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**Help protect our
southern right whales
Engagement pack**

Help protect our southern right whales

Endangered southern right whales return to Victoria's coastal waters each year between May and October to give birth and raise their calves.

With the help of the whale watching community, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) has been monitoring the population for decades. After being [protected from whaling in Australian waters in 1935](#), the species is recovering slowly. Currently, there are only approximately 300 whales in our south-east Australian population.

Species experts have highlighted that southern right whales are vulnerable to boat strikes and disturbance right along the coast of Victoria. To help our southern right whale population recover, boat responsibly and follow three key actions:

1. WATCH OUT FOR WHALES: Stay alert, as southern right whales can be difficult to spot. These whales have no dorsal fin, so they can look like floating logs as they rest near the surface, often in shallow water close to shore.

2. SLOW DOWN TO 5 KNOTS: Within 300m of a whale, you must slow to 5 knots. It's best to travel at less than 10 knots when within 1km of whales to keep vessel noise low. Mothers and calves need rest and quiet as they communicate in whispers to avoid predators.

3. KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE: Don't go within 200m of a whale in a boat, 300m on a jet ski. Stay out of their way and avoid boxing them in. If you find yourself too close to a whale, put your engine in neutral and let them pass.

The broader community can also help protect our whales:

- Learn about our southern right whales and share this knowledge with others.
- Report disturbance to whales or unsafe boating to Crime Stoppers Victoria on **1800 333 000**.
- Upload photographs and sightings of the visiting whales to the online platform, [WhaleFace](#). The information collected will help future research and provide updates on the whales during breeding season.

Watch out for whales – awareness initiative

In the coming weeks, southern right whales will give birth and nurse their calves in waters along the Victorian coastline. It means those of us out on the water must take special care to protect them.

With funding from the Victorian Government's Icon Species Program, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's (DEECA) Arthur Rylah Institute and the Conservation Regulator are leading a community awareness and engagement initiative to help reduce the risk of boat strikes and disturbance to our whales.

The project has delivered a range of resources to educate our recreational boating community about the important role they play in protecting the species. We need your help spreading these important messages to your community at events, workshops, or public locations.

Enclosed in this Engagement pack is:

- Poster - seasonal boat ramp signage
- Postcard
- Sticker
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs)
- Social media post static
- Social media post video
- Newsletter article

If you would like to receive hard copies of the above printable material, please contact our project team using the details below.

Contacts

Project Lead: Dr Kasey Stamation, kasey.stamation@delwp.vic.gov.au

Arthur Rylah Institute, Collaboration and Impact: Tess McLaren, tess.mclaren@delwp.vic.gov.au

Poster – Warrnambool seasonal signage

Specs: A2 (can be printed at A3)



From **May - October**
Across all of Victoria's coastal waters

WHALES IN WATER

STAY ALERT

Only ~300 of our endangered **southern right whales** remain in the south-east Australian population.

WATCH OUT FOR WHALES



Stay alert, southern right whales can be difficult to spot.
These whales have no dorsal fin, so they can look like floating logs as they rest near the surface, often in shallow water close to shore.

SLOW DOWN TO 5 KNOTS



Within 300m of a whale you must slow to 5 knots.
It's best to travel <10 knots when within 1km of whales to keep vessel noise low. Mothers and calves need rest and quiet as they communicate in whispers to avoid predators.

KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE



Don't go within 200m of a whale in a boat, 300m on a jet ski.
Stay out of their way and avoid boxing them in. If you find yourself too close to a whale, put your engine in neutral and let them pass.

Victorian coastal waters are a special place for these iconic whales that return each winter to give birth and raise their calves.

Now more than ever, our safe boating can help protect our whales while their population recovers.

Report disturbance to whales or unsafe boating to Crime Stoppers 1800 333 000
Find out more by visiting our website:



VICTORIA
State Government

The Southern Right Whale Icon Species Project was funded by the Victorian Government.

Audience: Boaters and coastal community of Warrnambool

How should it be shared?

