

Killer Whales of the Northern Indian Ocean: A Catalogue of Photo-Identified Individuals



With Contributions from members of the
Northern Indian Ocean Killer Whale Alliance

August 2018



The Northern Indian Ocean Killer Whale ID Catalogue

August 2018

The Northern Indian Ocean Killer Whale ID Catalogue and sightings repository are the result of an extensive collaborative effort by the individuals and organizations that make up the [Northern Indian Ocean Killer Whale Alliance \(NIOKWA\)](#).

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For the most current (and up to date) version of this catalogue, please visit the Live On Screen Version hosted on the [NIOKWA website](#).

Cover Photo: NIO034 by Raja and the Whales Crew

About the NIO Killer Whale Alliance

Very little is known about the killer whales that inhabit the tropical waters of the Northern Indian Ocean.

Due to their typically offshore nature and infrequent sightings, very little is known about their ecology, movements, population structure and more...this makes them some of the most mysterious cetaceans in the world.

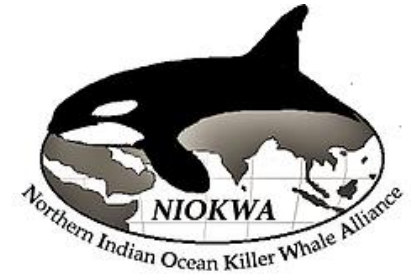
The Northern Indian Ocean Killer Whale Alliance was founded as part of a collaborative project between Orca Project Sri Lanka, a Citizen Science study of killer whales seen off Sri Lanka, and Wildlife Conservation Society biologist Tim Collins, with the hopes of shedding some light on the lives of these mysterious whales. In addition to coordinating a Photo ID catalogue for the region and developing a general repository of sighting records, the alliance was set up with the objective of increasing the number of “eyes and ears” available in the area for killer whale sightings. Membership includes individuals and organizations from a wide range of backgrounds including marine research, tourism and recreation.

Together we learn more

Although sightings are sparse they can be far more informative when they are shared and compared. In addition to this PDF, a live online version the catalogue can also be found on the NIOKWA website under the 'ID Catalogue' tab. All images contributed are fully credited to their photographer(s), observers and/or study.

While only in the early stages, this ocean-wide collaborative effort bears the support of over 30 individuals and 19 organizations. We predict that in time this project may reveal some of the secrets of the whales in this region, including insights into their site fidelity, diet, movements between countries, population sizes and maybe even ecotypes.

Individual Members of the Northern Indian Ocean Killer Whale Alliance



Founders and Administrators

Georgina Gemmell (Orca Project Sri Lanka)

Tim Collins (Wildlife Conservation Society)

Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne (Orca Project Sri Lanka)

Robert Pitman (NOAA/ Technical Advisor to Orca Project Sri Lanka)

Louisa Ponnampalam (MareCet Research Organisation)

Chris Johnson (WWF Australia)

Heike Vester (Ocean Sounds)

Akshay Malavi (Gamefishing Asia)

Andy Willson (Five Oceans Environmental Services)

Robert Baldwin (Five Oceans Environmental Services)

Rob Lott (WDC Whale and Dolphin Conservation)

Vanessa Williams-Grey (WDC Whale and Dolphin Conservation)

Dieter Dongphrajan (Sailing Phuket/ S.Y Nakamal)

Charles Anderson (Marine Biologist in the Maldives)

Asanga Cooray (Mirissa Water Sports)

Ada Natoli (UAE Dolphin Project)

Pete Garbett (Cetal Fauna)

Michael Gilbert (Watamu Marine Association/

Kenya Marine Mammal Network)

Gill Braulik (WCS Wildlife Conservation Society)

Chammika Kumara

John Totterdell (MIRG - WA Orca Research)

Salvatore Cerchio (New England Aquarium)

Bernard Coetsee (SCAR Antarctic Conservation Strategy/
Seychelles Island Foundation)

