

What is a National Marine Sanctuary?

Our national marine sanctuaries embrace part of our collective riches as a nation. Within their protected waters, giant humpback whales breed and calve their young, coral colonies flourish, and shipwrecks tell stories of our maritime history.

Sanctuary habitats include beautiful rocky reefs, lush kelp forests, whale migrations corridors, spectacular deep-sea canyons, and underwater archaeological sites. Our nation's sanctuaries can provide a safe habitat for species close to extinction or protect historically significant shipwrecks.

Ranging in size from less than one square mile to over 5,300 square miles, each sanctuary is a unique place needing special protections. Natural classrooms, cherished recreational spots, and valuable commercial industries—marine sanctuaries represent many things to many people.



Photo © Flip Nicklin/Minden Pictures

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale

National Marine Sanctuary

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A National Marine Sanctuary

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale

Photo: Doug Perrine/HWRF/Seapics.com/NOAA Fisheries Permit #882



Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

The Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary represents a new step in conserving the birthplace of an endangered marine mammal. The sanctuary enables citizens and government to work collectively on safeguarding the breeding and calving range of the largest North Pacific population of humpback whales. Congress established the sanctuary in 1992 and with the approval of Hawai'i's governor, the sanctuary was fully designated in 1997. Encompassing 1,370 square miles of coastal waters adjacent to the main Hawaiian Islands, the sanctuary extends out from the shoreline to the 100-fathom isobath (600-foot depth) and consists of the submerged lands and waters off of portions of Kaua'i, O'ahu, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, Maui and Hawai'i.

The sanctuary supports research and education aimed at increasing understanding of humpback whales. Sanctuary resources are managed by a joint partnership between the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration within the United States Department of Commerce.



Photo: Doug Perrine/HWRF/Seapics.com/NOAA Fisheries Permit #882

Nā wahi kupaianaha ... extraordinary places The National Marine Sanctuary System

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has managed marine sanctuaries since the 1972 passage of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. The National Marine Sanctuary Program serves as the trustee for a system of 14 marine protected areas that encompass more than 150,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington State to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa, as well as the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Our nation's sanctuary waters may provide a safe habitat for species close to extinction or protect historically significant shipwrecks.

Protection of these diverse ocean and freshwater resources requires a great deal of planning, management, and cooperation between federal, state, and local officials. The National Marine Sanctuary Program works cooperatively with others to balance enjoyment of marine environment and inland lakes with long-term conservation. Increasing public awareness and appreciation of our marine heritage, scientific research, monitoring, educational programs and outreach are only a few of the efforts the national marine sanctuary system uses to fulfill its mission to the American people.



Sanctuary Programs

Vision

The sanctuary works collaboratively to sustain a safe and healthy habitat for the North Pacific stock of humpback whales (koholā). As a community of ocean stewards, the sanctuary strives to achieve a balance of appropriate uses, inspired care-taking, enlightened understanding, and effective education to ensure the continued presence of the koholā for future generations. The sanctuary endeavors to do this with harmony, hope, respect, and aloha o ke kai (love of the sea).

Education

Offering opportunities to educators and students is a sanctuary priority. The sanctuary conducts teacher workshops, introducing teachers to marine science and environmental conservation activities for their students. Other educational opportunities include lectures, trainings and a variety of resource materials that can be found on the sanctuary website.



