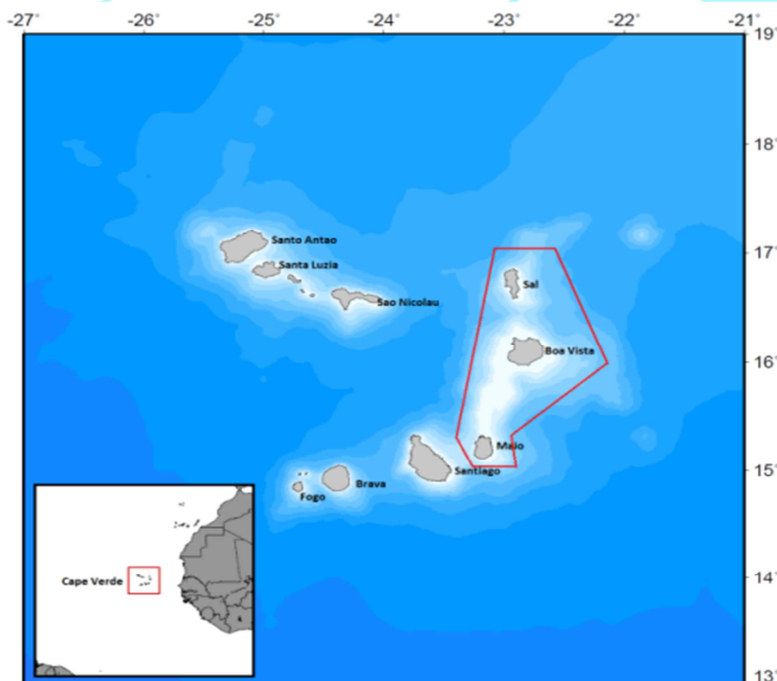


Creating a Marine Protected Area for Cape Verde's threatened humpback whales

This project aims to protect the precariously small, insular population of humpback whales breeding in Cape Verde. The population size is just 235 individuals versus 10,000 in Western Atlantic breeding population (Caribbean Sea). Data will be collected which is urgently required for the establishment of a marine protected area and a sub-population Red List assessment of this population by the IUCN. MCR and partners will identify areas of critical habitat for humpbacks around the archipelago. For the first time, systematic monitoring of other species will be carried out including beaked whales, dolphins and sperm whales.



Humpback whale mother and calf swim through the harbour at Sal Rei, Boa Vista, where the pier was recently extended using blasting with no mitigation measures in place © Pedro Lopez-Suárez



Map: The main known Cape Verde breeding ground for humpback whales (red) Plotted using open-source MapTool (seaturtle.org)

Monitoring and vessel surveys will be conducted from oceanographic buoys and *R/V Song of the Whale*, to gain a better understanding of species presence, migratory routes, seasonality and threats (from anthropogenic noise, fisheries and other coastal and offshore human activities). MCR will continue to engage with the Cape Verde Ministry for the Environment to establish a system of licencing for whale-watching operators to ensure that the industry is more sustainable. Current indications are that this is the most important calving area for humpback whales in the eastern North Atlantic Ocean (Ryan et al., 2014), yet their habitat is threatened by rapid coastal developments.