

CAPE CHATTER

Nature Observations around The Cape

Special Edition

6th October 2020



*Great and Pied Cormorant keeping watch over
the channel at Port Welshpool*

The Cape is on the traditional land
of the Bunurong people

*"When we tug at a single thing in nature,
we find it attached to the rest of the
world..." John Muir*

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A day on the water ...

I have taken the liberty to produce something a little different in this
Special Edition of **Cape Chatter**.

The Cape is in a special part of the world and our back yard is the wild water of Bass Strait. We do not get the chance to see much out on the water and have only sporadic chances to see life in the blue world. So a small group of **Cape** residents (D,G and the 4J's – sounds like a 70's pop group!) made the most of a whale watching trip off Wilson's Promotory last Friday with **Wildlifecoast Cruises**. And we were not disappointed.

Despite some rough conditions, we managed to see an array of seabirds, dolphins and humpback whales, all which can be seen along our stretch of the Bunurong Coast, along with the spectacular scenery of Wilson's Promotory with it's many lovely coves and islands.

Highlights were seeing three dolphin pods and four humpback whales, two which kept us occupied for over an hour performing all types of behavioural manouvres.



Above and Below: *Common Dolphin* were happy to see us and kept us company alongside our vessel



THE MIGHTY HUMPBAC WHALE



Wilson's Prom appears to be the turning point south for humpbacks returning from their northern tropical migration down to Antarctica via the east Tasmanian coast for the summer. Over the next few weeks, mothers and calves are likely to be seen on the returning journey.

Our two Humpback Whales were sub-adult and they kept us spell bound for over an hour performing all sorts of party tricks: breaching, spy hopping, pectoral slapping, diving and 'head stands'.

The whales were estimated to be about 12 metres long (full size they grow to around 16).

These photos on the left were just a few of the amazing breaches where whales launch themselves out of the water spinning their massive bodies around.

I am not sure why they breach – is it a type of play, or communication, or are they ridding themselves of parasites? Whatever, it is spectacular to watch and hear!





Pectoral slaps ...

Another common movement displayed was the slapping of pectoral fins on the water which I understand to be a communication behaviour between humpbacks. There was also lots of lying on backs with the pectoral fins pointing to the sky.



One of the humpbacks had a distinctive clean white fluke, while the other had a smudgy grey coloured fluke. The picture below shows the fluke of one and the pectoral fin of the second whale.



Spy-hopping and head stands...

Spy-hopping, where the whale rises vertically from the water and appears to look around the water's horizon, was performed a couple of times.



Above: 'Head stand' where the whale launches it's tail vertically out of the water.



Below: The classic dive of a Humpback Whale as water sprays of its fluke and the second whale is displaying its pectoral fin.





Above: Black-faced Cormorant



Above: Australasian Gannet



Above: White-bellied Sea Eagle (immature)

Seabirds ...

Several seabirds were seen including: Shy Albatross, Australasian Gannet, Crested Tern, Pacific Gull, Great Cormorant, Pied Cormorant and Black-faced Cormorant. A beautiful, majestic, immature, White-bellied Sea-Eagle appeared late on the cruise.



Above: White-bellied Sea-Eagle. Picture taken into the sun but shows the wonderful flight feathers of these powerful birds.



Above: Great Cormorant in flight