

## Maui, Hawaii trip report

August-September 2015

Vladimir Dinets

While everybody else travels to CAR, Tibet and the Andes, I've just spent two weeks on Maui (and I was there for the third time, believe it or not). Not a place to visit for mammalwatching, but if you find yourself stuck there for some other reason, here are a few tips:

**Hawaiian hoary bat**, the only native non-marine mammal, has recently been found to be two subspecies, originating from two different colonization events; the ones on Big Island are more divergent from mainland populations than those on other Hawaiian Islands. I've never seen bats on Maui, but sightings are sometimes reported from Waipoli Rd. in the vicinity of Polipoli Springs Recreational Area, and also from Waianapanapa State Park.

**Feral pigs** are declining on Maui thanks to hunting and fencing-off of the best habitat; they are said to be most common in the forests above Hana. **Axis deer** can often be seen in Makapu Beach State Park (particularly on the slopes of the red volcanic cone called Puu Olai); they are heavily hunted and very shy. **Small Indian mongoose** is also common in that area and in the nearby La Perouse Bay State Park.

**House mouse** is rare on Maui; try Hwy 377 to Haleakala National Park around midnight (there is a lot of traffic after 3 am as people drive to the summit to see the sunrise). **Polynesian rat** can occasionally be seen at night in Hosmer Grove just inside the national park. Waimoku Falls Trail in the coastal part of the park is the best place to look for **black rat**; they are also often seen at night along Hwy 360 between Huelo and Hana and along the access road to Iao State Park (Hwy 320). **Norway rat** occurs in sugar cane fields and can sometimes be seen late at night along Highways 311 and 380, as well as in Kealia Ponds National Wildlife Refuge, where the **mongoose** also occurs.

Humpback Sanctuary Visitor Center in Kihei is said to be the best place to watch **humpback whales** from shore (from mid-December to mid-April). There are a few companies running humpback-viewing tours in season.

There are lots of interesting cetaceans around the island, but all dolphin-viewing tours go after **spinner dolphins** inside the flooded crater at Molokini Island. The loop road around the E side of the island takes a full day to drive; it has a few lookouts where you can sometimes see **spinner dolphins** (we didn't). For other species you can try ferries to Oahu, Lanai or Molokai, but the captain of one of the ferries told me they see any dolphins only about once a month. Lanai circumnavigation tour run by Ocean Riders ([mauiocseanriders.com](http://mauiocseanriders.com)) is probably slightly better: they occasionally encounter **offshore bottlenose dolphins**, **rough-toothed dolphins**, and **pygmy killer whales**. It wasn't available during our visit because of multiple hurricanes passing through.

**Hawaiian monk seals** are still rare on Maui. They are occasionally seen on snorkeling trips to Lanai, Molokai and Molokini, and a few show up unpredictably on sandy beaches between Kihei and Lahaina. During storms they sometimes haul out on Honolua Beach in the far NW. There are also a few breeding records from secluded beaches between Hana and La Perouse Bay. I never saw any seals on Maui, but found a blog where good locations and recent sightings on Oahu are discussed: [monksealmania.blogspot.com](http://monksealmania.blogspot.com)