Jane Spilsbury (Watamu Marine Association/Kenya Marine
Mammal Network)

Muhammad Lazuardi (Coral Triangle Center/Conservation International)

Nazanin Mohsenian (Plan for the Land Society)

Hamed Moshiri (Plan for the Land Society)

Rebecca Soctt (Seychelles Island Foundation)

Franco Banfi

Martin Solli

Anouk Ilangakoon

Joshua Barton

Darryl MacDonald (Clear Blue Photo)

Curtis Lowe (Project Clean Uluwatu)

Steve Trott (Watamu Marine Association/ Kenya Marine Mammal
Network)

Abhishek Jamalabad (WWF India)

Josh McInnes (Transient Killer Whale Research Project)

Amy Kennedy (NOAA)

Jodie Thomas

Rob Coverdale

Member Organizations

Orca Project Sri Lanka (OPSL)

Environment Society of Oman - www.eso.org.om

WCS Wildlife Conservation Society – www.wcs.org

Ocean Sounds (Raja Ampat Cetacean Study) – www.ocean-sounds.org

Wild Blue

Marine Information & Research Group Australia www.mirg.org.au

Raja and the Whales www.rajaandthewhales.com

Mirissa Water Sports Ltd www.mirissawatersports.com

Whale Watching with Geeth www.whale-watching-mirissa.com

Gamefishing Asia www.gamefishingasia.com

Five Oceans Environmental Services www.5oes.com

WDC Whale and Dolphin Conservation uk.Whales.org

UAE Dolphin Project www.uaedolphinproject.org

Cetacean Sirenian Indonesia www.cetasindonesia.org

Thailand Divers Ltd www.thailand-divers.com

Dive Alor Dive www.divealor.com

Big Blue Diving Khao Lak www.bigbluedivingkhaolak.com

Watamu Marine Association www.watamu.biz

Cetal Fauna www.facebook.com/groups/CetalFauna

Kenya Marine Mammal Network - kenyammnetwork.wix.com/kmmnetwork

Plan for the Land Society – www.plan4land.org



Sightings Records

Table 1. Sightings records for Identified Killer Whales

Pod or Individual ID	Date	Location	Observer and Source
Pod 1.	2004/05/06	Eritrea, Red Sea	Chris Johnson/ WWF
Pod 2.	2008/11/29	Seychelles, Passe du Bois	Bernard Coetzee/ Seychelles Island Foundation
Pod 3.	2008/01/02	India, Kochi	Martin Solli
Pod 4.	2006/03/01	Oman	Louisa Ponnampalam/ ESO
Pod 5.	2005/02/22	Muscat, Oman	Louisa Ponnampalam/ ESO
Pod 6.	2013/04/18	Mirissa, Sri Lanka	Shawn Heinrichs/ Blue Sphere Media
Pod 7.	2012/03/31 2012/06/22 2015/01/28	Mirissa, Sri Lanka Mirissa, Sri Lanka Mirissa, Sri Lanka	Rob Hampson Raja and the Whales Crew Raja and the Whales Crew
Pod 8.	2014/04/25	Mirissa, Sri Lanka	Raja and the Whales Crew
Pod 9.	2015/05/10	E coast offshore, Sri Lanka	Mike Greenfelder
Pod 10.	2008/12/29	Mirissa, Sri Lanka 17 re-sightings between 2008-2016 across Sri Lanka in Mirissa, Trincomalee and Kalpitiya. (See Orca Project Sri Lanka's Sighting Log)	See Orca Project Sri Lanka's Sighting Log
Pod 11.	2008 June 2015/08/31	Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates Mirissa, Sri Lanka	Khalid Al Rumaithi/ Gulf News Raja and the Whales Crew
Pod 12.	2013/11/13 2014/12/01	Myanmar Koh Tachai, Thailand	Dieter Dongphrajan Big Blue Diving Khao Lak

