

Kaikōura tragedy: Whale surfaced underneath boat - source

(Clark, H., 2022)



By [Hamish Clark](#)

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NOW PLAYING • Focus: Kaikōura mourns after boating tragedy

NZ Herald reporter Katie Harris provides the latest in Kaikōura boating tragedy from Goose Bay. Video / NZ Herald ...

P A sperm whale is understood to have flipped a boat at Goose Bay, claiming the lives of five photographers near Kaikōura.

The fatal accident happened about 10am on Saturday when a whale breached directly underneath the boat, capsizing the charter vessel, the Herald has been told.

D Six people were thrown overboard, including the skipper. Five others were trapped underneath the upturned hull and didn't survive.

No one who was on the boat at the time of the tragedy could be reached for comment.

D According to their website, the 10 keen photographers from the Nature Photography Society had planned the three-day field trip to Kaikōura for months.

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Everyone made their way to the popular seaside village on Friday September 9 with a desire to photograph the landscapes, seascapes and birdlife of Kaikōura.

The trip coincided with the Kaikōura 48-hour photography exhibition, and they could enter the competition with photos they had taken in August.

One of the highlights of the weekend was a three-hour "birding trip" with Fish Kaikōura Charters at a cost of \$80 per head.

The three-hour charter would take the group out on the water to capture photos of the snow-capped Kaikōura landscape in the background and the birdlife along the coast.

Whale watching wasn't on the agenda.

Safety briefing held, life-jackets were worn

Saturday was a perfect day boating with sunny skies and the promise of a great day for capturing stunning photos.

The Herald understands from a close source there was a safety briefing and the group were wearing life jackets - a standard procedure for fishing charters.

The group set out at 9am in the 8.5m aluminium boat, leaving South Bay at Kaikōura and heading down the coastline to Goose Bay near the well-known twin road tunnels on State Highway 1.

The normally rough seas were unusually flat and calm, almost glassy, with no real swell and not a breath of wind.

After an hour the charter headed north towards Barneys Rock, a popular spot for photographers and tourists.

Whale came up directly beneath the boat

Barneys Rock is less than 100m from shore and just north of the double tunnels.

It is often covered with birds and is known for seals.

As the charter boat motored slowly north it appears it was on the edge of the famous deep trench that is home to whales.

The canyon quickly drops away to a depth of 500 metres and as far down as 3km.

The boat was about 500m from shore when, the Herald understands, a whale came up underneath the boat.

The skipper and passengers were tossed into the water.

A Goose Bay local says they saw the whale within "two or three hundred yards" from the boat.

Kevin Anderson said he saw a whale heading north, diving under the water near the vessel.

The retiree said nothing else was near the vessel at the time and the sea was dead calm.