

# The Canadian Field-Naturalist

## Book Reviews

**Book Review Editor's Note:** *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* is a peer-reviewed scientific journal publishing papers on ecology, behaviour, taxonomy, conservation, and other topics relevant to Canadian natural history. In line with this mandate, we review books with a Canadian connection, including those on any species (native or non-native) that inhabits Canada, as well as books covering topics of global relevance, including climate change, biodiversity, species extinction, habitat loss, evolution, and field research experiences.

**Currency Codes:** CAD Canadian Dollars, USD United States Dollars, EUR Euros, AUD Australian Dollars, GBP British Pounds.

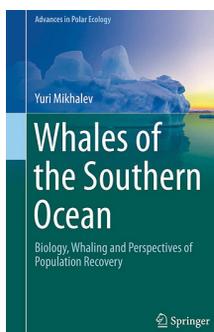
### BIOLOGY

#### **Whales of the Southern Ocean: Biology, Whaling and Perspectives of Population Recovery. Advances in Polar Ecology Volume 5**

By Yuri Mikhalev. 2020. Springer Nature. 382 pages, 179.99 USD, Cloth, 139.00 USD, E-book.

Whales of the world, particularly large baleen whales, have been the target of human exploitation for millennia. Indigenous peoples around the world have targetted whales for subsistence hunts for thousands of years, but these hunts are typically sustainable, simply because the populations of hunters are relatively small and the whales often stay far offshore out of the reach of hunters in small boats. However, over the past several centuries, whale hunts became commercialized, and this led to vast over-exploitation and the near extinction of many populations of whales in every ocean of the world, including the ice-covered polar seas. Large whaling ships would embark on long expeditions, and would track whales even in some of the most hard to reach stretches of ocean. In the latter years of whaling (i.e., within the past century), tens of thousands of whales were harvested every year by commercial whalers. Most commercial whaling has ceased, following the huge efforts of scientists and conservationists involved in the International Whaling Commission. However, the effect of commercial whaling is still felt in all the world's oceans, and it is possible that many populations of whales will never fully recover.

*Whales of the Southern Ocean* fits within this context. Author Yuri Mikhalev is a Russian scientist who led



part of Russia's science mission during whaling expeditions in the Southern Ocean. He uses his vast knowledge of Russian whaling operations in the Southern Ocean to provide a relatively detailed overview of the history of whaling, particularly from the lens of Russian whalers. The author then goes on to use data that he collected on the biology of whales in the Southern Ocean based on whales harvested by Russian whalers, and examines trends in length-weight relationships, growth laws, reproductive biology, and the spatial distribution of different whales species from the Southern Ocean. The amount of data available from whaling operations is vast, and many of the details presented in this book could be very useful for whale biologists. In the final chapter, the author discusses the ecology of different species of whales and their potential for recovery following the cessation of commercial whaling.

Overall, *Whales of the Southern Ocean* is full of very interesting information, but it would be quite dense for non-specialists. Multiple chapters are quite data-heavy, and are definitely written for a specialist audience. This book would be a very good resource for whale biologists, particularly for those who study whales in the Southern Ocean. However, I'm not sure that the audience extends far beyond this specialized group.

WILLIAM D. HALLIDAY

Wildlife Conservation Society Canada,  
Whitehorse, YT, Canada and

School of Earth and Ocean Sciences,  
University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada

©The author. This work is freely available under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0).