This poster has been designed specifically for Warrnambool where locals are already familiar with the term whale nursery but need to be alert to whales present outside their regular breeding ground at Logan's Beach. This poster is not designed to be used at Logan's Beach as separate rules apply for vessels from 1 June to 31 October. It can be displayed at retail stores or hospitality venues or provided to boating/fishing interest groups in the Warrnambool community for display. Corflute signs will be displayed at coastal boat ramps in Warrnambool between May and October to warn people that whales are in the water.

DOWNLOAD

Poster – State-wide seasonal signage

Specs: A2 (can be printed at A3)



The poster features a yellow background at the top with a cartoon illustration of a large whale and a smaller calf swimming. Below the illustration, the text reads: "From May - October Victoria's coastal waters are a". A black horizontal band contains the words "WHALE NURSERY" in large white letters. Below this, the words "STAY ALERT" are written in large red letters. A red horizontal band contains the text: "Only ~300 of our endangered southern right whales remain in the south-east Australian population." Below this are three columns of information, each with a small illustration and a title. The first column is titled "WATCH OUT FOR WHALES" and shows a whale with a boat nearby. The second is titled "SLOW DOWN TO 5 KNOTS" and shows a whale with "Shhhh" written above it. The third is titled "KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE" and shows a whale with a "200m" distance marker. At the bottom of the poster is a dark blue section with white text, including the Victorian Government logo, a QR code, and contact information for Crime Stoppers.

From
May - October
Victoria's coastal waters are a

WHALE NURSERY

STAY ALERT

Only ~300 of our endangered **southern right whales** remain in the south-east Australian population.

WATCH OUT FOR WHALES

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These whales have no dorsal fin, so they can look like floating logs as they rest near the surface, often in shallow water close to shore.

SLOW DOWN TO 5 KNOTS

Within 300m of a whale you must slow to 5 knots.

It's best to travel <10 knots when within 1km of whales to keep vessel noise low. Mothers and calves need rest and quiet as they communicate in whispers to avoid predators.

KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE

Don't go within 200m of a whale in a boat, 300m on a jet ski.

Stay out of their way and avoid boxing them in. If you find yourself too close to a whale, put your engine in neutral and let them pass.

Victorian coastal waters are a special place for these iconic whales that return each winter to give birth and raise their calves.

Now more than ever, our safe boating can help protect our whales while their population recovers.

Report disturbance to whales or unsafe boating to Crime Stoppers 1800 333 000

Find out more by visiting our website:



VICTORIA
GOVERNMENT

The Southern Right Whale Icon Species Project was funded by the Victorian Government.

Audience: Boaters, coastal communities

How should it be shared?

This poster has been designed for display right along Victoria's coastline. It can be displayed at retail stores or hospitality venues or provided to boating/fishing interest groups in coastal communities for display. Corflute signs will be displayed at coastal boat ramps between May and October to ensure people who use the water stay alert for whales.

[DOWNLOAD](#)

Postcard

Specs: 99mm x 210mm (1/3 A4)



WATCH OUT FOR WHALES



Stay alert, southern right whales can be difficult to spot.

These whales have no dorsal fin, so they can look like floating logs as they rest near the surface, often in shallow water close to shore.

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Victorian coastal waters are a special place for our endangered **southern right whales** that return each winter to give birth and raise their calves.

Now more than ever, our safe boating can help protect our whales while their population recovers.

Report disturbance to whales or unsafe boating to Crime Stoppers
1800 333 000

Find out more by visiting our website:



The Southern Right Whale Icon Species Project was funded by the Victorian Government.



Audience: Boaters, coastal community.

How should it be shared?

This postcard can be distributed at events or workshops, supplied to retail stores or hospitality venues, or provided to boating/fishing interest groups. It has been designed for people to take and keep in their pocket the next time they go boating.

DOWNLOAD

Sticker

Specs: 85mm



Audience: Recreational and commercial boat users, beach goers, coastal community.

How should it be shared?

