

Hector's Dolphin Research

There are three main populations of Hector's dolphin in the South Island with the East Coast and West Coast populations being the largest. The South Coast population is the smallest.

East Coast South Island Population:

- The most recent survey contracted by MPI was undertaken by scientists from Cawthron Institute, Proteus, and Marine Wildlife Research.
- Surveys were conducted in summer 2012-2013 and winter 2013.
- The summer survey recorded a population estimate of between 6,300 and 13,100.
- The winter survey recorded a population estimate of between 5,200 and 10,600 – significantly greater than the previous population estimate of 1,800.
- Unlike the previous survey which was boat-based, the new survey was an aerial line-transect survey from Nugget Point to Farewell Spit and covered a much greater distance than the previous survey.
- The aerial survey also gave scientists a better vantage point, meaning they were more likely to pick up more sightings than the boat-based survey.
- The results are undergoing peer review, with final results expected before the end of 2013.

South Coast South Island Population:

- Surveys were undertaken in 2010 by scientists from Cawthron Institute, Marine Wildlife Research and NIWA.
- The surveys consisted of two aerial line-transect surveys from Puyseger Point to Nugget Point in summer and winter.
- Population estimate of 630 (slightly more than previous survey).

West Coast South Island Population:

- This population was last surveyed in 2000 and results published in 2004, by Otago University (Slooten et al 2004, Marine Mammal Science).
- Aerial line-transect survey from Milford to Farewell Spit.
- Population estimate of 5,388.
- There has not been anything more recent for this population.
- Given the findings of the recent surveys for East and South Coast populations, an updated survey that follows the same technique and goes further offshore is recommended.