



K W A Z U L U - N A T A L
SHARKS BOARD
Maritime Centre of Excellence

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

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MEDIA RELEASE

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The humpback whale population has recovered extremely well since whaling ceased during the early 1970's and the current population estimates for our region during the winter migration period (June to November) is estimated to be approximately 15,000, increasing at a rate of 11% per annum. It appears that the whales choose to travel at different distances offshore each year and also favour different bays to rest in with their new born calves. This is possibly associated with water clarity, swell size and nearshore currents. Members of the public who are avid whale watchers may have noticed that there has been a substantial increase in the number of humpback mother and calf pairs visiting the Zinkwazi and Blythedale area this season.

The KZN Sharks Board and the Kwadukuza Municipality share concerns of an entanglement in the shark safety gear occurring and in an attempt to find a suitable solution to this we have, in consultation with the Sharks Board Research Division, agreed on a way forward for the next month or so. During periods of intense whale activity the two nets at Zinkwazi and one at Blythedale will be removed and replaced with additional drumlines as a temporary measure. After examining 10 years of shark capture data for these two beaches, we are confident that this short term variation to the gear will not lead to any increase in risk for bathers. Drumlines match the catch statistics of nets in terms of the capture of both the great white and tiger shark. Bull sharks, the other species of concern are predominantly a summer species and captures of these during September and October are very low.

Both the Kwadukuza Municipality and the Sharks Board believe that this approach serves in the best interest of the environment. Most of these whales will leave the KZN coast by the end of October early November for the summer feeding grounds in the Antarctic. This approach may be considered during peak whale season at other protected beaches along the KZN coast in the years ahead. Head of Operations Mike Anderson-Reade expressed his gratitude to the Kwadukuza Municipality for their understanding and cooperation in dealing with this issue.

ENDS

Mike Anderson-Reade

Head of Operations