

SHORT-FINNED PILOT WHALE (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*): Hawaiian Stock

STOCK DEFINITION AND GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Short-finned pilot whales are found in all oceans, primarily in tropical and warm-temperate waters. They are commonly observed around the main Hawaiian Islands and are probably also present around the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (Shallenberger 1981). Recent sighting locations around the main Hawaiian Islands (Mobley et al. 2000) are shown in Figure 1. Several mass strandings have been reported from the main islands (Tomich 1986; Nitta 1991). In Japanese waters, two stocks have been identified based on pigmentation patterns and differences in the shape of the heads of adult males (Kasuya et al. 1988). The pilot whales in Hawaiian waters are similar to the Japanese "southern form." Stock structure of short-finned pilot whales has not been adequately studied in the North Pacific, except in Japanese waters. Preliminary photo-identification work with pilot whales in Hawaii indicated a high degree of site fidelity around the main island of Hawaii (Shane and McSweeney 1990). For the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) stock assessment reports, short-finned pilot whales within the Pacific U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone are divided into two discrete, non-contiguous areas: 1) Hawaiian waters (this report), and 2) waters off California, Oregon and Washington.

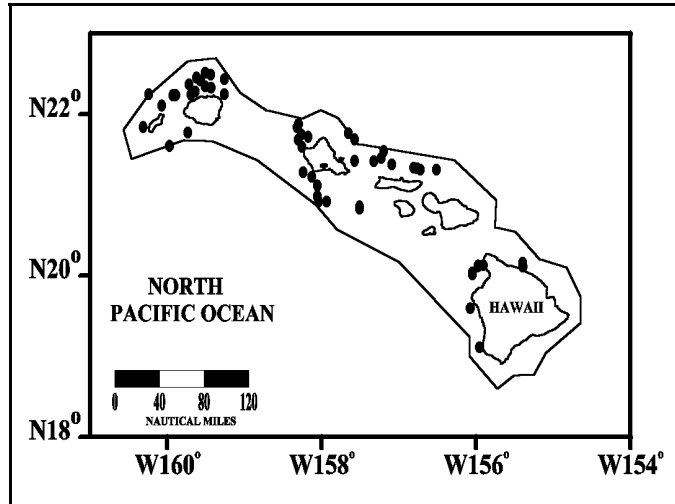


Figure 1. Short-finned pilot whale sighting locations during 1993-98 aerial surveys within about 25 nmi of the main Hawaiian Islands (see Appendix 2 for details on timing and location of survey effort). Outer line indicates approximate boundary of survey area.

POPULATION SIZE

Estimates of short-finned pilot whale populations have been made off Japan (Miyashita 1993) and in the eastern tropical Pacific (Wade and Gerrodette 1993), but it is not known whether any of these animals are part of the same population that occurs around the Hawaiian Islands. As part of the Marine Mammal Research Program of the Acoustic Thermometry of Ocean Climate (ATOC) study, a total of twelve aerial surveys were conducted within about 25 nmi of the main Hawaiian Islands in 1993, 1995 and 1998. An abundance estimate of 1,708 (CV=0.32) short-finned pilot whales was recently calculated from the combined survey data (Mobley et al. 2000). This abundance underestimates the total number of short-finned pilot whales within the U.S. EEZ off Hawaii, because areas around the Northwest Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) and beyond 25 nautical miles from the main islands were not surveyed.

Minimum Population Estimate

The log-normal 20th percentile of the combined 1993-98 abundance estimate is 1,313 short-finned pilot whales. As with the best abundance estimate above, this includes only areas within about 25 nmi of the main Hawaiian Islands and is therefore an underestimate.

Current Population Trend

No data are available on current population trend.

CURRENT AND MAXIMUM NET PRODUCTIVITY RATES

No data are available on current or maximum net productivity rate.

POTENTIAL BIOLOGICAL REMOVAL

The potential biological removal (PBR) level for this stock is calculated as the minimum population size (1,313) times one half the default maximum net growth rate for cetaceans ($\frac{1}{2}$ of 4%) times a recovery factor of 0.50 (for a species of unknown status with a known fishery mortality within the U.S. EEZ off Hawaii; Wade and Angliss 1997), resulting in a PBR of 13 short-finned pilot whales per year.

