

>>> **ORCA**
NEWSLETTER <<<

AUGUST NEWS

The beauty of nature



TOP NEWS OF THE MONTH

41 OPPORTUNISTIC BOAT SURVEYS

By Julene Capazorio

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Discover the astonishing highlights of our August marine research with Ocean Blue Adventures: From an abundance of Southern Right whales to rare Humpback dolphin sightings and the remarkable growth in migrating Southern Right populations, our surveys bring marine wonders to light.

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Discover our August achievements: 115 hours of dedicated research on the Robberg Peninsula resulted in 55 shark sightings, including great whites and bronze whalers, along with 29 graceful stingrays. Our commitment to understanding and preserving Plettenberg Bay's marine ecosystem continues.

OVER 100 HOURS SEARCHING FOR SHARKS ALONG ROBBERG

By Melissa Nel

TIME SPENT AT SEA WITH OCEAN BLUE ADVENTURES

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By Julene Capazorio

>>> WHALES!

During our opportunistic boat-based research with the renowned sustainable whale-watching company Ocean Blue Adventures, we collect data on the marine life observed during our surveys out on the ocean waters in the Plettenberg Bay area. This includes species ranging from migratory seabirds to cetaceans, recording their movements, response to our presence and overall behaviours. In August we successfully conducted 41 surveys, 11 hours in 'close' encounters/contact with marine animals, **61,5 hours in total on the ocean**. Of these 41 surveys, **273 whales, 1561 dolphins** and 206 other sightings were observed. These sightings were significantly dominated by the migratory species, the Southern Right whale being observed all along the coast in the shallow waters. Southern Right whale presence in our bay is from June to November. They come from their feedings grounds in the Antarctic to use the shallow, warm, and sheltered waters in Plettenberg Bay to mate and calf safely. With exceptional weather conditions, the whales staying in the shallows and swimming slowly, these factors together made for the perfect observation and data collection sightings.

Other whale sightings included our inconspicuous resident whale species, the Bryde's whale as well as the first sightings of the Humpback whales on their returning migration.

Our volunteers were also lucky to see a few superpods of Bottlenose dolphins surfing, jumping, and gliding through the water as well as the rare and **endangered Indopacific Humpback dolphin**.

We are nearing towards the end of our recognized winter great white shark season, but still managed to spot **3 white sharks** on our surveys.

Our volunteers are also given to chance to receive marine guide training and assist the guiding experience on the tourist whale-watching boats. This gives them hands-on experience not only in the marine conservation area but also in the sustainable tourism industry, which generally goes hand in hand.

Highlight of the month was spotting **26 Southern Right whales** (breeding & mother-calf pairs) on a one-and-a-half-hour sunrise whale survey trip. It was mentioned by the owners and staff of Ocean Blue Adventures that this is the most Southern Right being observed in the whale season in more than 10 years.

“The highlight of the month was spotting 26 Southern Right whales (breeding & mother-calf pairs) on a one-and-a-half-hour sunrise whale survey trip!”.



COMMUNITY CORNER:

EMPOWERING STUDENTS, CELEBRATING SPORTS, AND REVIVING ROCKY SHORES

By Kade Howorth

>>> SIYAKULA SPORTS DAY IN KWANOKATHULA

We had a wonderful experience engaging in enjoyable activities with the youth at the Kwanokathula Sports Field during Siyakula's participation in the annual sports day. The atmosphere was electric, with music and delicious hotdogs complementing the event. Additionally, a playground provided a platform for the children to display their unwavering courage as they fearlessly raced down the towering slide.

>>> SHARK SPOTTERS EDUCATION COLLAB

In September we had the privilege of educating **258 kids** as well as plenty staff members at Stofpad and Kwanokathula primary school. We shared the importance of sharks found in Plettenberg Bay, as well as playing fun and interactive games that encourage kids to be safe at the beach and find new love for the sharks.



NEW BEGINNINGS: ROCKY SHORE SURVEYS

We have embarked on an exciting new beach survey initiative aimed at comprehensively exploring the abundance and distribution of marine organisms. Employing sophisticated techniques such as quadrat sampling and transect surveys, we have commenced our research endeavor. While it is still early in our study, initial findings indicate the presence of a remarkably biodiverse ecosystem. Our survey area encompasses Central Beach, Keurbooms Beach, Robberg Beach, and Lookout Beach, and we eagerly anticipate uncovering further insights as we continue our monitoring efforts.



DEDICATED CLIFF-TOP MONITORING ALONG ROBBERG MPA

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By Melissa Nel

>>> SHARKS!

Throughout this month, the dedicated team at ORCA, alongside our passionate volunteers, invested a cumulative total of 115 hours in observational efforts from the breathtaking Robberg Peninsula. This commitment involves embarking on challenging hikes twice a week, during which we strategically position ourselves at carefully selected vantage points along the mountain. Our overarching goal is to gain valuable insights into the seasonality of shark populations in the Plettenberg Bay region and to explore the potential impact of various environmental factors on their presence.

As we reflect on the past month, our efforts have borne fruit with a remarkable tally of 55 shark sightings recorded in August. These sightings encompassed the magnificent great white shark, known for its imposing presence, as well as the formidable bronze whaler species. In addition to these thrilling encounters, our team documented an impressive 29 sightings of majestic stingrays gracefully navigating the ocean waters.

Our team couldn't be more thrilled with the level of activity we've observed this month, and we're eager to delve deeper into our findings. By continuing our vigilant monitoring and research, we aim to further our understanding of the marine ecosystem in the Plettenberg Bay area and contribute to its conservation and preservation.

“The highlight of our efforts comes in the form of a remarkable tally of 55 shark sightings recorded in August.”.

