

## HAWAIIAN SPINNER DOLPHIN

*Stenella longirostris*

Hawaiian name (Nai'a)

### Physical Traits

**Size:** 1.7 to 2.2 m, 75 kg. Males slightly larger than females, calves at birth approximately 77cm

**Teeth:** 45 to 65 sharp-pointed teeth on both upper and lower jaw

**Food:** Fish (small deep-ocean species) and squid

**Habitat:** Mainly offshore but found in shore resting during the day

**Range:** Subtropical and warm temperate world oceans

**Status:** Population unknown, but common throughout their range

The scientific classification *Stenella longirostris* refers to the species' long snout. There are four distinct Eastern Pacific forms; the Eastern, the Whitebelly, the Costa Rican and the Hawaiian.

The Spinner Dolphin is a slender animal with a long thin beak. The Hawaiian Spinner Dolphins are three toned animals that have a dark gray or black dorsal cape, lighter gray sides with a creamy-white belly. The dorsal fin varies on all animals. The flippers are long and pointed and the snout is long and black-tipped. The name "Spinner Dolphin" is given these animals from their behavior of jumping and spinning in the air. An activity that is specific to this species. They also exhibit other spectacular acrobatic jumps and somersaults. They vocalize with whistles and clicks and can reach speeds as fast as 20kph.



The Spinner Dolphin is also unique in the fact that these animals hunt their prey at night. Using echolocation to locate their prey, they feed on deep water fish and squid. After a night hunting, the Spinners unite in defensive groups and move into the shallow sandy bays of the islands for shelter. It is in these sheltered areas that the Dolphins rest. They do not sleep as we know it. Only certain parts of their brains are asleep at any one time. The Spinners turn off their sonar and rely heavily on sight during this time. They use the clear water and sandy bottom of the bays to assist in the detection of predators. Sharks are a major concern and are a serious threat to the dolphins. The Spinners remain inshore throughout the morning hours. In the afternoon hours, the pods start to head back offshore for another night of hunting.