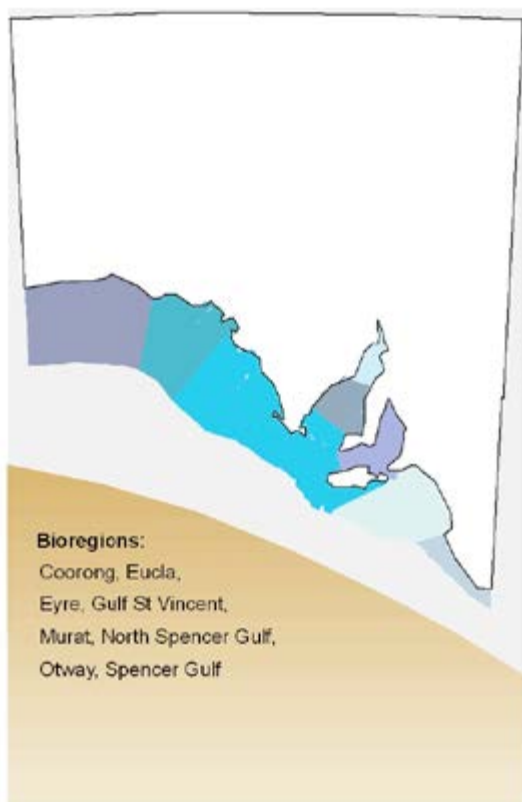


Southern Right Whale

Eubalaena australis



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Southern Right Whales are mammals, not fish. They breathe air just like humans do through nostrils called 'blowholes' located on top of their heads. All whales are cetaceans – a group of marine mammals which also includes dolphins and porpoises.

The raised whitish patches of thickened skin on Southern Right Whales are called callosities and are encrusted with marine lice and barnacles. They are present on calves from birth and can be used to individually identify whales throughout their lifetime (like unique birthmarks). A Southern Right Whale calf weighs about one tonne at birth, while adults can weigh up to 80 tonnes.

The story of Kondole, the whale, is one dreamtime story from Encounter Bay.

Diet

These giant mammals eat some of the smallest foods in the ocean in large quantities. Small crustaceans, like krill and copepods, make up most of their diet. A Southern Right Whale eats up to a tonne of tiny crustaceans per day in subantarctic waters. They strain their food from the ocean, catching it in their comb-like 'teeth' called baleen.

Breeding

Between 25 and 55 calves are born in Southern Australia each year in June and nursing continues in November. When a calf is born it has only a little blubber to keep it warm. To quickly build up some blubber it suckles up to 150 litres of rich, fatty milk from its mother every day. When doing this it can gain up to 90kg in weight each day.

Habitat

Every year, Southern Right Whales migrate from cold Antarctic waters to the warmer sheltered waters of southern Australia to breed and have their young (calves). The Head of the Great Australian Bight is an important calving ground for the Southern Right Whale, with more than 900 individual whales recorded in this area over the past 18 years.

Threats

Whaling (hunting) in the past drastically reduced their numbers from around 60,000 to around 7,000 globally. Pollution, habitat degradation, and predation by sharks are other potential threats to Southern Right Whales. Coastal development, human harassment and entanglement in fishing gear and ship strikes are other problems.



Adult Southern Right Whales grow up to 18 metres long – that’s as long as a bus!

Conservation

Numbers of Southern Right Whale are thought to be increasing since they were internationally protected

You can help the Southern Right Whale by:

- going whale watching and seeing Southern Right Whales for yourself
- not polluting – anything washed down a stormwater drain goes straight out to sea
- following the whale watching code if you are lucky enough to see a whale at sea: keep your distance and keep quiet.

For further information

Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

Eastwood: (08) 8273 9100

Gawler: (08) 8523 7700

Lobethal: (08) 8389 5900

Willunga: (08) 8550 3400

Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

Northern Adelaide: (08) 8406 8289

Barossa: (08) 8563 8436

Central Adelaide: (08) 8234 7255

Southern Adelaide: (08) 8384 0176

Southern Fleurieu: (08) 8551 0524



Photo by Aude Loisier

Southern Right Whale



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