This sticker can be distributed at community events, supplied to retail stores or hospitality venues, or provided to local schools and community interest groups. It has been designed for outdoor use and people stick it on their boat, vehicle, surfboard bag or beach gear.

Contact our team for your own stickers or download the design below.

[DOWNLOAD](#)

FAQs

Specs: A4 double sided

Southern right whale – Frequently asked questions

Why are southern right whales endangered?

Southern right whales were the target of whalers for many years, their name 'Right Whale' comes from being considered the right whale to hunt. Between 1822 and 1930, more than 26 000 individuals were taken in Australian and New Zealand waters. Mother-calf pairs resting close to shore were easy targets for shore-based whalers until they were protected in 1935. While humpback whales have bounced back after their protection from whaling in 1963, southern right whales have not. This slow recovery is thought to be partly attributed to their infrequent calving and strong birthing site preference. Scientists believe Logan's Beach may be the only breeding ground in south-eastern Australia where all females (familiar with that site) weren't killed during whaling and so the cultural memory for that site was retained.

What are the threats to Southern right whales?

Human activity is one of the biggest threats to Southern right whales, they are at particular risk from boat strikes, noise disturbance and entanglements while calving, nursing, and resting in the waters along Victoria's coast.

How can boaters avoid incidents with whales?

Stay alert for all whales when out on the water, including Southern right whales and Humpback Whales. Southern right whales can be difficult to spot as they have no dorsal fin, so they can look like floating logs when resting near the surface.

Boaters should slow down when near a whale. If you find yourself within 300 metres of any whale, you must slow to five knots. It's best to travel at speeds less than 10 knots when within one kilometre of whales to keep the vessel noise low. Mothers and calves need rest and quiet as they communicate in whispers to avoid predators.

It's also important to keep a safe distance from whales once you spot them. Boats must stay at least 200m from whales. Stay out of their way and avoid boxing them in. If you find yourself too close to a whale, put your engine in neutral and let them pass.

How can you tell the difference between Southern right whales and other whale species in Victoria?

Southern right whales have no dorsal fin or white on the undersides of their pectoral fins or tail, which distinguishes them from Victoria's most frequently sighted whale species the humpback whale. The southern right whale has short paddle like pectoral fins compared to the very long pectoral fins of the humpback whale. Southern right whales also have hard white bumps on their heads (called callosities) which are unique to right whales. Many of Victoria's southern right whales can be individually identified by their unique callosity patterns.

In the past, Logans Beach has been referred to as a 'whale nursery', why is the new signage referring to the whole coast of Victoria as a whale nursery?

While Logans Beach is the only calving ground currently legislated as an 'exclusion zone' during the whale season, our research is showing that Southern right whales are increasingly using other areas along Victoria's coast to nurse and raise their calves. Cow-calf pairs will travel slowly along the coast outside of their calving ground, presumably so that the calf can strengthen its swimming skills in preparation for its journey south to the feeding grounds. Females may also choose other sheltered locations, outside of Logans Beach to raise their calves, especially as the population expands.

Is Logan's Beach still an exclusion zone June to October?

Yes, Logans Beach is still the primary calving ground and a critically important area to protect for our endangered Southern right whales. Entering this zone is prohibited between 1 June and 31 October.

Audience: Engagement partners, coastal community.

How should it be shared?

This FAQ document can be provided to interested parties or used to inform further engagement across different platforms such as websites, media articles or educational conversations with local community or at events.

DOWNLOAD

Social media post static

Specs: 1080 x 1080



Suggested text:

Our endangered southern right whales need our help. When out on the water: Watch for whales, slow down and keep a safe distance.

