

YOUR FULL NAME

Topic

Behaviour and movement patterns of dusky dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus obscurus*) off Kaikoura, New Zealand: Effects of tourism

Research and Findings

Tourism targeting dusky dolphins near Kaikoura began in 1987, and currently five operators offer tours to view or swim with dolphins. This study evaluated effects of tourism on dusky dolphins by collecting shore- and boat-based data to compare it to data collected by previous researchers.

Resting and socialising behaviours decreased when vessels were present, while milling and travelling behaviours increased. Swimming speeds decreased and leaping increased when boats were present. Responses grew over time, an indication that dolphins are less tolerant of tourism activity than in the past.

Chronic exposure to disturbance has been linked to negative population-level effects in other vertebrates. As a precautionary measure, operating conditions were amended to reduce vessel traffic around dolphins. Studies examining physiological effects and consequences of vessel traffic are needed to determine threshold levels at which negative impacts are seen. Appropriate management guidelines can be developed based on these threshold values.