
Whale Watching

Level

4+

Key questions

Why is it important to keep data on whales?

What sort of data is important?

Key outcome

Develop a sense of responsibility for collecting data and a feeling of empathy for whales.

Adapted from Queensland Department of Environment's *Whale Watching* leaflet, from *Project ReefEd*, the Queensland Department of Environment's leaflets, and Gould League Poster.

All States have regulations controlling approaches to whales by boats. Two major marine parks have been set up in Hervey Bay (Queensland) and in the Great Australian Bight (SA) to protect large numbers of whales which collect there at certain times of the year. Whale watching leaflets are available from the respective state government Departments of Environment.

What you need

Clipboard, pencil

Paper

Whale watch leaflets

What you do

A great deal of time can be spent at an appropriate site along the coast or at sea waiting for whales or dolphins to surface or blow a spout! Students may be able to assist in the Australian research program into sightings of whales and can use the following procedures.

1. Observe the whale, including its spout, the shape of the back, back (flukes) and side (pectoral) fins and method of diving.
2. Record the date, time, place of sighting, identification (if made), number in pod, estimate of size, direction of travel and whether there are young.

If students come across a stranded whale, they must report their finding to either their state Museum or Department of Environment, using the phone numbers available in any telephone book. If the whale is still alive, the animal may be able to be saved; if dead, the carcass should be examined before it decomposes.

Again, recording observations of length, any visible injuries, locality and date is very important. Photographs can be very useful in establishing both the species and its size.

References

'Whales' *Reef Notes*, available from the GBRMPA, PO Box 1379, Townsville 4810.
The Queensland Department of Environment, Marine Parks Section, PO Box 155 Brisbane Albert St, 4002, distributes free leaflets on whale identification and whale watching. Other state Departments of Conservation also distribute local information.
The Gould League of Victoria, Po Box 117, Moorabbin 3189, sells a *Cetacean Pack* and a poster on whales.

Whale Watching

Data sheet for Stranding Report

| | |
|--|--|
| Species | |
| Date of stranding | |
| Locality | |
| Number of individuals | |
| Condition | |
| Length (tip of upper jaw to tail notch) | |
| Sex | |
| Number & longitudinal extent of throat grooves | |
| Number of teeth each side of jaw | |
| Colour description (plus photos & sketches) | |
| Remarks | |
| Observer's Name | |
| Address | |
