

KOHOLĀ CONNECTION

THE VOICE OF THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS HUMPBACK WHALE NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

WINTER 2010

SPLASHING OUT from Coast to Coast p. 8

Maui Welcomes Its
Newest Addition p. 4

Charting an
International Course p. 10



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KOHOLĀ CONNECTION

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NEWS SPLASH!



SANCTUARY SIGNS PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE WILDLIFE VIEWING

The sanctuary has completed phase one of a multi-phase effort to install signs that educate about marine wildlife at popular shoreline locations. The signs focus on marine protected species including whales, dolphins, seals and turtles, and also feature information on Hawaiian reefs.

A total of 12 signs have been installed to date at locations on the islands of Hawai'i, Maui, and O'ahu. Locations range from busy boat ramps to popular scenic lookouts. Additional signs are in development for future areas to empower communities and individuals with knowledge to protect Hawai'i's marine resources.

KAUA'I OFFICE EVALUATES ITS NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) is currently evaluating a number of options regarding the future direction of the sanctuary's Kaua'i office. The sanctuary program on Kaua'i has outgrown its existing office space and the availability of suitable venues for sanctuary lectures, workshops, and training sessions has diminished on island. "We are constantly faced with inadequate facilities to accommodate the numbers of attendees and volunteers our events are able to attract and the island has a general shortage of affordable spaces that are climate-controlled for showing multi-media presentations," said Jean Souza, the Kaua'i programs coordinator. "This has severely impacted the kinds of programs we can currently offer."

A number of options are being explored, including the possibility of establishing a Kaua'i Ocean Discovery Center – a visitor center with lecture, training and educational facilities and office space. Such a facility

would be important on an island which currently has no marine lab, marine visitor center, or marine aquaria. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Pacific Islands Region, which includes the humpback whale sanctuary and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, and others have expressed interest in developing such a facility on Kaua'i. The ONMS will be looking to the community for input in the possibility of developing a new facility on Kaua'i. Ideas and comments can be directed to Jean.Souza@noaa.gov. Look for details on the progress of this effort in future issues.

MAKING BIG PROGRESS ON HAWAII'S BIG ISLAND

When it comes to rescuing marine mammals, the old adage "many hands make light work" has never been more fitting. Recently, a dead pygmy sperm whale weighing over 800 pounds landed on the shores of the Big Island – and you can imagine the sheer amount of manpower that was needed to remove it. Fortunately, an increase in community involvement on the Big Island has aided such efforts.

Justin Viezbicke, the Hawai'i programs coordinator on the Big Island, is grateful for the community's growing support. "I'm the only one in the office, and I really couldn't function without the extra help," says Viezbicke. With over 50 volunteers on the west side alone, he is able to pull together a rescue team at the very first sighting of a marine mammal stranding.

In fact, this past June a local resident made a dire discovery: an 11-month-old Hawaiian monk seal had swallowed a fishing hook and the fishing line was dangling from its mouth. Through the volunteer network and under close coordination with NOAA Fisheries, Pacific Islands Marine Mammal Response Program, Viezbicke was able to quickly assemble a team of people to help in the rescue effort. After a week of searching, the team successfully located the seal and worked with the US Coast Guard, the state of Hawai'i, NOAA Fisheries Protected Resources Division and veterinarians to safely remove the hook and return the seal to the ocean.

"As spectators watch these types of rescue and recovery efforts, they feel compelled to get involved and wonder how they can help," shares Viezbicke. Volunteers participate in a training program and meet monthly to practice the proper procedures. They also get involved in education and outreach programs, as well as take an active role in marine mammal strandings



all across the Big Island. "We have a diverse group of volunteers of all ages, and their involvement has been crucial to our success," Viezbicke adds.

GOING HOLO-HOLO ON LANA'I

Sanctuary staff and volunteers recently visited the beautiful island of Lāna'i to spread the word about protecting the ocean. The fun began on board the Trilog, where Lāna'i students were given the opportunity to become Junior Marine Scientists. Students and parents worked together to learn about water quality after taking their own samples, and the adventure didn't stop there. While recording data about the marine wildlife that could be seen, over 100 Hawaiian spinner dolphins were spotted nearby. Other wildlife included flying fish, corals and birds – a memorable day for all, no doubt!

The fun continued that evening when the sanctuary sponsored an Ocean Fest and Movie in the Park event that featured "Nim's Island," a movie starring Jodie Foster. Those in attendance were able to take part in a variety of marine art activities and games. In addition, information and displays that focused on the sanctuary and humpback whales were available.

Lāna'i is the only island in Hawai'i that is completely surrounded by the sanctuary. It's a special place for humpback whales and the other marine life that call Hawaiian waters home. Don't miss your chance to go Holo-Holo to Lāna'i this whale season and experience whale watching, Lāna'i style.





