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**STUDY REVEALS HAWAII'S FALSE KILLER WHALES ARE
A DISCRETE POPULATION**

A research paper authored by scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Cascadia Research Collective and the Wild Whale Research Foundation reveals that false killer whales found around the main Hawaiian Islands are genetically different from false killer whales elsewhere in the tropical Pacific Ocean. The study was published online in the *Canadian Journal of Zoology*.

"The results were surprising," said Dr. Susan Chivers, lead scientist from the NOAA Fisheries Service Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla, Calif., and one of three NOAA scientists who worked on the report. "False killer whales are usually considered to be a wide-ranging species that travel throughout the tropical oceans."

Estimates of the false killer whale population in Hawaii indicate just a few hundred individuals. The small population size, combined with the discovery of the genetic differentiation from other populations suggests that the Hawaiian false killer whales may be more at risk from human impacts than other larger populations.

The study used small skin samples collected from both free-ranging false killer whales and from a small number of animals incidentally caught in the Hawaii long-line fishery to examine the genetic characteristics of false killer whales throughout the tropics and sub-tropics.

Although members of the dolphin family, false killer whale behavior often mimics orcas or killer whales. The species typically remains far from shore, and are not thoroughly studied. The deep water surrounding the Hawaiian Islands makes it one of the better locations to study this species.

The study was a collaborative effort between Chivers, Nicole Hedrick and Juan Carlos Salinas from the NOAA Fisheries Service and researchers Dr. Robin Baird of Cascadia Research Collective, based in Olympia, Wash., and Daniel McSweeney and Daniel Webster of the Wild Whale Research Foundation based in Holualoa, Hawaii.

The citation for the study is *Canadian Journal of Zoology*, vol. 85, issue 7 (July), pp. 783-794).

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The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

On the Web:

NOAA Fisheries Service: <http://www.nfms.noaa.gov>

NOAA's Southwest Fisheries Science Center: <http://swfsc.noaa.gov>

Cascadia Research Collective: <http://www.cascadiaresearch.org>

Hawaiian Cetacean Studies: <http://www.cascadiaresearch.org/robin/hawaii.htm>

Canadian Journal of Zoology: http://pubs.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/cgi-bin/rp/rp2_desc_e?cjz