

# HAWAIIAN SPINNER DOLPHIN

*Stenella longirostris*

## N A I 'A



*Spinner dolphins in Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary.  
Photo: Claire Fackler/NOAA*

### About

Hawaiian spinner dolphins are best known for their acrobatic leaps out of the water, spinning several times on their long axis. Leaps are often done in a series, with as many as 14 in a row. They are sometimes found traveling with bottlenose dolphins or humpback whales in Hawai'i.

These marine mammals reach sexual maturity at seven years. Adult females can give birth to a single calf every three years. Gestation is about 11 months, and females will lactate for one to two years. Their lifespan is about 20-25 years.

Like other dolphins of the genus *Stenella*, spinner dolphins are relatively small, reaching lengths of four to seven feet (2 m) and weighing approximately 130 to 170 pounds (59-77 kg) as adults. They have long, slender rostrums or beaks. Hawaiian spinner dolphins feature a three-part color system with countershading from dark to light.

### Feeding Patterns

Hawaiian spinner dolphins eat species of small fish, shrimp, and squid that are typically found at 650 to 1,000 foot depths. In order to feed on these species, Hawaiian spinner dolphins forage at night, taking advantage of their prey's daily migration patterns, which bring them closer to shore and to shallower depths.

### Did you know...

...a group of dolphins is called a pod.

...Because the species is active at night, daytime interactions with humans interfere with necessary rest and sleep time.

## Distribution & Movement Patterns

Hawaiian spinner dolphins are found close to shore during the day across the main Hawaiian Islands. In these important nearshore habitats, the dolphins engage in resting and reproductive activities vital to their survival. At night, pods will fuse into larger groups to feed in deeper water.

## Threats

- Acoustic disturbance
- Collisions with ships
- Entanglement in marine debris
- Habitat degradation
- Interactions with humans are a growing threat to the Hawaiian stock

## Research

- Documenting abundance of spinner dolphins in Hawai'i
- Assessing impacts of human interactions on spinner dolphins
- Acoustic monitoring to assess distribution and habitat use

## Management and Protection

- In 2021, NOAA Fisheries established a rule under the Marine Mammal Protection Act that prohibits swimming with, approaching, or remaining within 50 yards of a Hawaiian spinner dolphin.
- This rule applies to any vessel, person, or object that is within two nautical miles from shore of the main Hawaiian Islands and in designated waters in Maui Nui.

*Other dolphins commonly seen in the waters around the Hawaiian Islands include bottlenose dolphins and pan-tropical spotted dolphins.*

*All wild dolphins are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, making it illegal to harass, hunt, capture, kill, or feed, or attempt any of these activities.*

*Report any suspected violations to NOAA Fisheries Enforcement at 1-800-853-1964*

*To report marine mammal injuries, strandings, or entanglement, call 1-888-256-9840*

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