

Expert says humpback whale sighting near Pulau Redang a first [WATCH]

By Zatul Iffah Zolkipli - September 15, 2024 @ 6:32pm



The appearance of a whale, believed to be a humpback species or 'Megaptera novaeangliae', spotted near Pulau Redang is remarkable, as no previous sightings have been recorded. PIC SCREEN GRAB FROM SOCMED

KUALA TERENGGANU: The appearance of a whale, believed to be a humpback species or 'Megaptera novaeangliae', spotted near Pulau Redang is remarkable, as no previous sightings have been recorded.

Associate Professor Dr Maizah Mohd Abdullah, a lecturer in marine biology and associate researcher at the Institute of Oceanography and Environment (INOS), Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT), confirmed the possibility based on a viral video, though a definitive identification is difficult because of the footage quality.

However, she said the shape of the dorsal fin suggested that it was a humpback whale, also known as a 'paus bongkok'.

She added that whales undertake the longest migration of any mammal.

"This species can be found in deep waters worldwide, but the population closest to Malaysian waters originates from the northwest Pacific region.

"This population of humpback whales is reported to use the waters around Okinawa, Japan, and the Philippines for breeding, and there have been sightings in Malaysia in the waters off Pangkor in Perak and Miri in Sarawak," she said.

Maizah said there is insufficient evidence to suggest that the waters in this state are a migration route for these marine mammals, given that this is the first recorded sighting of the species at Pulau Redang.

She also said there is no scientific data on the migration routes of humpback whales in the waters of Pulau Redang.

"However, it is not impossible, as Pulau Redang is near the northwest Pacific waters, one habitat for this mammal population."

Maizah emphasised reporting any whale sightings to authorities to monitor migration patterns and protect these endangered creatures.

"The appearance of such charismatic marine mammals as humpback whales serves as a reminder that no matter where we are, everyone must work together to preserve the sustainability of our oceans.

"My advice to locals is to exercise caution when engaging in activities in nearby waters, and if they encounter any endangered marine species, they should slow their boats and avoid approaching too closely," she said.

Yesterday, a 44-second video showing the whale near the island was uploaded by TikTok user @akihiro_san28, sparking widespread interest.