

Discriminating between Cuvier's (*Ziphius cavirostris*) and Blainville's (*Mesoplodon densirostris*) beaked whales in Hawai'i



Z. cavirostris adult female © G.S. Schorr 2006



M. densirostris adult female © R.W. Baird 2006

Typically Cuvier's have a relatively high profile above the water when surfacing, while Blainville's show less back and arch high only occasionally on terminal dives. Cuvier's have a relatively flat back when viewed from behind or in front, while Blainville's are more peaked. The dorsal fin of Cuvier's is small relative to the amount of body visible above the surface. Adult Cuvier's are 5.5-6 m, while adult Blainville's are 4-4.5 m. Both species in Hawai'i regularly have white oval scars from cookie-cutter sharks.



Z. cavirostris adult male © G.S. Schorr 2004



M. densirostris adult male (top) © R.W. Baird 2006

The front third of the body of adult male Cuvier's is white, and fades into rusty brown/gray around the dorsal fin. Females have more uniform buff/brown colored bodies. The body of Blainville's is brown to olive. Both often have algae on the head/body.



Z. cavirostris adult male © D.J. McSweeney 2006



M. densirostris adult male © R.W. Baird 2006

The Cuvier's melon is bulbous, the beak is small and rarely visible on surfacing, and the teeth are at the tip of the beak. The Blainville's long beak is usually visible on surfacing and the teeth are midway along the jaw. Often barnacles will be attached to the erupted teeth of males in both species.