Call to action: Learn more about sharing the water with whales at <https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/our-wildlife/whales,-dolphins-and-seals/water-safety-around-marine-mammals>

Audience: Coastal community

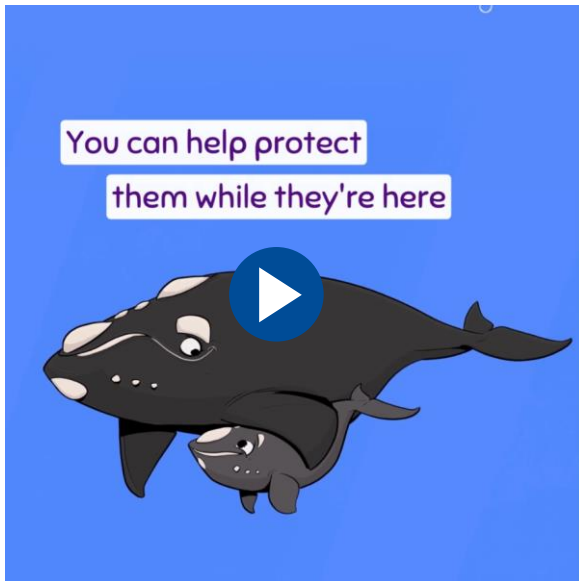
How should it be shared?

Share this image and text on your social media platforms to ensure coastal communities see the important message.

DOWNLOAD

Social media video

Specs: 44seconds, MP4, 1080 x 1080



Suggested text:

Our endangered southern right whales need our help. To protect our whales when out on the water: Watch for whales, slow down and keep a safe distance.

Stay alert, these whales have no dorsal fin and can look like floating logs as mothers and calves rest near the surface, often in shallow water close to shore. Slow down to keep vessel noise low. Mothers and calves need rest and quiet as they communicate in whispers to avoid predators.

Giving our whales plenty of space keeps them safe.

Call to action: Learn more about sharing the water with whales at <https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/our-wildlife/whales,-dolphins-and-seals/water-safety-around-marine-mammals>

Audience: Coastal community.

How should it be shared?

Share this fun video and text on your social media platforms to ensure coastal communities see the important message.

DOWNLOAD

Newsletter article

Looking out for our southern right whales

Boaters are being asked to stay alert as endangered southern right whales make their way back to Victoria's coastal waters to birth and care for their young.

With just 300 southern right whales estimated to remain in the south-eastern Australian population, the annual breeding season – from May to October – is a crucial time for the species.

Boaters play an important role in protecting these rare and magnificent creatures as disturbance and strikes from boats pose significant threats during this time.

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's (DEECA) Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research and the Conservation Regulator are urging our recreational boating community to follow three simple steps:

1. **WATCH OUT FOR WHALES:** Stay alert, southern right whales can be difficult to spot. These whales have no dorsal fin, so they can look like floating logs as they rest near the surface, often in shallow water close to shore.
2. **SLOW DOWN TO 5 KNOTS:** Within 300m of a whale you must slow to 5 knots. It's best to travel at speeds less than 10 knots when within 1km of whales to keep vessel noise low. Mothers and calves need rest and quiet as they communicate in whispers to avoid predators.
3. **KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE:** Do not go within 200m of a whale in a boat, 300m on a jet ski. Stay out of their way and avoid boxing them in. If you find yourself too close to a whale, put your engine in neutral and let them pass.

The endangered species has traditionally been observed at Warrnambool's Logan's Beach, however in recent years mothers and calves have increasingly been seen right along Victoria's coast.

Community members can contribute to whale conservation by submitting whale sightings and photos to [WhaleFace](#).

Community sightings submitted to this platform have allowed DEECA to add new whales to the photo-identification catalogue, to track the return of calving females, and have provided crucial information about nursing, resting, and strengthening locations used by southern right whales.

To learn more about the regulations for boaters near whales, visit: <https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/our-wildlife/whales,-dolphins-and-seals/water-safety-around-marine-mammals>

Audience: Boat owners, vessel operators, broader coastal community

How should it be shared?

This article has been written for stakeholders to share in their regular newsletters or on the news sections of their websites. It is designed to engage boat owners and vessel operators to follow the important and simple steps to protect whales, and to encourage the broader community to contribute to the [WhaleFace](#) platform.

DOWNLOAD