Photo: Flip Nicklin/Minden Pictures/NOAA Fisheries Permit #987

Resource Protection

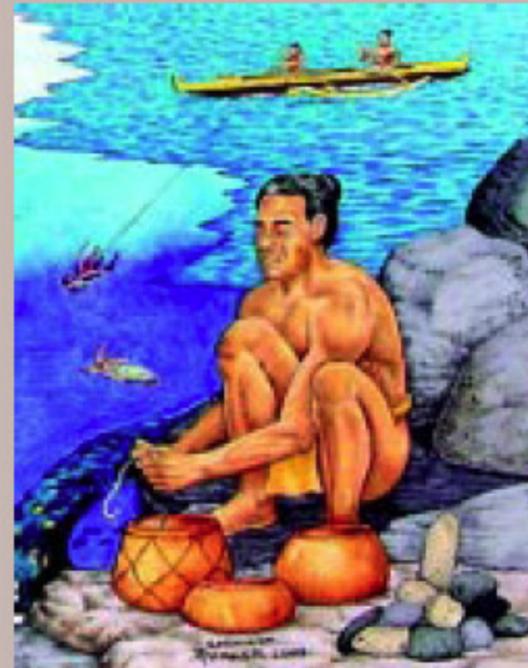
The highest management priority for the sanctuary is the long-term protection of humpback whales and their habitat. To facilitate this, the sanctuary works to reduce threats such as vessel strikes, and coordinates efforts to rescue animals that have become entangled in nets and lines that threaten their survival. The sanctuary works with other federal and state authorities, and with various community and business interests through its Sanctuary Advisory Council to ensure protection for humpback whales.

Research

The sanctuary's research goal is to increase scientific knowledge about the North Pacific humpback whale population and its winter habitat. Scientific findings help to further the sanctuary's ability to evaluate the on-going recovery of humpbacks and respond with effective management measures. The sanctuary supports the work of marine scientists, whose efforts include photo-identification, DNA sampling, studying whale populations, tracking migration, birth and mortality rates; and whale behavior studies. This research is vital to the preservation of humpback whales around the world.

Native Hawaiian Culture

Ocean stewardship is deeply embedded in Native Hawaiian culture. Early Hawaiians developed techniques to manage ocean resources without depleting them. Many of the traditional practices, handed down through generations, continue to survive today. The sanctuary strives to facilitate and support Native Hawaiian uses within the habitat of the koholā.



Artist: Brook Kapuhunahi Parker

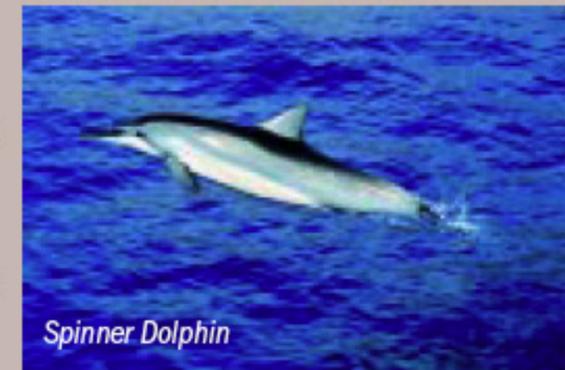
For more information about the sanctuary and its programs visit the website at <http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>

Hawai'i's Marine Environment

The Hawaiian marine environment nurtures many marine species in addition to the humpback whale. These include dolphins, Hawaiian monk seals and five species of sea turtles. Hawaiian waters are also home to important coral reefs, which sustain thousands of marine plants and animals.

Hawai'i's most extensive coral reef colonies are found beyond the main islands to the northwest of Kaua'i. These coral reefs are the foundation of an ecosystem that hosts more than 7,000 species, including marine mammals, fish, sea turtles, birds and invertebrates. One quarter of these species are found nowhere else in the world. Despite so much variety, the marine wildlife in Hawai'i is fragile and vulnerable.

Stretching over 1,200 miles, this area is the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and is made up of tiny islands, atolls and shoals. This relatively undisturbed wilderness is part of the largest marine protected area in the United States and is currently being considered as the nation's 14th national marine sanctuary.



Spinner Dolphin



Hawaiian Monk Seal



Green Sea Turtle

Photos: Lori Mazzuca

Hawai'i's Humpback Whales

Graphic by George Carey

Hawai'i Birthplace

Hawaiian waters are a birthplace of humpback whales in the North Pacific Ocean. An estimated 5,000 animals annually congregate here and find the warm and shallow waters ideal for mating, calving and nursing. With its current population estimated to be about 7,000 in the North Pacific, this endangered species is slowly making a comeback to its pre-whaling population of 15,000 to 20,000 animals.

