

MEDIA RELEASE

Swire Bulk deviates vessels around Southern Sri Lanka's waters to protect endangered whales

Rerouting vessels can reduce the number of ship-strikes and whale-kills by up to 95%, protecting endangered whales and cetaceans that live in coastal waters

20 February 2023, Singapore – Swire Bulk is deviating its vessels from the Southern waters of Sri Lanka with immediate effect. The area off Southern Sri Lanka is one of the busiest shipping lanes globally, and also serves as a feeding ground for many cetaceans. This voluntary move by the company aims to decrease the number of ship-strikes against whales, which has been identified by researchers to be the leading cause of death for whales around Sri Lanka's waters.

Swire Bulk's vessels will now pass at least 15 nautical miles south of Dondra Head traffic separation scheme and avoid sailing through marked out as "no go areas". This directive will apply to all ships transiting to the south of Sri Lanka, excluding ships calling Galle OPL and ports within marked areas. Any vessels calling Galle will reduce speed to 8 knots as a way to reduce the likelihood of ship-strikes.

10 years ago, Swire Pacific Offshore (then part of the Swire Group), had sponsored a study "*The Indian Ocean Marine Mammal Research and Conservation Project*" in Sri Lanka, spearheaded by the Biosphere Foundation, a non-profit environmental conservation organisation. The three-year study explored ways to preserve the population of endangered pygmy blue whales amongst others, and ways to enhance eco-tourism in the country. Results from the study strongly encouraged marine and international authorities to move the current International Maritime Organisation (IMO) traffic separation scheme 15 nautical miles south. In doing so, the risk of ship-strikes to whales can be reduced by 95%. Organisations like Mediterranean Shipping Co (MSC) and Stolt Tankers have also made similar route adjustments to protect endangered whales.

Peter Norborg, Chief Executive Officer at Swire Bulk, said, "Sustainability and safety are at the core of our business – and in this case, we need to consider and prioritise the ecosystem in which we operate and the safety of marine wildlife. Swire Bulk is already a proud participant of the Enhancing Cetacean Habitat and Observation (ECHO) Programme where we work with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority to reduce underwater noise generated by vessels to support and save endangered southern resident killer whales. Rerouting our vessels in Sri Lanka is just another way that we can continue to do more for the ocean ecosystem. Although this deviation will incur a small increase in voyage distances for our ships, this is the right thing for us to do. We are proud to act on the research initiated by a fellow Swire-group company and to raise awareness on how minor deviations can have a big impact on the welfare of endangered whales."

Sharing her lived experience, Abigail Alling, Chief Executive Officer at Biosphere Foundation, said, "I have lived on small sailing boats alongside Sri Lanka's great whales, and witnessed the tragic chaos caused by ships traversing night and day through their habitat. On behalf of our research team, we wish to thank Swire Bulk for following our recommendation to move their ships off the coast by 15 nautical miles to reduce ship strikes by 95%."

Read more about Swire Bulk's sustainability efforts here – <https://swirebulk.com/sustainability/sd-reports/>

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About Swire Bulk

Swire Bulk, the specialist bulk trading arm of the multinational Swire Group, is a leading vessel owner and operator in the dry bulk geared sector with a trading fleet of around 125 Handysize and Supra/Ultramax vessels controlled by nine commercial offices around the world. Its global headquarters is situated in Singapore. Swire Bulk operates one of the most modern and fuel-efficient fleets on the water. With a diversified cargo base and a balanced vessel operating mix between owned and chartered tonnage, Swire Bulk is well-placed to be a long-term partner of choice for its global customers and deliver market-leading, innovative, and sustainable freight solutions.

For more information, please visit www.swirebulk.com

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