

## Marine Mammal Database - External User Information

Please read this information before using or analysing the Department of Conservation's marine mammal data.

### 1 Marine Mammal Incidents data

- All cetacean species other than Hector's and Maui dolphins, NZ sea lions and Antarctic seals.
- All incidents (live strandings, beachcast incidents, injuries, entanglements, dog attacks, ship strikes, etc).
- Tab NZ\_STRANDINGS contains information about the occurrence such as date, location, number of animals, refloat details etc. There may be multiple individuals involved in one event.
- Tab MEASUREM contains information about a specific animal such as sex, measurements, necropsy results etc. There may be more than one individual per event, these are linked via the 'MarMam observation ID num'.

### 2 Guide to fields

While DOC is trying to get all marine mammal data (excluding data held in Dragonfly e.g. seal tags) into the same format, there are currently discrepancies between the data sets. Not all fields mentioned will be available from all data sets.

#### 2.1 General

There are several values used to define missing data throughout the data sets, they may also be blank:

- 'Not applicable' – field doesn't apply to this record
- 'Not recorded' – information wasn't recorded
- 'Unknown' – the status/existence of the information isn't known, often used with older data when original records aren't available or haven't yet been cross-checked. Note: It is important to differentiate between this and 'Indeterminable' as a necropsy result. 'Indeterminable' is an assigned value from the pathologist when they are unable to determine a cause of death. 'Unknown' in the same field would mean DOC doesn't know what the result of the necropsy was.

#### 2.2 Dates

Generally dates are in the format DD/MM/YYYY and may include time as HH:MM. For unknown dates, a year of 9999, or 1111 may have been used, e.g. 1/01/9999.

'Date event observed confidence' indicates whether a date is estimated or accurate.

#### 2.3 Locational data

All new data that comes in has coordinates converted to WGS84 degrees decimal, or coordinates determined from a location description. This has not been done for all past data so there may be spatial data missing from some data if you plan to map the records.

'Capture method' indicates whether the coordinates are estimated from a description ('Estimated location') or provided ('GPS – observer location' or 'GPS –subject location').

'Region' is defined by the council regions of New Zealand.

'Area Descriptor' is unique to Hector's and Maui dolphins and describes areas of their distribution.

## 2.4 Mass strandings

A mass stranding event is defined as two or more animals stranded together, excluding mother-calf pairs.

There are particular challenges that come with accurately capturing the details from a mass live stranding:

- Due to the large, dynamic, and often sprawling nature of mass stranding events, it is difficult to record accurate numbers of stranded, refloated, and restranded animals.
- It is difficult to determine if restranded animals are the same or different animals from an earlier stranding.
- Determining whether a refloat is successful is challenging as animals can later die at sea and decay there or wash up on another coastline.
- Recording accurate data is often not the priority when managing a live stranding event.
- Though methods will have been inconsistent in the past, refloat-restrand data should be captured as follows:
  - o One refloat attempt per high tide cycle
  - o Date and location of restrand should be recorded as the last stranding after one or more refloat attempts where animal/s are unable to be refloated. i.e. you are capturing the first stranding, last refloat, and last restranding if applicable.
  - o Other details about intermediate refloats and strandings can be captured as commentary.

## 3 Caveats

Please consider the following caveats when analysing the national marine mammal database:

- The data is limited to records received by the Department's National Office from a number of different sources and independent field offices and there are no guarantees that it is fully representative or accurate.
- The quality and quantity of data collection has improved over time, particularly with the advancement of technology.
- Processes for strandings and data collection have changed over time and have not necessarily been followed evenly around the country.
- The ownership, storage and formatting of this data has changed over time.

## 4 Conditions

We ask that you observe the following conditions regarding the use of this data:

- The data shall only be used in the manner outlined in your submitted proposal, unless prior permission is granted from the Department of Conservation.
- The Department is to be supplied with a copy of any reports, papers etc that result from your analysis of this data.
- The Department is to be informed of the intention to publish any findings resulting from the analysis of this data prior to the draft being submitted to the chosen publication.
- The Department of Conservation is to be appropriately acknowledged in any reports, publications etc that result from your analysis of the data provided.
- The data shall not be supplied to any third party without prior written permission from the Department.
- The data supplied shall not be made available on the internet or any other publicly available medium without prior permission from the Department.

## 5 Recommended acknowledgement

Department of Conservation Marine Mammal Database, [data set name], [date of extract in file name].

## 6 Contact

For enquiries and communication, contact the Department's Marine Species Team via [marinemammals@doc.govt.nz](mailto:marinemammals@doc.govt.nz)

Released under the Official Information Act 1982