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Sardine Run 2018 Media Update Thursday 14th June 2018

The KZN Sharks Board undertook a monitoring flight to Port St Johns this morning after observing increased sardine activity in the area between Waterfall Bluff and Port St Johns yesterday. The first small pockets of sardines were spotted in the Kelso area followed by few smaller ones off Mtwalume and Ifafa. These were clearly visible due to the very clear water visibility and there was no predator activity seen with these shoals. One of the commercial seine netters managed to net 500 crates at Kelso later on during mid-morning. Although the majority of the fish netted were sardines there were other shoaling baitfish species mixed with them which is common with the early shoals.

The real action, that is, sardine shoals accompanied by thousands of dolphins, Cape gannets and sharks were clearly visible from just north of Mkhambati southwards to Umgazana which is to the south of Port St Johns. This was very exciting to see as we have not observed this type of intense activity so near to KZN for a number of years. It is very difficult to try and predict when and if this spectacle will reach KZN and the timeline could be anything from a few days' to a possibly a week or two. Should the fish continue northwards it appears that we may be in for one of the better sardine runs seen in a long while.

The majority of the shark safety gear between Hibberdene and Port Edward has been removed from the water in anticipation of the arrival of the sardines and associated predators. It is highly likely that the few remaining beaches that are currently open for bathing will have gear removed early tomorrow morning. The Sharks Board understands the frustration sometimes experienced by some beach users at this time of the year when conditions are pleasant for bathers but bathing is restricted due to the removal of the shark safety gear, however appeals to the public to understand and support the reasons for these decisions. The Board will continue to monitor the movement of the shoals and will manage the shark safety gear in consultation with the coastal municipalities that are affected.

Mike Anderson-Reade
Head of Operations