

THREATENED SPECIES OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



SEI WHALE

Balaenoptera borealis

Conservation status

Australia: Vulnerable.

Northern Territory: Data Deficient.

Description

The sei whale is a moderately large (15-16 m length) baleen whale. It is dark blue-grey on the back and paler below. It has a prominent falcate dorsal fin; the baleen plates (each side of the mouth) are dark grey or black with a fine white inner fringe (Reeves *et al.* 2002). When diving they do not arch their back as pronouncedly as other whales.

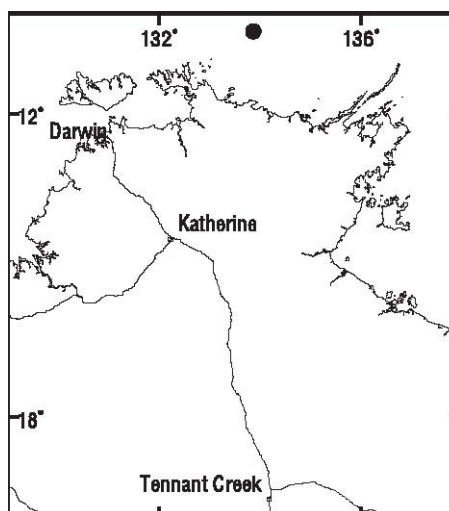
Distribution

The sei whale has a worldwide distribution from tropical waters to near polar regions. Its distribution may be inconstant and unpredictable. Sei whales are generally deep water animals, rarely found near the coast (Bryden *et al.* 1998). They are infrequently recorded in Australian waters.

Around the NT, there is only one record, from a trawl in Commonwealth waters on 1 Sept 1989 at 10°21'S, 133°52'E (Chatto and Warnecke 2000).

Conservation reserves where recorded:

None.



Known location of the Sei Whale

• = post 1970

Ecology

Sei whales are amongst the fastest of all whales. They generally occur in small groups, but may form feeding aggregations. They are typically surface feeders, skimming the water with open mouths. They have a relatively broad diet including fish, krill and copepods.

Conservation assessment

Hunting pressure caused the Southern Hemisphere population of sei whales to decline from about 100,000 to 25,000 (Bryden *et al.* 1998).

In the Northern Territory, there are too few records to assess its conservation status.

Threatening processes

The main threat to the sei whale is the legacy of previous hunting, and current and future proposed hunting. It may also be affected by habitat degradation, including reduction in food supplies, and climate change (DEH 2005).



Northern Territory Government

Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts

Conservation objectives and management

National conservation and management objectives are detailed in a national recovery plan (DEH 2005). The main NT priority is to improve knowledge of the distribution, status and habitat requirements of this species, and other whales, in and around NT waters.

Compilers

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References

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- DEH (2005). *Humpback whale recovery plan, 2005-2010*. (Department of Environment and Heritage, Canberra.)
- Reeves, R.R., Stewart, B.S., Clapham, P.J., and Powell, J.A. (2002). *Sea mammals of the world*. (A. & C. Black, London.)

