

# Excitement Over Visiting Killer Whales To Victorian Waters

*Killer whales sighted off Phillip Island provide valuable insights into their lives – thanks to some very excited Citizen Scientists and researchers.*

MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA, June 22, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Killer whales sighted off Phillip Island during recent days, provide valuable insights into their lives – thanks to a collaboration between some very excited Citizen Scientists and researchers.

As soon as David Donnelly saw images from the sighting, he knew they held a remarkable story. David is the curator of Killer Whales Australia's East Australian Killer Whale photo-ID catalogue and the Research Officer with the [Dolphin Research Institute](#).

The first reports came on 18 June from land-based whale spotters closely followed by participants of a whale-watching cruise with Wildlife Coast Cruises near Pyramid Rock. We suspect yesterday's sightings were likely to be the same animals.

These sightings are the 139th validated sighting of this species in Victorian waters since 2000.

'The dolphin called Killer' is the largest of the dolphin family (which are all whales). They are highly mobile, making them unpredictable and challenging to study. However, with the help of citizen scientists, the team at Killer Whales Australia has been able to slowly build an understanding of this elusive species along the east coast of Australia.

Using images supplied by collaborators Wildlife Coast Cruises, two of the individuals sighted last week were matched to the east Australian Killer Whale catalogue. The individuals were first catalogued in 2015 and are known as EA\_0056, and EA\_0057.....this is the first time these animals have been sighted in Victorian waters!

The whales are ID'd using physical features which include fin size and shape, the form of the saddle (grey colouration below and behind the dorsal fin) as well as the shape of the eye patch.

These two individuals were last sighted in November 2019 off the Tasman Peninsula on the far southeast coast of Tasmania -- a swim of at least 630 kilometres.

The killer whales current presence coincides with the migration of humpback and southern right whales to our waters. Killer whales are known to work in well-organised groups to hunt these

larger whales.

David refers to the painstaking work of Citizen Science as "organising the chaos". "It's not that the information is chaotic, it's the sheer number of images and reports coming from a range of sources that we receive during the peak of the season.... It's a great problem to have".

Interestingly but not surprisingly, these two killer whales have been seen together at every recorded sighting. Close social bonds are crucial for this species survival -- as is developing an understanding of their lives to support their protection.

Yesterday, as well as killer whales, humpback whales, southern right whales, and common dolphins, were also reported to the Two Bays Whale Project which is also part of David's work with the Dolphin Research Institute.

The Two Bays Whale Project is a citizen science-based project run by the Dolphin Research Institute in collaboration with Wildlife Coast Cruises, Phillip Island.

The public are reminded not to approach whales closer than 200 metres in boats, 300 metres on Jetskis or 30m for paddlers and swimmers.

The Dolphin Research Institute urges people to report their sightings via PodWatch on their website: [dolphinresearch.org.au](http://dolphinresearch.org.au) or by calling 1300 130 949.

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IMAGERY: Photos are available.

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