



Promulgated in terms of the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board Act, 2008 (Act No. 5 of 2008)

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## **Sardine Run 2020**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Tuesday 26 May 2020**

Every year at this time the KZN Sharks Board tries to anticipate the arrival of the sardines and their associated predators, the sharks and dolphin, into southern KZN waters.

The reason for this is solely in order to manage the removal of Shark Safety Gear prior to the arrival of what has become internationally renowned as *The Greatest Shoal on Earth*. Due to the unpredictable nature of these little silver fish, most locals, fishermen and scientists understand that this task is easier said than done. There have been many occasions in the past when predictions and opinions have been totally incorrect. These fish can move through in the deep and out of sight of most of the predators. There have been many years when these fish are not seen on the lower south coast at all and they have appeared without warning at Scottburgh, Amanzimtoti and even Durban on occasions. The Cape Gannets are the best indicators of the sardines and are often seen in vast numbers, dropping out of the sky and diving on the shoals of sardines.

In a normal scenario, the Sharks Board undertakes routine pre-season aerial surveys and boat trips in order to track the movement of sardines through the Eastern Cape. We are also in constant contact with shore anglers and dive operators, who are based on the Wild Coast and can see the activity passing. We also rely on the seine netters who are well informed and who follow the movements of the shoals with great interest.

Due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 National lockdown and in accordance with Lockdown Legislation and Regulations, all Shark Safety Gear was removed on 24 March 2020. As a result, no sardine surveillance flights, or operational boating activity has been permitted. Therefore, no physical monitoring of sardine activity has been undertaken by the Board.

We have however been receiving numerous reports of large concentrations of sardines and associated activity in the Eastern Cape between East London and Mazeppa Bay. On Monday 25th May large concentrations of Cape Gannets were seen directly off the Kob Inn at the Qhorha River mouth, which is 230 km south of Port Edward.

The severe cold front, with its gale force south-westerly winds and large surf, which is due to hit the KZN south coast on Tuesday 26 May could well drive the sardines into deeper water. The shoals could then reappear inshore along the KZN south coast when the sea and weather conditions settle.

Please keep in mind that most of the reporting and feedback we are receiving is in the inshore areas at the moment. There is always a possibility of being surprised by fish which have moved through in the deep or small pockets without any predators to announce their arrival.

Acting HOD: Operations

GREG THOMPSON