

Blue whales on rise in bay study

■ Rachel Curry

Researchers have reported an increase in the number of critically endangered southern right whales.

Mr Burton said the southern right whales were one of the most at-risk species, with only about 5000 left in the Southern Ocean.

"Because of their behaviour coming close to shore, they are particularly vulnerable," he said.

"It's important to raise awareness about not approaching them so closely. They get spooked fairly easily."

Western Whale Research is one of the collaborators involved in the South West Whale Ecology Study, along with Curtin University's Centre for Marine Science and Dunsborough Coast and Land Care.

The study not only provides data on land sightings, but also records whale sounds and uses theodolite tracking to monitor whale pod movements.

Visit <http://souwest.org>.

December.

Western Whale Research director Chris Burton said this was an increase on the last couple of years, but they needed more data to identify it as a trend.

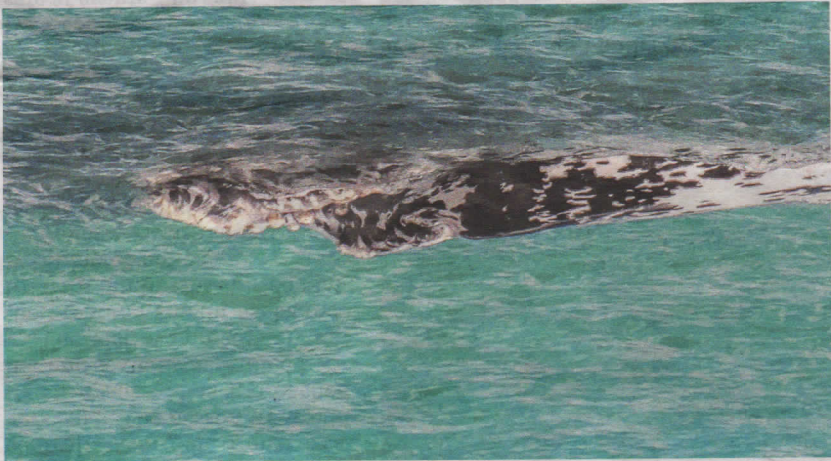
"We noticed their migration time was a bit earlier in October and November. There were a lot of females with calves, which is very interesting," Mr Burton said.

About 2000 vulnerable humpback whales were spotted during the season, which is similar to previous

season, which is similar to previous

whales were spotted during the

watching for the study.



This southern right whale was spotted during the season. Pictures: Ian Wiese



Dunsborough Coast and Land Care volunteers spent countless hours whale watching for the study.