

Rare whale caught on film for first time

February 23 2012



A Shepherd's beaked whale off the coast of Australia's Victoria state. The Australian Antarctic Division team was tracking blue whales when they spotted the reclusive mammals, which are so rarely seen no population estimates of the species exist.

Australian researchers Thursday revealed they had filmed a pod of extremely rare Shepherd's beaked whales for the first time ever.

The Australian Antarctic Division team was tracking [blue whales](#) off the coast of Victoria state last month when they spotted the reclusive mammals, which are so rarely seen that no population estimates of the species exist.

Voyage leader Michael Double said the black and cream-coloured mammals with prominent dolphin-like beaks had been spotted in the wild only a handful of times through history.

According to the Australian environment department, there have only been two previous confirmed sightings -- a lone individual in [New Zealand](#) and a group of three in [Western Australia](#)

They have never been filmed live before.

"These animals are practically entirely known from stranded dead whales, and there haven't been many of them," Double told AFP, calling the footage "unique".

"They are an offshore animal, occupying [deep water](#), and when they surface it is only for a very short period of time."

Double said what was remarkable about the sighting was that the whale was previously thought to be a solitary creature, yet was in a pod of 10 to 12.

"To find them in a pod is very exciting and will change the guide books. Our two whale experts will now carefully study the footage to work out the whale sizes and so on and prepare a scientific paper."

The Shepherd's beaked whale, also known as the Tasman beaked whale, was discovered in 1937 but little is known about them.

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