

Common Bottlenose Dolphins of Hawai'i



HITt0201 sighted 2003-2023



HITt0309 sighted 2003-2022



HITt0327 sighted 2004-2022



HITt0439 sighted 2003-2020



HITt0450 sighted 2005-2022



HITt0452 sighted 2005-2021



HITt0501 sighted 2006-2023



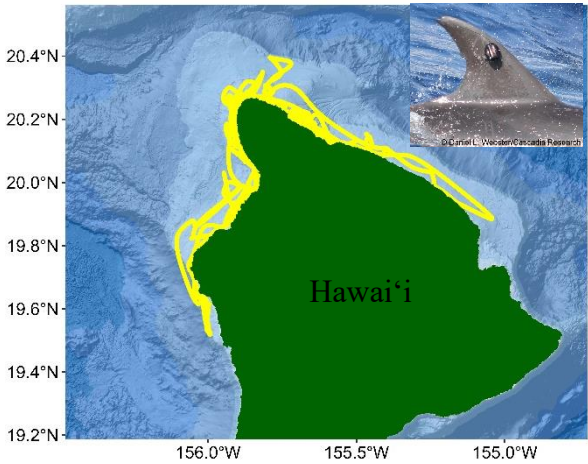
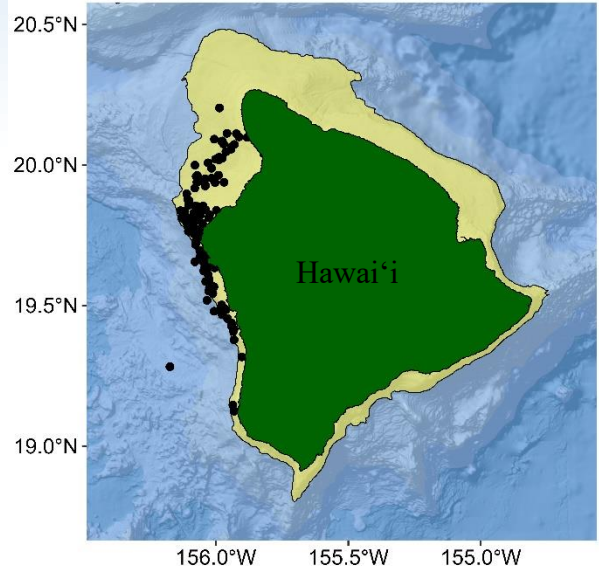
HITt0585 sighted 2002-2023

Common Bottlenose Dolphins of Hawai‘i

The Hawaiian Islands are home to five genetically differentiated populations of common bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*), including four island-associated resident populations centered around Kaua‘i and Ni‘ihau, O‘ahu, Maui Nui, and Hawai‘i Island, and a rarely seen offshore population that lives in deeper waters. With the exception of the Hawai‘i Island population, there is evidence that bottlenose dolphin populations in Hawai‘i have declined over the last 25 years.



Island-associated bottlenose dolphins are a shallow-water species, and are most frequently seen off Hawai‘i in waters less than 500 m (~1,650 ft) deep. On the right, you can see the recognized boundary (yellow) for the Hawai‘i Island population, along with the locations (black dots) where we’ve sighted groups during our field work from 2002-2024. The one offshore dot is a group from the open-ocean population.



We are currently using satellite tags that track both locations and dive behavior to study where and how bottlenose dolphins spend their time. On the left you can see a satellite tag trackline from an individual tagged off Hawai‘i Island in 2014, along with an image of the tag attached to the fin.

To contribute your photos of whales and dolphins to our research, scan the QR code below, or email Hawaii@cascadiaresearch.org



Cascadia Research Collective
non-profit research and education since 1979

Bottlenose dolphins regularly interact with the Blue Ocean Mariculture net pens off Kona. We have photos of 36 unique bottlenose dolphins associating with the farm between 2008 and 2021, but suspect that there are likely more that visit the farm based on the rate at which we are identifying new individuals there. We’ve also found that bottlenose dolphins that spend time at the farm are uncommonly aggressive towards other cetaceans in the area. Citizen scientists have reported these individuals being aggressive towards short-finned pilot whales, melon-headed whales, false killer whales, pantropical spotted dolphins, and spinner dolphins. If you have photos of dolphins around the farm, please contribute them!

