



SPOTLIGHT

Twist and spout

BY Amanda Hooton

I AM useless at whale watching. “I see a whale!” I cry. “No, wait ... maybe it’s a boat? Oh. Just a wave.” But even if I can’t see them, the annual humpback whale migration – up to 10,000 kilometres, the world’s longest mammal migration – is well underway. Between June and August, approximately 25,000 humpbacks travel north along our coastline from the Antarctic to the sub-tropical waters off Queensland to mate and calve. And from late August to October, they retrace their journey south.

“That return journey has already begun,” explains Jools Farrell of ORRCA, NSW’s only licensed marine mammal rescue group. “And this southern leg can actually be better for seeing whales. They’re bringing the calves back, so they often hug the coastline a little closer; they often stop in bays so the babies can rest and suckle; the mothers might have an escort of a bull whale or two. They’re easier to spot in groups.”

They also *do* more on the return leg: more flipper and fluke slapping, more breaching. “Those behaviours are primarily for communication; the mothers are teaching the calves what to do. But they’re also trying to get rid

of sea lice and parasites. They get itchy, and slapping the water is like scratching. They pick up parasites in the warm water, so they’re scratching on the way south.”

No excuses for whale-spotting failure, then. Any advice for the ineffective amateur? “One, have patience!” says Farrell. “Two, a headland is much easier than a beach: you want to be looking out across the ocean, rather than being at eye level with the water. Three, look at the horizon, then work your way back in. Binoculars really help. And four, look for the spout. Humpbacks have a big round spout, like a large bush or ball. Southern right whales have a V-shaped spout. And minkes have a smaller rounded shape: a little bush.”

The best guarantee of spotting a whale, however, is to have plenty of them. And for once in an environmental blue moon, it’s good news. After a near collapse by the 1960s, when fewer than 300 Australian humpbacks remained, the population has recovered here better than anywhere in the world, increasing by as much as 11 per cent a year. So whether you see one or not, you know they’re out there.

Watching for whales? Then know that different species can be identified by their silhouettes and blow types.

WATCH / READ / LISTEN

NON-FICTION
Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race.
BY RENI EDDO-LODGE

RENI EDDO-LODGE is not taking any press requests at this time. A pinned Tweet states that what she has to say “has not changed for the best part of a decade”, that the media should direct their energy to social justice organisations in the UK instead. Eddo-Lodge, 30, has never professed to have the answers. But now that *Why I’m No Longer Talk to White People About Race* has made her the first black British author to top the UK non-fiction book charts, a position achieved in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests – and an indictment, she’s noted, of the publishing industry – everyone wants her take. Again.

First published in 2017, *Why I’m No...* hit the ground running. Its collection of considered thoughts and irrefutable facts about race and racism reinvigorated a global conversation.



Awards rolled in. Tours sold out. There were reprints, translations.

To read the book as a wannabe white ally is to have the scales fall,

clunking, from your eyes. Eddo-Lodge was over trying to alert white folk to their unconscious biases, to the aggressions that people of colour experience daily. As she lays out the reasons why – while exploring issues from whitewashed feminism to the way racism benefits those in power – I felt uncomfortable, shocked.

I looked around, morbidly fascinated by how much I took for granted. I started talking to white people about race. When a friend declared she didn’t see colour, I countered with an Eddo-Lodge karate chop: “You can choose not to see the sky but it exists.” I called a relative out on his racist jokes. I recognised the red flags of white saviourdom, the need to go deep. I owned my personal anti-racism work. I’ve read more. Listened more. I am a work-in-progress.

Jane Cornwell.

SHOP / PLAY

SPARK YOUR child’s creativity with online art classes that utilise objects readily found at home. Streaming live, Marianna Marx (artist and owner of Melbourne’s Gloworm Studios) builds student’s observational drawing and painting skills as they learn to mix colour, create compelling compositions and develop personal artistic expression and confidence. Designed for the 7-12 age group, classes are offered as before- or after-school activities with drop-in classes available across the NSW and VIC school holidays. Adult and individual lessons are also available.

Frances Mocnik

