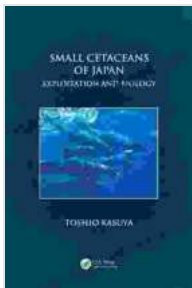


Small Cetaceans of Japan: Exploitation and Biology

Small cetaceans, including species such as dolphins, porpoises, and beaked whales, are an important part of the marine ecosystem and have long been exploited by humans for food, oil, and other products. In Japan, small cetaceans have been hunted for centuries, and continue to be taken today despite concerns about the sustainability of these populations.



Small Cetaceans of Japan: Exploitation and Biology

by Ila France Porcher

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 484 pages



Historical and Cultural Context of Cetacean Hunting in Japan

The hunting of cetaceans in Japan dates back to the Jōmon period (14,000-300 BC), when people began hunting whales and dolphins for food and other resources. Over time, cetacean hunting became increasingly important, and by the Edo period (1603-1868), Japan had become one of the world's leading whaling nations.

In the early 20th century, Japan began to hunt cetaceans in the Southern Ocean and the North Pacific. This industrial-scale whaling led to a dramatic decline in cetacean populations, and by the 1970s, many species were on the brink of extinction.

In 1986, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) imposed a moratorium on commercial whaling. However, Japan continued to hunt cetaceans under a loophole in the moratorium that allows for scientific research. This research whaling has been widely criticized, and many conservationists believe that it is a cover for commercial whaling.

Current Status of Cetacean Populations

The current status of cetacean populations in Japan is difficult to assess due to the lack of reliable data. However, there is evidence to suggest that many populations are in decline.

The Dall's porpoise is one of the most commonly hunted cetaceans in Japan. Dall's porpoises are found in the North Pacific Ocean, and are typically taken in drive hunts. The Dall's porpoise population in Japan is estimated to have declined by over 50% since the 1970s.

The common minke whale is also hunted in Japan. Minke whales are found in all oceans, and are typically taken in coastal waters. The minke whale population in Japan is estimated to have declined by over 30% since the 1970s.

Baird's beaked whale is a deep-diving species that is found in the North Pacific Ocean. Baird's beaked whales are typically taken in harpoon hunts.

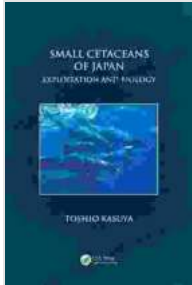
The Baird's beaked whale population in Japan is estimated to have declined by over 90% since the 1970s.

Conservation Challenges

The conservation of small cetaceans in Japan faces a number of challenges, including:

- **Overfishing:** Small cetaceans are often caught in fishing nets as bycatch. This is a major threat to small cetaceans, especially in coastal areas where fishing is concentrated.
- **Habitat loss:** The construction of coastal developments, such as ports and marinas, can destroy or degrade small cetacean habitat. This can make it difficult for these animals to find food and shelter.
- **Pollution:** Small cetaceans are exposed to a variety of pollutants, including heavy metals, PCBs, and pesticides. These pollutants can accumulate in the bodies of small cetaceans and can cause a variety of health problems.
- **Climate change:** Climate change is also a major threat to small cetaceans. As the ocean temperature rises, small cetaceans may have to move to new areas in order to find food and shelter. This can be difficult for these animals, especially if they are already facing threats from overfishing, habitat loss, and pollution.

Small cetaceans are an important part of the marine ecosystem and play a vital role in the food chain. However, these animals are facing a number of threats, including overfishing, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. In order to protect small cetaceans, it is important to take steps to reduce these threats and to promote the sustainable use of these resources.



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