Pod or Individual ID	Date	Location	Observer and Source
Pod 13.	2012/02/29 2012/03/06 2015/02/06	Raja Ampat, Indonesia Raja Ampat, Indonesia (with 3 other individual female/subadult males) Raja Ampat, Indonesia	Franco Banfi Hanz Schulz on Flickr Heike Vetser/ Ocean Sounds
Pod 14.	2007/04/08	Raja Ampat, Indonesia	Muhammad Lazuardi/Conservation International Indonesia
Pod 15.	2004/03/24	Maldives	Robert Pitman/ Odyssey Expedition
Pod 16.	2017/03/22	Kalpitiya, Sri Lanka	Andrew Sutton
Pod 17.	2017/03/28	Oman	Amy Kennedy and Darryl MacDonald Environment Society of Oman ESO
Pod 18.	2011/02/23	Kenya	Rob Coverdale/ Watamu Marine Association
Pod 19.	2018/01/26	Mirissa, Sri Lanka	Chammika Kumara/ Raja and the Whales Crew
Pod 20.	2018/02/17	Kenya	Jodie Thomas/ Watamu Marine Association
Suspected Lone Animals			
NIO038	2011/12/26 2012/12/01 2012/12/03	Mirissa, Sri Lanka Mirissa, Sri Lanka Mirissa, Sri Lanka	Sriyan de Silva Wijeyeratne, Rashmi de Silva Wijeyeratne and Rob Janson Madhawa Rajapakse Sean Swalwell

*All records from Sri Lanka have been sourced from the sightings log maintained by Orca Project Sri Lanka

Continued →

Suspected Lone Animals			
NIO039	2013/04/17	Mirissa, Sri Lanka	Marianne Taylor
NIO042	2009/04/07 2014/01/26	Andaman Islands Andaman Islands	Akshay Malavi/Gamefishing Asia Akshay Malavi/Gamefishing Asia
NIO050	2012/01/26	Mirissa, Sri Lanka	Michaela Hanusova/Whale Watching with Geeth
NIO051	2016/01/17 2016/01/26 2016/02/10 2016/02/11	Mirissa, Sri Lanka Mirissa, Sri Lanka Mirissa, Sri Lanka Mirissa, Sri Lanka	Raja and the Whales Crew Anna Hilbert/ OPSL Volunteer Raja and the Whales Crew Raja and the Whales Crew

*All records from Sri Lanka have been sourced from the sightings log maintained by Orca Project Sri Lanka

Northern Indian Ocean Killer Whale ID Catalogue

About:

Identification Methods:

This catalogue uses the tears, nicks and scars found on the dorsal fin as the primary method to identify individuals.

Saddle Patch Pigmentation:

The saddle patch is the grey saddle-shaped area at the base of a killer whale's dorsal fin. It is typically used as a feature for identification in the study of other killer whales, particularly in those from cold and temperate waters. However, killer whales in the tropics tend to have a saddle patch that is too faint to be a reliable feature for ID. Visibility and degree of shading does tend to vary from animal to animal and pod to pod, with some individuals having no visible patch while others' are clear enough to see unique contrasting scars. In the cases where an individual's saddle patch is clear enough to be used in identification, the image has been cropped to include it.

Limitations of opportunistic data:

Many of the encounters with these elusive, pelagic killer whales were opportunistic. Please understand that image quality and availability varies. For this catalogue, we have used just one side of the dorsal fin that best shows the overall silhouette. The killer whales are catalogued into pods, but in some cases not all of the pod was photographed, or photographed with a quality suitable for ID. At the top of each pod listing, an approximate number of animals sighted during that encounter has been given. This is based on either details provided by the observer or the number of distinguishable individuals present in photographs and/or footage.

Pod 1. (6 individuals)



NIO001



NIO002



NIO003



NIO004

All images © Chris Johnson/ WWF

Sighting Location(s): Africa East, Eritrea

Other Catalogues: Not at present time.

