

## Book Review

MARINE MAMMALS ASHORE: A FIELD GUIDE FOR STRANDINGS (2nd ed.). Joseph R. Geraci and Valerie J. Lounsbury. National Aquarium in Baltimore, Baltimore, MD. 2005. ISBN 0-9774609-0-8, 371 pp.

For over a century, biologists and other individuals have been gathering and reporting data on stranded marine mammals. Since 1977, when the first national marine mammal stranding workshop was held, the interest and value of marine mammal strandings has rapidly grown. Recognizing the scientific importance of standardizing data and sample collection, this field guide is a source of consistent guidance and serves as the “stranding bible” for response protocol.

This updated edition is based on the original *Marine Mammals Ashore: A Field Guide for Strandings* that was published in 1993. The guide is intended for individuals who are part of a marine mammal stranding network, those who plan to become involved in the network, or individuals who have an interest in marine mammal strandings. Overall, the book contains general information regarding marine mammal biology, distribution patterns, anatomy, life history, sample collection, live and dead stranded animal response procedures, as well as new information previously not available in the older version. The book is very informative, and we would recommend it to anyone that is thinking of becoming involved in or currently participates in a stranding network. The authors have broadened the “geographic scope” in the new edition and expand into topics that are relevant to countries bordering the United States. While the species identification chapter focuses on North American species, and there are obvious American biases throughout the book, we would encourage stranding personnel from other parts of the world to use the guide for its cosmopolitan benefits in the treatment of events of all major marine mammal taxa.

This current edition provides a wealth of new information that is important for stranding network members. For example, the authors contribute up-to-date information on new pathogens and diseases found in stranded marine mammals, as well as a range of zoonoses of which all of us who work with marine mammals should be cognizant. In addition, updated information is available regarding Unusual Mortality Events

(UMEs), including the criteria and processes used to determine and declare a UME, which may be useful for field workers who suspect an event. The guide includes an enhanced section on evaluating human interactions that contains detailed instructions for thorough evaluation, as well as an up-to-date human interaction datasheet to assist network members in conducting comprehensive and consistent examinations. This edition is particularly advantageous in that it includes special topic sections on disentanglement, tagging and monitoring, and geographical information systems. These sections provide basic guidance on disentanglement procedures; cover a variety of tagging techniques, including the advantages and disadvantages of each tag type; and touch on the uses of geographic information systems and applications as relevant to released animals as well as stranding mortality trends. The authors provide sampling procedures that are up-to-date and applicable to current issues in marine mammal strandings, including how to investigate noise-related cetacean strandings, as well as sampling procedures for various biotoxins. The guide provides guidance for live animal response, and includes a very useful qualitative evaluation criteria datasheet that can be used to assess mass stranded cetaceans. New information regarding team organization and the implementation of the Incident Command System is also addressed.

We are very excited about this new edition since we have been using the old guide in our own stranding-related work for many years. We frequently refer to the guide and have used it as a training tool for new staff and volunteers. Like the first edition, it is printed on weather (and blood!) resistant paper with a strong binding which facilitates its use in the field. In fact, as we were writing this review, we had the occasion to use it for reference during an unusual species stranding event in our study area, and referred to the guide while driving to the beach.

We found the book to be much improved with enhanced information that is relevant to recent marine mammal issues. The inclusion of how to evaluate human interactions and noise-related strandings, as well as the criteria used to determine UMEs, was exceptional. We feel the improvements in this new edition were outstanding, and we believe this guide will be incredibly useful to stranding network members.

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