

Boaters Harass Critically Endangered Mother Whale And Calf!

Researchers from the Dolphin Research Institute are concerned for a critically endangered southern right whale mother and calf after being harassed by boats.

MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA, June 28, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Boaters Harass Mother Whale And Calf!

Researchers from the [Dolphin Research Institute](#) are concerned for the welfare of a critically endangered southern right whale mother and her young calf after they were harassed by a vessel near Cape Schanck on Sunday.

A volunteer citizen scientist with the Institute's Two Bays Whale Project first sighted the whales then witnessed them appear desperate to evade a harassing vessel. The normally slow-moving southern right whales were seen travelling fast and making numerous directional changes as the boat maneuvered in an apparent attempt to gain photos of the pair.

David Donnelly, the Institute's Research Officer, confirmed that this is the first validated sighting of a southern right whale calf of this young age in the records of the Two Bays Whale Project for Victoria's central region.

Southern right whales are a critically endangered species in Victorian waters and are part of a genetically distinct population of less than 300. They are making a slow recovery from the brink of extinction.

"It is very disappointing that a mother with a young calf at their most vulnerable time should be placed under such unnecessary stress," said David Donnelly.

"The skipper of this vessel could be subject to a significant fine," said Jeff Weir OAM, Executive Director of the Dolphin Research Institute.

Yesterday we had sightings of killer whales, humpback whales, southern right whales and dolphins in our coastal waters. We also had many other reports of harassment from Port Phillip and along the Phillip Island coast. The Dolphin Research Institute were so concerned about the situation that they shut down their whale alert function of their Two Bays Whale Project so as not to encourage further similar behaviour. It's almost like the first calm day for ages made some boaters lose common sense.

“It is remarkable to have these animals in our marine backyard, and we must respect them by obeying the marine mammal regulations”, said Jeff Weir. “It’s not about spoiling the remarkable experience of seeing whales and dolphins, just showing common sense”.

Victoria’s regulations state that “People shouldn’t deliberately approach dolphins closer than 100 metres (whales 200m) in boats, 300 metres on jetskis or 30m for paddlers and swimmers”.

If dolphins or whales pop up close to you or approach your vessel, then ideally stop if safe to do so and watch, or slow down and keep your direction. Enjoy and value our remarkable marine treasures, then let them swim off, without following.

Everyone can help the Institute’s long-term research programs by reporting dolphin sightings. They can also join people who have supported the Adopt-A-Dolphin program for 28 years! Without community support, the Institute’s crucial research and education programs to protect our dolphins and bays will not happen.

To report sightings and support the Institute: www.dolphinresearch.org.au or 03 5979 7100.

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