

Department of Conservation and World Wide Fund for Nature Maui's (and Hector's) dolphin databases and validation system

1. The Department of Conservation (DOC) administers a database for sightings of Maui's dolphins. It contains data predominantly from 1970 to the present, but also includes one sighting from 1922.
2. In 2003 the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) initiated a separate database which contains data from 2003 to the present.
3. In 2007, WWF contracted an external party to undertake validation interviews on Maui's dolphin sightings received through its hotline. They were scored on a 7 point scale, 1 being most reliable and 7 being the least reliable.
4. WWF contributes its data to DOC to ensure the national database is as comprehensive as possible.

New standardised validation system

5. In 2009, DOC contracted work to consolidate Maui's dolphin sightings, including development of a validation system and interview process. The DOC validation system uses a 5 point scale that consolidates categories from the 7 point WWF scale, making WWF-scaled validations directly transferrable to the DOC scale. Validation categories 1-3 are the most reliable and categories 4 and 5 are the least reliable. These are outlined below. To assist with the independent verification of Maui's dolphin sighting reports, a standardised interview process has also been developed.
6. **Category 1** replaces the previously used categories 1 & 2 as the most reliable of sightings, and must satisfy at least one of the following criteria:
 - i. The sighting is from a person or source of known reliability. This might include university researchers or certain DOC field staff. A phone interview is recommended (but not required) for these reports, though it does not necessarily have to follow the standardised interview. For example, in the case that the report(s) is(are) from a systematic sighting survey, it would be beneficial to contact the survey leader or project manager and discuss the reliability of the survey team and whether there was any doubt about any of the reported sightings.
 - ii. The sighting is accompanied by a photograph which includes a known landmark consistent with the report; and which clearly identifies the species as a Maui's dolphin. Standardised interview required.
 - iii. The report is accompanied by an identifying photo that has no landmarks but is provided with additional details such as a detailed location description or GPS position. In this case it is crucial that a standardised interview be conducted as soon as possible to confirm the sighting.
 - iv. The report has been provided by someone familiar with Maui's dolphins. This might include people who have previously reported sightings that were classed as categories 1, 2 or 3 using the previous scoring system. A standardised interview is still required.
7. **Category 2** replaces category 3 sightings from the previous system. These reports are not accompanied by a photo (or the photo is poor quality and it is not clear what the species is). Upon completion of the standardised interview, the description of the dolphin is consistent with Maui's dolphins and the

location is within the known current range of Maui's dolphin. For these reports it is very important to carry out the interview as specified, and as soon as possible. The interviewee must identify the primary diagnostic features of Maui's dolphin such as size, dorsal fin shape and body colour patterns, without prompting from the interviewer:

8. **Category 3** replaces category 4 from the previous system. These reports are not accompanied by a photo (or the photo is poor quality and it is not clear what the species is). Upon completion of the standardised interview, the description of the dolphin is consistent with Maui's dolphins but the location is not within the known current range of Maui's dolphin, or the location is too vague to be certain. It is important to note that sightings placed in this category may become a 1 or 2 if additional independent reports become available:
9. **Category 4** replaces category 5 from the previous system. The description of the animal(s) provided during the standardised interview is not consistent with a Maui's dolphin:
10. **Category 5** replaces categories 6 and 7 from the previous system. Reports fall into this category when they fit one of the following criteria:
 - i. The description provided of the animal(s) during the standardised interview is consistent with Maui's dolphin, but the location description (or GPS location) is from the South Island (i.e. the animals were Hector's dolphin).
 - ii. The report is incomplete and does not allow a full assessment. Upon completion of a standardised interview it is not possible to score the sighting in any of the other four categories.
 - iii. The sighting may fall into one of the other categories, but a standardised interview is not able to be conducted and the report cannot be independently verified.
 - iv. The report is probably of another dolphin species.

Table 1: Categories for sightings

Category	Description
1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Report from a source of known reliability; or ii. High quality photo with landmark; or iii. High quality photo with no landmark but detailed description of location; or iv. Report from someone who has previously provided category 1, 2 or 3 reports (under the old system).
2	Description provided that is consistent with Maui's dolphin, detailed location description and/or GPS position.
3	Description provided that is consistent with Maui's dolphin, but the location is outside the known current range of the species.
4	Description is inconsistent with Maui's dolphin.

5

- i. The report is for a South Island location (Hector's dolphin); or
 - ii. The report is incomplete. The interview does not enable the report to be scored in any of the previous categories; or
 - iii. The interview was not able to be conducted; or
 - iv. The report is another dolphin species.
-