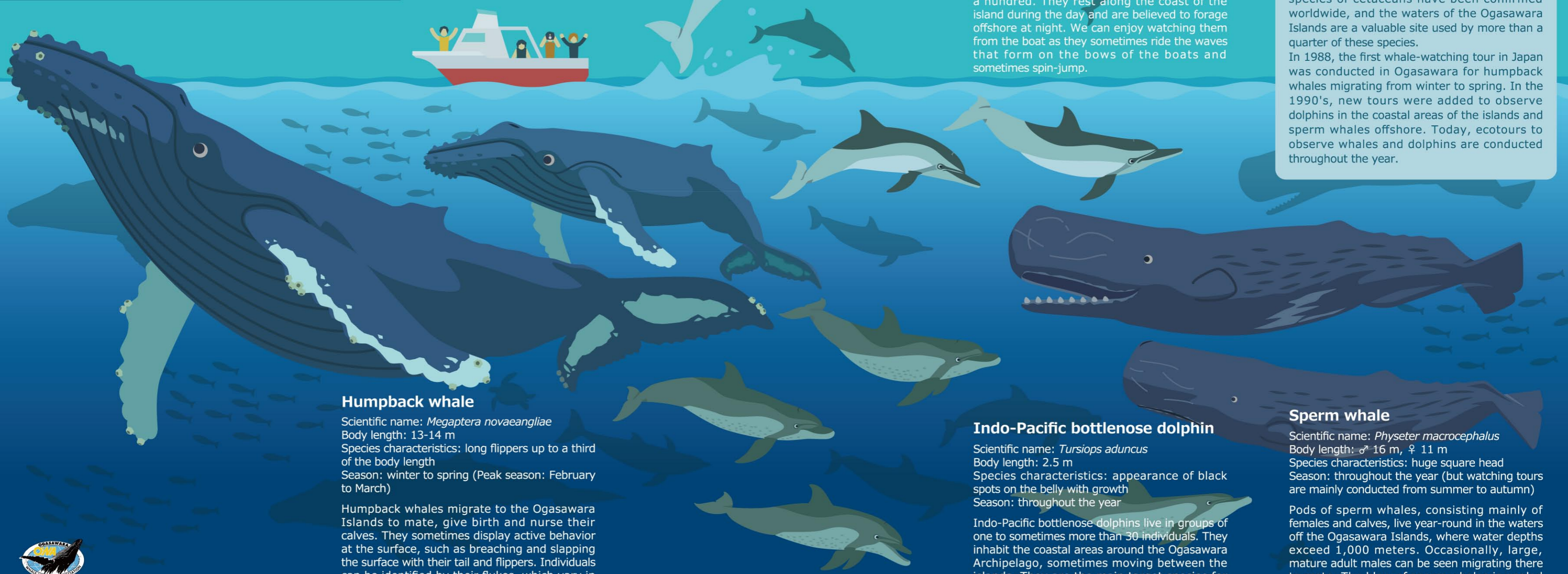


# Protecting Marine Life in Ogasawara

A Guide to Responsible Whale and Dolphin Watching



## Humpback whale

Scientific name: *Megaptera novaeangliae*  
Body length: 13-14 m  
Species characteristics: long flippers up to a third of the body length  
Season: winter to spring (Peak season: February to March)

Humpback whales migrate to the Ogasawara Islands to mate, give birth and nurse their calves. They sometimes display active behavior at the surface, such as breaching and slapping the surface with their tail and flippers. Individuals can be identified by their flukes, which vary in pattern and edge shape.

## Spinner dolphin

Scientific name: *Stenella longirostris*  
Body length: 2 m  
Species characteristics: long thin beak  
Season: throughout the year

Spinner dolphins live in groups of dozens to over a hundred. They rest along the coast of the island during the day and are believed to forage offshore at night. We can enjoy watching them from the boat as they sometimes ride the waves that form on the bows of the boats and sometimes spin-jump.

## Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin

Scientific name: *Tursiops aduncus*  
Body length: 2.5 m  
Species characteristics: appearance of black spots on the belly with growth  
Season: throughout the year

Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins live in groups of one to sometimes more than 30 individuals. They inhabit the coastal areas around the Ogasawara Archipelago, sometimes moving between the islands. They are the main target species for dolphin swimming in the Ogasawara Islands.

## Cetacean Diversity and Whale Watching in the Ogasawara Islands

More than 20 species of whales and dolphins (cetaceans) have been recorded in the waters around the Ogasawara Islands. About 90 species of cetaceans have been confirmed worldwide, and the waters of the Ogasawara Islands are a valuable site used by more than a quarter of these species.

In 1988, the first whale-watching tour in Japan was conducted in Ogasawara for humpback whales migrating from winter to spring. In the 1990's, new tours were added to observe dolphins in the coastal areas of the islands and sperm whales offshore. Today, ecotours to observe whales and dolphins are conducted throughout the year.

## Sperm whale

Scientific name: *Physeter macrocephalus*  
Body length: ♂ 16 m, ♀ 11 m  
Species characteristics: huge square head  
Season: throughout the year (but watching tours are mainly conducted from summer to autumn)

Pods of sperm whales, consisting mainly of females and calves, live year-round in the waters off the Ogasawara Islands, where water depths exceed 1,000 meters. Occasionally, large, mature adult males can be seen migrating there to mate. The blow of sperm whales is angled forward.



