

The Voices of Marine Mammals: William E. Schevill and William A. Watkins: Pioneers in Bioacoustics

Edited by Christina Connett Brophy. 2019. New Bedford Whaling Museum. 125 pages and flexi-disc insert of audio recordings, 29.99 USD, Paper.

The field of marine bioacoustics, or the study of sounds made by marine life, really only began after World War II. Navies round the world began developing underwater acoustic technology during the war



to detect enemy submarines and, following the war, biologists began using and further developing this technology to study marine life. Two researchers from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) were truly pioneers on this front: William (Bill) Schevill and William (Bill) Watkins. *The Voices of Marine Mammals* provides a really interesting overview of the many ways that Schevill and Watkins contributed to marine bioacoustics and marine mammal biology. Most chapters were written by authors who were touched by Watkins and Schevill in some way, whether they were trained, supervised, or mentored by Watkins and Schevill or collaborated with them.

The impetus behind this book was the donation by WHOI of the entire collection of whale and seal audio recordings made by Watkins and Schevill to the New Bedford Whaling Museum (NBWM). The NBWM then undertook the project of archiving, cataloguing, and digitizing this immense collection of whale and seal vocalizations. To celebrate this collection and the careers of Schevill and Watkins, the NBWM put together this book and released the Watkins Marine Mammal Sound Database (<https://cis.who.edu/science/B/whalesounds/index.cfm>). People interested in learning more about the history of marine bioacoustics should read this book and should also visit the Watkins database website to listen to the marine mammal sounds discussed within the book. The hard-

copy of this book also comes with a flexi-disc containing excerpts from a recording made by Watkins and Schevill in 1962, entitled “Whale and porpoise voices: a phonograph record”. These excerpts include five tracks from the 19 on the original record. The full, original record and its introductory 26-page booklet can be downloaded from <https://hdl.handle.net/1912/7431>. This flexi-disc is a nice addition to the book for anyone with the equipment to play it.

This book presents a great combination of biography and history of biology. It is full of interesting anecdotes about the lives of Watkins and Schevill, their adventures in the field, how they started different research projects and collaborations, and how they affected the careers of many researchers who are themselves at the top of their fields today. It also provides many examples of how Watkins and Schevill advanced different aspects of marine mammal science: nine of the 11 chapters in *The Voices of Marine Mammals* are dedicated to specific frontiers in marine mammal science that these scientists helped to advance. While most of their influence was related to marine mammal bioacoustics, they were also involved in developing the earliest tracking tags that could be attached to whales, which is a type of technology that is crucial to much of what we know about the movements of whales.

The Voices of Marine Mammals is well-written and should be easy to understand for readers with a basic knowledge of biology and science. It should be especially interesting to those interested in marine mammal science and the history of biology.

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