



Beaked Whales: A Complete Guide to Their Biology and Conservation

Richard Ellis, James G. Mead

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Beaked whales are a group that has been shrouded in mystery for most of the twentieth century. A few species were known to science only because a partial skeleton happened to wash up on a remote shore. Over the past few decades, however, scientists have gained a better understanding of this distinct group of cetaceans, gathering natural history information on twenty-two beaked whale species. In this book, famed artist and naturalist Richard Ellis and leading beaked whale researcher James G. Mead bring these unknown marine mammals into the limelight.

Beaked whales are long-lived cetaceans, with some living well past 70 years. They dive to great depths in search of prey, which they capture by expanding their oral cavity suddenly, causing a drop in pressure that sucks in the squid or fish they are hunting. The bodies of most males are covered with tooth-mark scars?possibly marks of mating battles. Because many species are only somewhat larger than dolphins, they are often confused with porpoises, although some larger beaked whale species may grow to 40 feet. These creatures need our help. Beaked whales have been a hot topic in conservation circles of late because their numbers are declining, perhaps due to the damaging effects of naval sonar on their auditory systems.

In Ellis and Mead's book, the beaked whales finally get their due. The duo provides a combination of fascinating stories about the species, original Richard Ellis art, and photos from leading natural history photographers. The result is an accessible, beautiful book?the first of its kind on this unusual group of whales. Meet the beaked whales, and enjoy the fascinating and mysterious world in which they live.

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