## Whale Watching as a Form of Ecotourism

Ecotourism is the concept of preserving the value of the natural, historical, and cultural attractions of a region by introducing them to travelers and passing them on to future generations. By encouraging each and every one of our ecotour participants to take responsibility and care for nature, we can do even more to protect the local natural environment. Encountering whales and dolphins in the wild is an exciting and moving experience, but we must be careful not to stress the animals or interfere with their natural behavior by approaching them for observation. For this reason, voluntary rules have been established for whale and dolphin watching in Ogasawara. We hope that everyone will enjoy whale and dolphin watching after learning about the ecology of the animals and the voluntary rules. We ask for your understanding and cooperation in respecting the animals and nature so that the Ogasawara Sea can continue to be a safe habitat for whales and dolphins.

## Protecting Wildlife in Ogasawara :How You Can Help

We hope this guidebook has helped you learn about the whales and dolphins that live in the waters of the Ogasawara Islands and the rules for observing them. When you participate in an ecotour, please be sure to interact with the animals and the natural environment with respect. This will help us protect the future of Ogasawara. Together, let's protect the nature that is so important to Ogasawara!

Publication date: June 2023  
 Illustrator/Designer: Haruyoshi Kawai  
 Publisher: Ogasawara Whale Watching Association  
 Aza Higashimachi, Chichijima,  
 Ogasawara-mura, Tokyo 100-2101, JAPAN  
 Tel: +81-4998-2-3215  
<https://www.owa1989.com/>



## Guidelines for Flying Drones Around Whales and Dolphins

Drones are permitted to approach cetaceans from any angle, as long as they are kept 30 meters from the target individuals, and they adhere to the other rules listed below.

- The drone shall not approach a group of cetaceans being watched nor a whale watching vessel actively watching whales.
- The drone may not approach cetaceans from the direction they are moving toward.
- If the drone's approach is seen to cause a change in the behavior of the target cetaceans or other wild animals, the flight must end immediately.

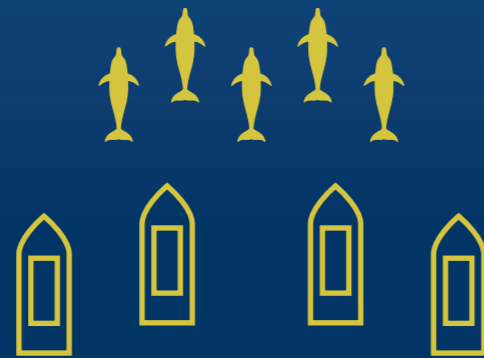
The full text is available via the QR code to the right.



↑ ↓  
 < 30m  
 No flying

## Guidelines for Dolphin Watching

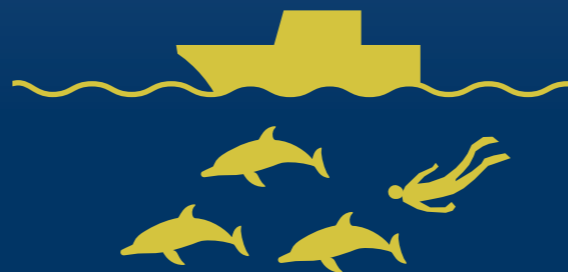
- The maximum number of boats allowed to approach a group of dolphins is four, regardless of boat size and purpose. (This includes watching only.)



Up to 4 boats are allowed to approach a single group of dolphins.

※Established by the Ogasawaramura Tourist Association

- The maximum number of times that people are allowed to swim with a single group of dolphins is five times per boat. (This does not necessarily mean that people are allowed to swim with the dolphins five times, but that they should consider the condition of the dolphins and other boats at the time.)



Up to 5 times per boat to swim with a single group of dolphins.

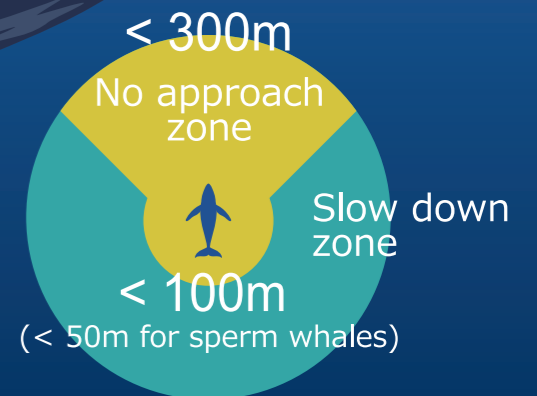
## Guidelines for Whale Watching

For boats less than 20 tons  
 (Including non-powered vessels such as yachts, canoes, kayaks, SUPs, etc.)

Target species: Baleen whales and sperm whales

Applicable waters: Within 20 nautical miles of the coast of the Ogasawara Islands

- Slow down when within 300 meters of a whale (slow down zone).
- Do not approach whales from the direction they are traveling.
- Do not approach within 100 meters of baleen whales and 50 meters of sperm whales (no approach zone).
- Do not maneuver the boat in a way that may disturb the whale's current behavior.
- If a whale approaches the boat, leave at a slow speed or stop until the whale has left the area.



Boats that are permitted to observe beyond the scope of the voluntary rules, for purposes such as academic research or reporting, will fly the designated red flag.

The full text is available via the QR code to the right.

