

# Whale visits Wellington

Following is a report by one of the divers who swam out to the whale.

*My daughter and family were drawn by gathering crowds on the Wellington South Coast around Houghton Bay. The attraction was a rare inshore visit from a Southern Right Whale.*

*In (my) 30 odd years diving around Wellington – this was a first. A quick reconnoitre on the beach was followed by a dash to assemble the video housing and snorkelling gear.*

*I hit the water at about 6pm – typical green murky Wellington winter water. I swam the few hundred metres out to the small group of snorkellers gathered on the surface.*

*A hint of apprehension as the huge tail emerged from the green – and I quickly found the heavily barnacled front end of the whale. What followed was an hour of close encounter magic – with the 12 metre gentle giant enjoying eye-balling the small creatures alongside – constantly repositioning itself to keep eye-contact.*

*Clearly it was aware of the small snorkelling bodies and was moving its fins and huge tail in careful consideration – even shifting its pectoral fin to accommodate a diver swimming alongside.*

*The vibration in the water from the deep whale call went through my body several times. The reason for the day long visit inshore was unclear – although the DOC scientists (who managed to brush some samples from the whale's back) noted some barnacle-clearing scratching against the shallow bottom of the bay.*

*In all a once-in-a-lifetime encounter rare enough in it's own right – but made even more unique by the fact that this visitor was an albino.*