

Further Blue Whale sightings – Mirissa, Southern Sri Lanka

It appears that our whale 'visitation' off the south coast near Mirissa is a regular event. Most recently we've had consistent sightings of blue whales about 6-8 NM off-shore over the last two months since early December 2007. Peak sightings were over the Christmas/New Year period; from 25th Dec through to 6th Jan, pods of between 3-7 whales were spotted every day when the weather was dry and calm, generally on exactly the same latitude. These whales, which Anouk Ilangakoon has identified as the Blue Whale, appeared to be traveling slowly in a westerly direction. However since then smaller pods have been regularly spotted during January with the last sightings of 2 whales on February 4th.

There is a theory that this is part of an annual migration pattern. However It also possible that these are not the strictly migratory southern hemisphere blue whales that move seasonally between Antarctic and tropical waters because if they were they should not be here now. An alternative theory is that the blues around Sri Lanka (at least some of them) do not undertake the annual migration as for some time there have been sporadic sightings on the west coast throughout the year (even during the monsoon) and whale stranding have been recorded all months of the year. Some experts believe that this could either mean that these are *B. musculus brevicauda* whose migratory patterns are still not fully understood or they are "true blues" that do not migrate for some other reason tied to year round food sources around Sri Lanka.

Whatever, it is exciting news for whale lovers in Sri Lanka. Since our first confirmed sight of the Blue Whales off Dondra Head in April 2006, the Mirissa Water Sports team have been keeping a detailed log of all the sightings of both whales & dolphins so that we can begin to understand their behaviour patterns. Although its is a not scientific record, we are hopeful that this information will be of some help to cetacean experts in future studies.

Last year both blue & sperm whale were again regularly spotted between mid April to 9th May 2007 (pre-monsoon). Lets hope they come inshore again for Sinhala New Year 2008!!

For photos and more information on whale watching trips visit our website: www.mirissawatersports.com