, is easy. They have a very distinctive black, rounded dorsal fin, black flippers, a black crescent over their blowhole, and a blunt snout (nose). They are also the smallest dolphin species in the world: females grow to just 1.7 m; males are slightly smaller.

Sightings of Māui dolphins are validated to check they are legitimate – this is important as information from sightings is used to inform legislation.

When and where to see them

Māui and Hector's dolphins are found close to shore, usually out to around 100 m depth, and in small groups. Māui dolphins are found on the west coast of the North Island, particularly around the Manukau and Waikato coasts; Hector's can be found around the coast of the South Island. We are particularly interested in sightings on the North Island coast south of Raglan and sightings at the top of the South Island.



Southern right whale/tohorā

How to identify a southern right whale

Adults average 14–15 m long and newborn calves between 4.5 m and 6 m. Tohorā are mostly black in colour and can be easily identified by lack of a dorsal fin, a v-shaped blowhole spray and white growths on their heads called callosities.

The pattern of callosities on each whale is different, making it possible to identify individuals and to track their movements.

When and where to see them

These whales can come very close to shore. Tohorā are native migrants to New Zealand. During the breeding season in winter and spring, they are mostly found in the waters around the subantarctic Auckland and Campbell islands, but there are occasional sightings around mainland New Zealand, particularly the southern South Island.