Pod 2. (approx. 8 individuals)



NIO005

© Bernard Coetzee/ Seychelles Islands Foundation

Sighting Location(s): Africa East, Seychelles

Other Catalogues: Not at present time.

Pod 3. (approx. 8 individuals)



NIO006



NIO007



NIO008



NIO009

All images © Martin Solli

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, India - Kerala

Other Catalogues: Not at present time.

Pod 4. (approx. 8 individuals)



NIO010



NIO011



NIO012

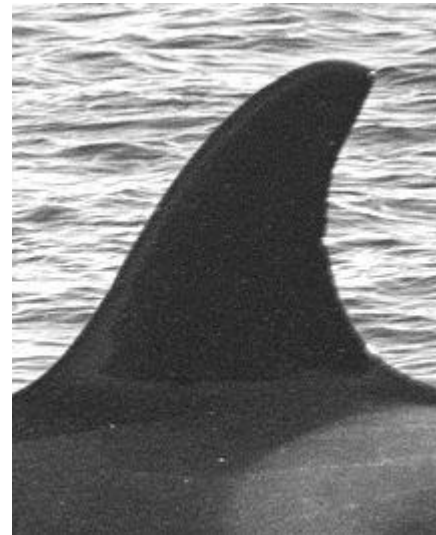


NIO013

All images © Louisa Ponnampalam/ESO

Sighting Location(s): Middle East, Oman

Other Catalogues: Not at present time.



NIO014



NIO015

Pod 5. (2 individuals)



NIO016



NIO017

All images © Louisa Ponnampalam/ESO

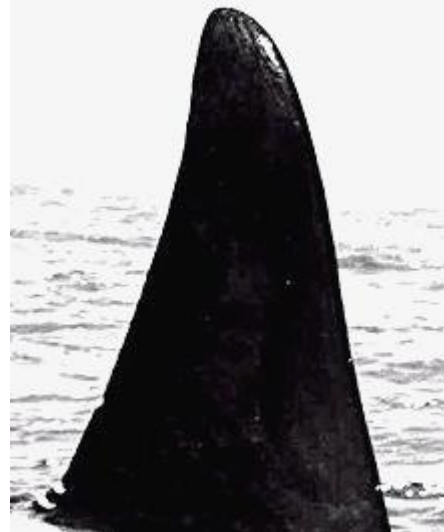
Sighting Location(s): Middle East, Oman

Other Catalogues: Not at present time.

Pod 6. (approx. 6 individuals)



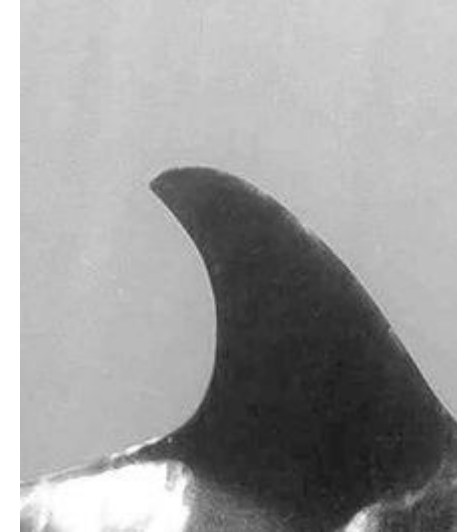
NIO018



NIO019



NIO020



NIO021

All images © Shawn Heinrichs/ Blue Sphere Media

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – Pod 2.

Pod 7. (approx. 5 individuals)



NIO022

© Raja and the Whales Crew

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – Pod 3.

Pod 8. (approx. 6 individuals)



NIO023



NIO024

© Raja and the Whales Crew

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – Pod 4.

Pod 9. (3 individuals)



NIO025



NIO026

All images © Mike Greenfelder

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – Pod 5.

Pod 10. (2 individuals)



NIO027



NIO028

All images © Andrew Sutton

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – Pod 1.

