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Killer whale sighted in Puerto Galera

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In Photo: A photo of the whale shark posted in the Facebook account of Kai Tagaki.

The sighting of a killer whale in Puerto Galera, a town in Oriental Mindoro and a popular tourist destination in Luzon, has caught the attention of marine wildlife-conservation advocates.

The fascinating marine mammal, about 7 meters long, was photographed and posted on Facebook (FB) through the account of Kai Tagaki, who first thought it was a dolphin jumping up and down.

Posted on April 18, at 12:38 p.m., the FB post was shared 383 times as of this writing and drew various reactions.

One FB comment expressed fear that it might attack humans. Another comment said the sighting is a good sign—and that the health of the marine ecosystem is improving.

Except for the photo, not much information was provided in the FB. Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said the report needs to be verified, although she said the killer whale could have been following its prey and found itself in that part of the Philippine waters.

She said it might have other companions, because killer whales are known to travel in groups during migration and while hunting preys.

“It may be after a prey and somehow got lost. But they usually hunt in group,” said Lim, who cautioned fishermen against hunting it down.

The largest among dolphin species, killer whales feed on almost anything they can find—including tuna, dolphins, sharks and even whale sharks. But it has no record of attack on humans.

The Philippines is a member of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, which include marine wildlife like sea turtles, dolphins, sharks and whales.

The Marine Wildlife Watch of the Philippines (MWWP), a non-governmental organization that advocates marine-wildlife conservation and their habitat in the Philippines, shared the post.

The group monitors illegal fishing or hunting of threatened marine wildlife, particularly those on the critically endangered list of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

AA Yaptinchay, executive director of MWWP, said sightings of orca, or killer whale, is not new in the Philippines. While saying that a killer whale having been photographed is very rare, their sightings is not new.

“There are records of sightings of orca before. It is the most cosmopolitan among all whales,” he said. Orcas, or killer whales, belong to the dolphin family, he said.

Yaptinchay said unless they are captured or harmed, killer whales do not attack humans.

“There is no record of them eating humans,” he said.

He said it is not in orca’s nature to feed on human, although it feasts large fish species and preys almost on anything it can feed on—including deadly sharks.

Yaptinchay said the sightings of the killer whale should be a wake-up call to concerned government agencies to intensify monitoring of Philippine seas.

“Only 30 percent of our seas have been surveyed so far,” he said.

The group said conducting surveys will reveal how rich the Philippine seas is, and what we stand to lose in failing to protect our marine areas against destructive human activities.

Hunting of marine wildlife, he said, remains unchecked despite local and international laws prohibiting such acts of terrorism against these amazing creatures of the sea.

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