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Killers with Manners: Emily Post, step aside. The new book on etiquette is being written by false killer whales. Studies of these large dolphins by Cascadia Research Collective scientists reveal a highly developed sense of community. According to the CRC, false killer whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*) “have long-term bonds. They share their prey, not only with their companions, but also with humans. A *Pseudorca* that was alone in British Columbia and Washington ... far from their normal range off Mexico, repeatedly caught large salmon and would offer them to boaters. In Hawaiian waters, *Pseudorca* have offered fish to human snorkelers and divers.”

Such behavior may be endearing, but the animals themselves are endangered, especially the small population that inhabits nearshore waters around the Hawaiian Islands. A recently published study by Robin Baird of the CRC and others, published in *Endangered Species Research*, shows that the range of this population, which numbers about 123, probably extends past the exclusion zone around the islands within which longline vessels may not fish. Members of a larger, archipelagic population were similarly found to venture into the exclusion zone. Baird and his colleagues conclude that simply using the distance from shore as the sole criterion for assigning a false killer whale to one or the other population is not “biologically realistic. These two populations may broadly overlap in their ranges.”

The findings have implications for managing the longline fishery. A take-reduction team recently established to reduce the bycatch of false killer whales has generally proceeded on the assumption that the nearshore population is unlikely to interact with the longliners. “Efforts should be made to assess longline fishery interactions in the areas where the longline boundary approaches closest to the main Hawaiian islands,” the study concludes.

Cruise Control: Faced with persistent allegations by KAHEA: the Hawaiian Environmental Alliance of violating the state’s environmental review law (Chapter 343), the state Department of Land and Natural Resources’ Division of Aquatic Resources stepped up its game last month to help rescue a planned research cruise to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands that was in serious danger of being scuttled.

At its regular April meeting, the state Board of Land and Natural Resources deferred acting on nine permit applications to study biological resources within the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. The board made its decision after an executive session and without a staff presentation or public testimony. With the next Land Board meeting scheduled for May 13, the contingent of marine researchers who had planned to sail to the monument on a research vessel in early May filed out of the board’s meeting room looking bewildered.

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But on April 19, the board, in a rare move, held a special meeting on the NWHI permits. This time, DAR staff presented a lengthy justification for why the division’s research exemption and the monument’s environmental assessment for its management plan allowed the board to approve the permits without further environmental review. DAR staff, as well as University of Hawai`i researcher Robert Toonen, submitted reports detailing the cumulative impacts research in the NEWI have had so far. In short, the level of impact research has had is “not detectable.”

KAHEA’s Marti Townsend praised the work, but said she believed merely submitting it to the Land Board fell short of what the law requires and asked that it also be sent to the office of Environmental Quality Control as the cumulative impact assessment that the monument’s EA lacked. Attorney Douglas Codiga, representing the university, argued that the information submitted to the Land Board satisfied the Chapter 343 requirements “in the context of an exemption.”

“There is clearly a research exemption and these are clearly research activities,” he said. And in the end, the Land Board agreed, voting unanimously to approve eight of the permit applications, which cover genetic studies of fish and invertebrates, the deployment of sound recorders, shark tagging, and invasive species surveys, among other things. The board withdrew the ninth application, which coral disease researcher Greta Aeby submitted then withdrew because DAR had recommended denial based on a previous permit violation.

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