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The Lives of Hawai'i's Dolphins and Whales: Natural History and Conservation

Robin W. Baird

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Ocean currents, winds, and rainfall all work together to create a marine oasis around the Hawaiian Islands, providing a home for many species of dolphins and whales normally found in the deep oceans of the world. *The Lives of Hawai`i's Dolphins and Whales* opens a window into the world of these mysterious creatures with stories and observations from author Robin W. Baird's work over the last seventeen years. The book includes exceptional full-color photographs of each species, life history descriptions, conservation threats, and maps showing sighting locations and movements of tagged individuals among the islands and offshore. While the well-known resident spinner dolphins and visiting humpback whales are covered, the ten species of lesser-known open-ocean dolphins and whales that are resident to the marine slopes of the islands are highlighted as well. Among these are endangered false killer whales, deep-diving Cuvier's and Blainville's beaked whales, abundant spotted dolphins, coastal bottlenose dolphins, cryptic dwarf sperm whales, family units of short-finned pilot whales, and social melon-headed whales. Baird also describes thirteen species of dolphins and whales that are found in offshore waters or are seasonal or occasional visitors to Hawaiian waters, including killer whales, the iconic sperm whale, and even blue whales and North Pacific right whales.

More is known about the social organization and natural history of many of these marine mammals in Hawai`i than anywhere else in the world. For all of the species discussed, Baird presents data obtained from long-term photo-identification studies, with distinctive individuals tracked through time and space; for many of them, he includes findings from studies using genetics and satellite tagging. He also provides information on predators and prey, social organization, diving, and night-time behavior, along with suggestions on how to tell some of the more difficult to identify species apart. The book closes by focusing on conservation issues, both success stories and challenges, engaging readers to consider ways to protect Hawai`i's unique assemblage of resident dolphins and whales.

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