Maui Welcomes Its Newest Addition



Earlier this year, NOAA's Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary celebrated the grand opening of the new Sanctuary Learning Center in Kihei, Maui. Construction on this new facility began in late 2004 and the building opened its doors to the public on April 13, 2009.

As part of the grand opening celebration, Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Senator Daniel K. Akaka, NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Hawaiian cultural practitioner Kimokeo Kapahulehua, and other notable dignitaries participated in the momentous ceremony. Over 200 people attended the grand opening and the celebration included presentations from guest speakers, entertainment and an opportunity to tour the new facility. The new 4,600-square foot building was celebrated as a welcome addition to the island of Maui and will serve as a valuable resource to the entire Hawai'i community.

The Sanctuary Learning Center provides expanded facilities for research and education programs that enhance humpback whale protection and offers additional opportunities for education on the marine environment. It also provides a wonderful venue for affiliated programs and meetings. The new learning center can seat up to 100 people, allowing ample room for presentations and school groups. Last year, more than 6,000 students visited the Kihei location, and the need for additional space became apparent.

"It's a great addition for us because it provides more room for us to do things with the kids," said Maui Programs Coordinator Patty Miller.



Students from pre-school to junior college are invited to participate in a variety of programs. Younger children have fun with hands-on activities and crafts, while older kids get the chance to experience educational reef walks. Many of the students from Maui Community College participate in important limu (seaweed) studies and fish counts. In the summer, students also come from the mainland to participate in field monitoring.

The new multipurpose learning center is located next to the sanctuary office building, adjacent to the historic Ko'ie'ie Hawaiian fishpond and sanctuary waters. Students are encouraged to explore the area and get their feet wet. Some of the older children work on the fishpond restoration while others track opihi. The familiar blue buildings have become a landmark on Kihei's coast, representing the special significance of Maui's protected waters as the centerpiece for a marine sanctuary dedicated to the humpback whale.

"Maui County is the heart of the humpback whale sanctuary," said Naomi McIntosh, sanctuary superintendent. "This center will serve the sanctuary and the community by providing a new venue to work together to protect humpback whales in Hawai'i."

Through its educational programs the sanctuary has informed both locals and visitors about the ecological and cultural significance of the marine environment. The sanctuary also sponsors research and resource management programs from this office, and the new facility will further enhance interaction with the greater Pacific and international marine mammal management community.

Future renovation plans for the existing site include developing a campus that will integrate all three buildings through an open outdoor plaza at the west end of the current parking lot. New exhibits will feature more interactive and visitor-friendly educational tools. These vital improvements will enhance the property, while still maintaining the spectacular view of sanctuary waters. If you live on Maui or have a chance to visit Kihei, be sure to visit the new Sanctuary Learning Center and see all of the exciting new additions. 🌿

Dignitaries take part in the opening ceremony of the Sanctuary Learning Center.





STARS OF THE SEA

Skip and Gloria Snyder

What does it take to be nominated as Volunteer of the Year? Just ask Maui residents Skip and Gloria Snyder and they'll tell you it takes passion, dedication, and an unwavering commitment to help protect our endangered humpback whales. Skip and Gloria have volunteered at the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary for over eight years and they have consistently donated numerous hours of their time each year. Their dedication and effort truly goes beyond the norm.

In 2007, Skip and Gloria established the Friends of the Humpback Whale, a non-profit organization that has raised thousands of dollars to help support sanctuary programs. Last year, they manned information stations weekly to promote reef stewardship for the International Year of the Reef Program. They also participate in numerous activities and volunteer efforts throughout the year, with education being their primary focus. "Anything we can do to help educate the children and help them be stewards of our ocean is our goal," says Gloria.

In June, the Snyders and 15 other Volunteer of the Year nominees were acknowledged at the 2009 National Marine Sanctuary Foundation's Leadership Awards Dinner, held in Washington, D.C. Winning the award was Josh Churchman, a commercial fisherman and ocean lover from Bolinas, California. Churchman was recognized for his significant

contributions in a variety of areas and for his exceptional stewardship of the ocean environment.

As part of the 2009 Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW), the Snyders visited Senator Inouye at his office. "We felt so honored to be a part of this incredible experience" recalls Gloria. "The senators and representatives were so receptive to us, and so welcoming. It was wonderful to be honored for something we love to do."

"The sanctuary would simply not be able to reach the number of people they do without the support of these two dedicated people" says Emily Carlson, former volunteer coordinator for the sanctuary's Maui office. "They really are amazing volunteers and without them, this volunteer program would not be what it is today." For all of their hard work and devotion, the sanctuary would like to extend a big mahalo to Skip and Gloria. 