Humpbacks Are Mammals

The humpback whale is one of 81 species in the cetacean family. Of two major groups of cetaceans, humpbacks belong to the *Mysticetes*, a sub-order characterized by a mouth containing hundreds of baleen plates that allow for filter-feeding. The other sub-order is the *Odontocetes*, which includes toothed whales like the sperm whale and dolphins.

Like us, cetaceans are mammals: they breathe air and give birth to live young. Humpbacks also sport distinctive knobs on the top of their heads called tubercles. A single hair is found on each tubercle giving the humpback another trait characteristic of all mammals—hair!



Photo: Doug Perrine/HWRF/Seapics.com/
NOAA Fisheries Permit #663

Migration

Humpback whales spend summer months feeding on zooplankton and small fish that flourish in the colder, nutrient rich waters of temperate and sub-polar regions like Alaska.

Their annual migration to the tropics during winter is an amazing feat, not yet fully understood. It's believed they follow cues of temperature, ocean currents and the earth's magnetic field to navigate nearly 3,000 miles of open ocean.

“Humpback”

A small dorsal fin and a hunched appearance displayed above the water's surface as the animal prepares for a dive, is responsible for the more popular name—humpback whale.

“Big Wings”

Humpback whales have the longest pectoral fins of the whales. The adults can have pectoral fins that measure 15 feet long—about one-third of their total body length of 45 feet. Their proportionately huge pectoral fins led to the humpback's scientific name, *Megaptera novaeangliae*—“Big Winged New Englander.”



Photo: Flip Nicklin/Minden Pictures/
NOAA Fisheries Permit #987

The Humpback's Fingerprint

Scientists are able to identify and track individual whales by the distinct pattern on the underside of their large, powerful tails known as flukes. With patterns of pigmentation and shape so unique, each one can be likened to an individual “fingerprint.”



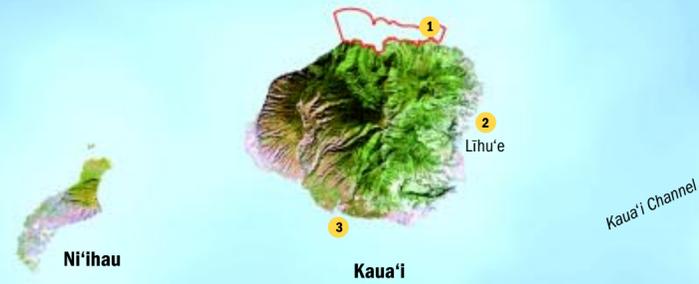
Photo: Doug Perrine/HWRF/Seapics.com/NOAA Fisheries Permit #882

Humpbacks Are Unique

An average weight of 44 tons puts the humpback whale in the medium range of the great whales. Humpbacks are unique among all whales in their tendency to display acrobatic movements; this has earned them a reputation for being playful. Perhaps the humpback's most famous and intriguing feature is its song—said to be one of the longest and most complex in the animal kingdom. The latest scientific evidence suggests that vocalizations emitted by the males are used to fend off competitors during breeding activity.

A Special Place for Humpback Whales

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary



Naupaka, a native plant that grows on the beaches near the sanctuary.



Sanctuary Headquarters 16

The beachfront setting of the sanctuary headquarters in Kihei, Maui offers both scenic beauty and ecological significance. Visitors to the site will discover a living classroom, with many opportunities to enjoy the simple pleasures of nature watching. During winter, koholā (humpback whales) are seen on the horizon with frequent activity close to shore. The deck of the main building provides a viewscope for observing the ever-changing scene along Maui's coastline.