Pod 11. (11 individuals)



NIO029



NIO030



NIO031



NIO032



NIO033



NIO034



NIO035



NIO036

Continued →

Pod 11. Continued



NIO037

© Raja and the Whales Crew

Sighting Location(s): Middle East, Abu Dhabi UAE / Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – Pod 6.

Suspected Lone Individual



NIO038

© Madhawa Rajapakse

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – OM002.

Suspected Lone Individual



NIO039

© Marianne Taylor

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – OM003.

Pod 12. (3 individuals)



NIO040

All images © Dieter Dongphrajan/ SY Nakamal



NIO041

**Sighting Location(s): Asia Southeast, Myanmar
- Asia Southeast, Thailand**

Other Catalogues: Not at Present Time.

Suspected Lone Individual



NIO042

All images © Akshay Malavi/ Gamefishing Asia

Sighting Location(s): Asia Southeast, Andaman Is.

Other Catalogues: Not at Present Time

Pod 13. (2 individuals)



NIO043

All images © Franco Banfi



NIO044

Sighting Location(s): Asia Southeast, Indonesia – Raja Ampat.

Other Catalogues: Not at Present Time

Pod 14. (2 individuals)



NIO045



NIO046



All images © Muhammad Lazuardi/ Conservation International Indonesia

Sighting Location(s): Asia Southeast, Indonesia – Raja Ampat.

Other Catalogues: Not at Present Time

Pod 15. (6 individuals)



NIO047



NIO048



NIO049

All images © Robert Pitman

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Maldives

Other Catalogues: Not at Present Time

Suspected Lone Individual



NIO050

© Michaela Hanusova/ Whale Watching with Geeth

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – OM009.

Suspected Lone Individual



NIO051

© Raja and the Whales Crew

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – OM025

Pod 16. (20 individuals)



NIO054



NIO055



NIO056



NIO057



NIO058



NIO059

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – Pod 7

All images © Andrew Sutton

Continued →

Pod 16. Continued



NIO060



NIO061

All images © Andrew Sutton

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – Pod 7

Pod 17. (6 individuals)



NIO062



NIO063



NIO064



NIO065



NIO066



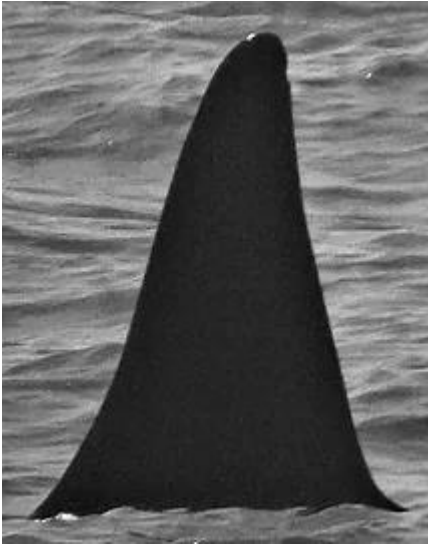
NIO067

Sighting Location(s): Middle East, Oman

Other Catalogues: Not at present time.

All images © Amy Kennedy and Darryl MacDonald/ESO

Pod 18. (9 individuals)



NIO068

© Rob Coverdale/ WMA

Sighting Location(s): Africa East, Kenya

Other Catalogues: Not at present time.

Pod 19. (4 individuals)



NIO069



NIO070

All images © Raja and the Whales Crew

Sighting Location(s): Asia South, Sri Lanka

Other Catalogues: Orca Project Sri Lanka – Pod 8

Pod 20. (4 individuals)



NIO071



NIO072

All images © Jodie Thomas/ shared by WMA

Sighting Location(s): Africa East, Kenya

Other Catalogues: Not at present time.

We'd love to hear from you

To become an alliance member, share a sighting or request to use data or images in publication please contact us at

georgina.wildoceans@gmail.com

Or alternatively, you can fill out a contact form found on the [NIO Killer Whale Alliance website](#)

