# The Solomon Islands: Coral Reefs and Cetaceans.

## A new concept for sustainable marine (mammal) tourism in the Coral Triangle.


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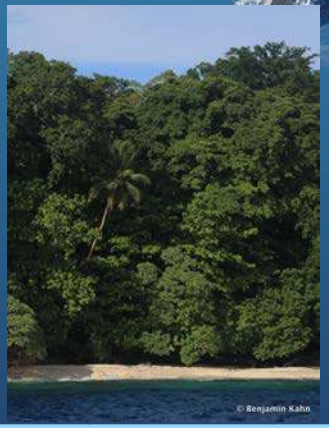
# Tourism significance and synergy with marine conservation

- In April 2016 the first Coral Reefs and Cetaceans cruise in The Solomon Islands was conducted on-board MV. Bilikiki. This special interest marine adventure concept was developed by APEX Environmental and Oceanic Society.
- The cruise combines high-quality snorkeling and diving - on some of the most brilliant and bio-diverse coral reefs in the world - with exceptional whale and dolphin encounters; and makes use of long-established tour operators in the Solomons (similar to specialist underwater photography tours).
- This new marine tourism product will increase the marketing opportunities and exposure of the Solomon Islands to a global market.
- Cruises have a clear tourism priority but also promote marine conservation (i.e. cruise outcomes may contribute to earlier studies – see Kahn 2006, 2007).
- More collaboration with ECD and other agencies is welcomed, to support sustainable marine mammal management.


# Solomon Islands Coral Reefs and Cetaceans Cruise

## Summary of Outcomes:
## Whale and dolphin watch effort




- From 6 – 14 April 2016.
- Part-time activity conducted over 9 days.
- Covered over 407 kilometers (220.1 nautical miles) of national marine waters.
- 5 distinct island groups:
    1. Guadalcanal
    2. Florida Islands
    3. Russel Islands
    4. Mborokua (Mary) Island
    5. Southern Marovo Lagoon: Kicha, Bulo, Minjanga Islands

- Averaging a dedicated search effort of 3 hours per day.
- Total sea time: 28.3 hrs
- Actual search hours: 21.3 hrs
- Whale-watch observation time: 7.0 hrs

# Summary of Outcomes - Cetaceans

- Cetacean species positively identified: 6.
- Total number of sightings (n=14) and
  - Encounter frequency - ranking by species:

1. Spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*; n=6)
2. Spotted dolphins (*Stenella attenuata*; n=2)
3. Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus*; n=2)

1. Pilot whales (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*; n=2)
2. Fraser's dolphins (*Lagenodelphis hosei*; n=1)
3. Risso's dolphins (*Grampus griseus*; n=1)

- Estimated relative abundance.
  - Individual count: 727 animals



# Summary of Outcomes - Seabirds

- Seabird species positively identified (n=11):

1. Lesser crested tern
2. Crested tern
3. Bridled tern
4. Roseate tern
5. Black-naped tern
6. Black noddy
7. Lesser frigate bird
8. Brown booby
9. Shearwater (unidentified spp.)
10. Sea-eagle
11. Brahminy kite


# Summary of Outcomes

Other information:

- Non-cetacean sightings included:
  - Manta (n=1)
  - Billfish (n=2)

- Commercial shipping activity was extremely low:

  - Large-scale pelagic fishery vessels:
    - Tuna purse seiners actively setting nets (n=2)
  - Inter-island ferry/landing craft (n=1).

- Plastic debris fields logged were minimal: n=3 (category 1/low: n=2; category 2/low to medium: n=1).

- The waters of the Solomon Islands that we visited are still largely unaffected by plastic trash, unlike most other nations of the Coral Triangle where marine debris is becoming a major threat to marine life and food security.



# The Coral Triangle Oceanic Cetacean Program

*Thank you for the opportunity to present at this meeting.*

*A special thanks to the Environment & Conservation Division (ECD) Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management & Meteorology(MCDM), Solomon Islands Government*

More information is available from:

www.apex-environmental.com
and
www.oceanicsociety.org

Oceanic Society

# Shortlisted references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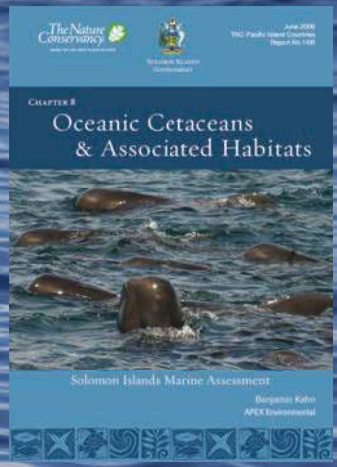



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