HUMAN-CAUSED MORTALITY AND SERIOUS INJURY

Fishery Information

Mortality of cetaceans has been observed in Hawaiian fisheries, and the gear types used in these fisheries are responsible for marine mammal mortality and serious injury in other fisheries throughout U.S. waters. Gillnets are used in Hawaiian waters and appear to capture marine mammals wherever they are used, and float lines from lobster traps and longlines can be expected to occasionally entangle whales (Perrin et al. 1994).

One short-finned pilot whale was observed killed outside the U.S. EEZ in the Hawaiian longline fishery between 1994 and 1998 (Figure 2), with approximately 4.4% of all effort (measured as the number of hooks fished) observed. This mortality rate extrapolates to a total 5-year estimate of 23 (95% CI = 1-108) short-finned pilot whales, or an average of 4.6 animals killed per year (Kleiber 1999). The single observed short-finned pilot whale was reported to have been entangled in the fishing line. Reports for other odontocetes indicate animals may also ingest the hook or become hooked in the mouth or other part of their body.

Interactions with cetaceans have been reported for all Hawaiian pelagic fisheries (Nitta and Henderson 1993), but no other interactions with short-finned pilot whales have been documented. Interaction rates between dolphins and the NWHI bottomfish fishery have been estimated based on studies conducted in 1990-1993, indicating that an average of 2.67 dolphin interactions, most likely involving bottlenose and rough-toothed dolphins, occurred for every 1000 fish brought on board (Kobayashi and Kawamoto 1995). Fishermen claim interactions with dolphins who steal bait and catch are increasing. It is not known whether these interactions result in serious injury or mortality of dolphins, nor whether short-finned pilot whales are involved.

Other Removals

Since 1963, at least 20 short-finned pilot whales have been live-captured from Hawaiian waters by Sea Life Park/Oceanic Foundation (Shallenberger 1981).

STATUS OF STOCK

The status of short-finned pilot whales in Hawaiian waters relative to OSP is unknown, and there are insufficient data to evaluate trends in abundance. No habitat issues are known to be of concern for this species. They are not listed as “threatened” or “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act (1973), nor as “depleted” under the MMPA. Although information on short-finned pilot whales in Hawaiian waters is limited, this stock would not be considered strategic under the 1994 amendments to the MMPA given the absence of reported fisheries related mortality within the U.S. EEZ. However, the potential effect of mortality in the Hawaiian longline fishery in international waters is not known. Insufficient information is available to determine whether the total fishery mortality and serious injury for short-finned pilot whales is insignificant and approaching zero mortality and serious injury rate.

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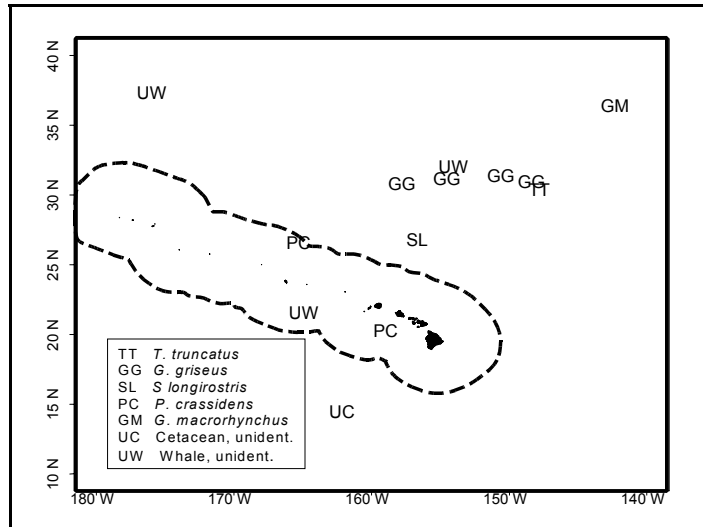


Figure 2. Locations of observed cetacean interactions in the Hawaiian longline fishery, 1994-98 (modified from Kleiber 1999). Dashed line is the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ); GM = short-finned pilot whale.

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