



Media Release - Kaipara Forest and Bird

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People who use set nets in the Kaipara Harbour may contribute to the extinction of Maui's Dolphin, says Kaipara Forest and Bird convenor, Suzi Phillips.

"Set nets kill nearly every fish, bird and marine mammal that swims into them. They are perhaps the most wasteful and indiscriminate fishing method ever developed", she says.

Forest and Bird is calling for an extension of the set net ban along the North Island West Coast to include set netting within west coast harbours, such as the Kaipara.

At present there is a ban on all commercial and recreational set netting along much of the North Island West Coast to help to save the critically endangered Maui's dolphin.

Maui's dolphins prefer shallow water environments. Recent research has revealed that at least three out of the five harbours within their range are used by these critically endangered dolphins, but these harbours are not currently included in the set net ban.

"Maui's dolphin are regular visitors to the Kaipara Heads area and there are many anecdotal reports of them inside the Kaipara Harbour" says Ms Phillips. The population of Maui's dolphin is estimated to be less than 111 individuals, with as few as 25 breeding females.



“The ban on set netting is an important step towards saving Maui's dolphin from extinction” says Ms Phillips. “Do set netters in the Kaipara want to risk being responsible for killing the world's most endangered marine dolphin?”,.

Set nets are a major cause of death by drowning of the Maui's dolphin, and the closely related South Island Hector's dolphin.

In addition to calling for a national ban on set nets, Forest and Bird is seeking an education and enforcement regime to ensure that commercial and recreational fishers are aware of the alternatives and do not breach the ban. They also want fisheries observers on trawlers operating within Maui areas, extending four nautical miles from the coast.

“Set nets are used widely in New Zealand waters by recreational and commercial fishers, yet they are as deadly as drift nets” says Ms Phillips. “Most captures of marine mammals and birds are never reported” she says. “The reported kills only give a tiny hint of the size of the underwater carnage.”

ENDS

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