

October 8, 2011

Kayaker captures amazing blue whale footage, above and below surface

By: [Pete Thomas](#), GrindTV.com

Majestic [blue whales](#) have been feeding off Southern California for months, luring marine mammal paparazzi of all types, including TV news crews, onto whale-watching boats. But some of the most amazing footage was captured off Redondo Beach recently by kayaker Rick Coleman, who was using his helmet camera. It includes surface lunge-feeding and spectacular underwater close-ups of a gargantuan blue whale (pay special attention at the 1:15 and 2:15 marks). It's worth noting, however, that this type of behavior is ill-advised because of the size and power of the great leviathans.

Said Monica DeAngelis, a marine mammal biologist with [NOAA Fisheries](#): "One move of a flipper or the whale's fluke and that person could have been seriously hurt."

On [his YouTube channel](#) Coleman seemed to acknowledge he had gotten a bit too close, by posting this comment: "I'd like to take a moment to state that I don't recommend, endorse or in any way want to encourage anyone to try and swim with these whales. The whales are large, unpredictable animals and potentially dangerous." <http://www.youtube.com/user/MrRJCtube>

(Blue whales, which can measure 100 feet and weigh 150 tons, are the largest creatures ever to inhabit the planet. There are about 10,000 worldwide. About 2,000 feed off California each summer and fall, almost exclusively on tiny shrimp-like krill.)

Among NOAA Fisheries [whale-watching guidelines](#) are passages that state vessels should not be operated at a constant speed while paralleling or following whales within 100 feet, and that vessels -- or in this case a vessel and its pilot who jumped in for a better look -- should "do nothing to cause a whale to change direction." The kayaker was much closer than 100 yards but it's unclear whether he altered the whale's behavior.

DeAngelis said the guidelines are not regulations, but cautioned others against trying to get that close to whales aboard such small vessels. It's just plain common sense, she added, to give the mammals a wide berth.