Inside the Education Center, exhibits and artifacts highlight the significance of humpback whales from the perspectives of both science and culture. Open during weekdays, the center also features a marine science library, information for adults and children and a corps of dedicated volunteers, well-versed in whale facts and legends. The stone walls of Kō'ie'ie, an intricately constructed fishpond, are a record of the kinship that Native Hawaiians had with the sea when they inhabited the area long ago.

The sanctuary also maintains offices on Kaua'i, O'ahu and Hawai'i. For more information on programs and volunteer opportunities go to the sanctuary's website at <http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>

Whale Watching

Whether from land or boat, whale-watching can be an exciting activity. Humpback whales return to Hawai'i each winter, with the peak season from December through April. If you have an opportunity to get on the water, there are a number of whale-watching companies that can help you see and experience the wonders of the humpback whale. Whether on your own or on a tour, please follow the guidelines and regulations developed to help ensure a safe environment for you and humpback whales. Ocean users should be mindful of regulations intended to protect marine creatures and their habitat.



Sunset over sanctuary waters and Diamond Head (Leahi) on O'ahu.

Regulated Activities

The sanctuary's resources can be protected by all ocean users through voluntary compliance with applicable federal and state regulations. Unless authorized by a valid Federal and state research permit; it is unlawful for any person to:

- Approach by any means, within 100 yards of any humpback whale;
- Cause a vessel or other object to approach within 100 yards of a humpback whale;
- Operate any aircraft within 1,000 feet of any humpback whale;
- Disrupt the normal behavior or prior activity of a humpback whale.

Report Strandings or Violations

For stranded, injured, sick, or entangled marine mammals
(888) 256-9840 NOAA Fisheries
For disturbance and harassment of marine mammals
(800) 853-1964 NOAA Office of Law Enforcement
For oil spills or illegal dumping
(800) 424-8802 U.S. Coast Guard

Humpback Whale Behavior



Photos: Suzanne Canga

Island	Place of Interest	Phone	Indicates sanctuary facility				
			Visitor Center	Scenic View	Boat Trips	Aquarium	Walks
Kaua'i	1 Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge (808) 828-1413		●	●			●
	2 Kapa'a Overlook			●			
	3 Port Allen				●		
O'ahu	4 Hale'iwa and Honolulu				●		
	5 Waikiki Aquarium (808) 923-9741					●	
	6 Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve (808) 396-4229		●	●			
	7 Hālonā Blowhole			●			
Moloka'i	8 Makapu'u Point				●		
	9 Hālawā Bay			●			
Lāna'i	10 Kamalo			●			
	11 Shipwreck Beach			●		●	
	12 Mānele Bay			●			
Maui	13 Lahaina Harbor				●		
	14 Papawai Point			●			
	15 Mā'alaea				●	●	
Hawai'i	16 Sanctuary Education Center (808) 879-2818		●	●			
	17 Kailua-Kona				●		
	18 Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park (808) 329-6881		●	●			
	19 Waikoloa Beach			●	●		●
	20 Pu'ukoholā Heiau National Historical Site (808) 882-7218		●	●			●
21 Mokupāpapa Discovery Center (808) 933-8195		●					

The Hawaiian Islands

Encompassing 1,370 square miles, the sanctuary is outlined on this map by the red line that follows the shoreline and extends to the 100-fathom contour line (600-foot depth). The unique characteristics of the main Hawaiian Islands appear on this image taken from space. Lava flows on the island of Hawai'i are clearly visible as dark ribbons that appear to flow across the landscape. Deep canyons created from erosion are evident on Kaua'i and the northern peninsula of Hawai'i. Agricultural areas can be distinguished on the narrow isthmus joining the peaks of Maui. Dark green areas are rainforests and appear primarily on the northeast sides of the islands, where prevailing tradewinds bring in moisture from the ocean in the form of rain. The dense urban core of Honolulu, the state's capital city, appears gray and dominates the south coast of O'ahu. With close proximity to land, the sanctuary's waters can be affected by human influences such as vessels, ocean activities and pollution from urban and agricultural runoff.

