

## CETACEANS

### **Sperm Whale** *Physeter macrocephalus*

Sperm Whales were seen on two dates, with eight animals on 31 March (the sea day between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia) and two on 11 April off New Ireland.

On the early WPO expeditions, this species was regularly seen off Bougainville, however, WPO 2013 was the second year in succession when none were recorded there. Although average water temperatures around the Solomon Islands were reported to be 3-5°C above normal, it seems unlikely this is the explanation for this unexpected trend.

### **Humpback Whale** *Megaptera novaeangliae*

The sole sighting was a lone animal on 26 March offshore from South Island.

### **Blue Whale** *Balaenoptera musculus*

Undoubtedly one of the most unexpected discoveries on any WPO expedition was the eight Blue Whales which were seen off the west coast of North Island on 27-28 March. The first animal was recorded shortly after exiting Cook Strait (between South and North Islands), with three more seen later day and four further sightings the following day.

### **Bryde's Whale** *Balaenoptera edeni*

A lone animal off New Ireland on 11 April was the only record of the expedition and the first sighting of this species on a WPO voyage for a number of years.

### **Orca** *Orcinus orca*

At least 20 animals were seen on 27 March off the south-west corner of North Island.

### **Short-finned Pilot Whale** *Globicephala macrorhynchus*

A small pod (low A) was recorded on 7 April, as the ship cruised from Makira towards Guadalcanal.

### **Pygmy Killer Whale** *Feresa attenuata*

Six individuals of this small and rarely encountered species were seen off New Ireland on 11 April.

### **Melon-headed Whale** *Peponocephala electra*

There were several sightings of this species off New Ireland on 11 April (A), with some of the animals seen close to the ship.

### **False Killer Whale** *Pseudorca crassidens*

The only records of this species were as the ship sailed away from Guadalcanal (8 April), with a low A logged.

### **Cuvier's Beaked Whale** *Ziphius cavirostris*

At least three individuals were seen off the New Caledonian coastline on 1 April.

### **Dwarf Sperm Whale** *Kogia breviceps*

This species was only seen on 7 April (offshore from Makira) with three animals spotted.

### **Bottlenose Dolphin** *Tursiops truncatus*

Small numbers of Bottlenose Dolphins were seen on 30 March (near Norfolk Island), 31 March (sea day between Norfolk Island and New Caledonia) and 3 April (offshore from New Caledonia), although all counts were in low single figures.

A was also logged off Kolombangara on 9 April. It is possible these animals were Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops aduncus*, although the views were not good enough to be certain.

**Rough-toothed Dolphin** *Steno bredanensis*

The waters off Bougainville are usually reasonably reliable for this species and a small pod of five or so animals were seen there on 10 April.

**Short-beaked Common Dolphin** *Delphinus delphis*

Good numbers were seen off the west coast of North Island on 28 March, with B logged.

**Spinner Dolphin** *Stenella longirostris*

This species can be extremely common off Bougainville and New Ireland and good numbers were seen offshore from the latter island on 11 April, with B recorded.

**Pantropical Spotted Dolphin** *Stenella attenuate*

Another species which was seen well off New Ireland (11 April: A).

**Fraser's Dolphin** *Lagenodelphis hosei*

The views of this species off New Ireland (11 April) were unquestionably the best of any WPO expedition, with some of the animals bow-riding for several minutes and other 'porpoising' immediately adjacent to the side of the ship. This gave everyone a great opportunity to see the animals' pink flanks and somewhat stubby beaks.

**Dusky Dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus obscurus*

Reasonable numbers were seen on the first full day of the expedition (26 March), as the ship cruised north up the east coast of South Island.

**Hector's Dolphin** *Cephalorhynchus hectori*

At least five of these small New Zealand endemics were seen on 26 March, not long after the ship had left Lyttelton.

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