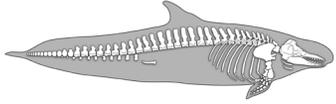


Mahi-mahi
Coryphaena hippurus

False Killer Whale
Pseudorca crassidens



FALSE KILLER WHALE FACTS

INCREASE YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THESE AMAZING ANIMALS!



Status:

Endangered - Main Hawaiian Islands insular (resident) population.
Marine Mammal Protection Act - like all marine mammals, they are protected under the MMPA.

Species Description:

False killer whales are large members of the dolphin family. Females reach lengths of 15-16 feet (4.5-4.8 m), while males typically reach 17-18 feet (5.2-5.5 m). In adulthood, false killer whales can weigh approximately 1500 pounds (700 kg).

They have a small conical head without a beak. Their dorsal fin is tall and their flippers (pectoral fins) have a distinctive hump or bulge in the middle of the front edge. False killer whales have dark coloration except for some lighter patches near the throat and middle chest. Their body shape is more slender than other large delphinids.

False killer whales breed

year-round. Gestation

periods range

from 14 to

16 months

and

lactation

occurs for

one and a half to two years.

False killer whales have low reproduction

rates with calving intervals of approximately

seven years, and females stop reproducing in their early

40s. Females mature around 10-12 years of age while males mature in their late teens.

Maximum longevity is at least 63 years. These whales are gregarious and form strong

social bonds. They are usually found in groups of ten to twenty that belong to much

larger groups of up to 40 individuals in Hawai'i and 100 individuals elsewhere.

They are known to "strand" in large groups as well. False killers are also found with other cetaceans, most notably rough-toothed dolphins and bottlenose dolphins. To increase success of finding prey, these whales travel in a broad band that can be up to several miles wide. False killer whales regularly share food and cooperatively hunt. In Hawai'i they feed during the day on large fish. They have been known to attack smaller dolphins that are involved in the tuna purse-seine fishery in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean.

Population Trends:

Currently, the Hawai'i pelagic stock is estimated at about 1500 individuals, the North-western Hawaiian Islands insular population is about 550 individuals, and the main Hawaiian Islands insular population at about 150 individuals. The main Hawaiian Islands insular population stock declined between the late 1980s and the mid-2000's, but there is not enough data to estimate population trends for other stocks.

Threats:

False killer whales are taken as by-catch or interact with a number of fisheries, such as the Hawai'i Longline fishery. They are also hunted and killed opportunistically in Indonesia, Japan, and the West Indies. Because they feed high on the food web they have high levels of toxins and also compete directly with humans for food.

Habitat:

They prefer tropical and sub-tropical waters that are deeper than 3,300 feet (1000 m)

and typically come close to shore only around oceanic islands like in Hawai'i.

Distribution:

False killer whales occur in the U.S. in Hawai'i, rarely along the West Coast, and from the central Atlantic coastal states south. The species can be found in all tropical and sub-tropical oceans worldwide.

Did you know?

False killer whales were first known from fossils and were not discovered alive until 15 years later. Their scientific name (*Pseudorca crassidens*) came from similarity in the appearance of their skull to killer whales, not from any similarity in external appearance. They have thicker teeth than killer whales - crassidens means thick tooth.

