



# HUMPBACK WHALE MONTH FACT SHEET

**It's Humpback Whale Month in Hawai'i and the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary wants you to get involved in protecting Hawai'i's humpback whales.** The sanctuary offers many opportunities for the public to learn about and watch whales each season. Find out how you can get involved by visiting us online at [hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov](http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov).

**THE SANCTUARY** lies within the shallow (less than 600 feet), warm waters surrounding the main Hawaiian Islands and constitutes one of the world's most important humpback whale habitats. Through education, outreach, research and resource protection activities, the sanctuary strives to protect humpback whales and their habitat in Hawai'i. This continued protection is crucial to the long-term recovery of this endangered species.

**HUMPBACK WHALES** were once plentiful in oceans worldwide. The global population was depleted by the commercial whaling industry at the start of the 20th century. Now, more than 10,000 animals may migrate to Hawai'i each winter between November and May.

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 that is not yet fully understood. It's believed that humpbacks follow cues of temperature, ocean currents, and the earth's magnetic field to navigate nearly 3,000 miles of open ocean. Once in warmer waters, the whales engage in breeding, calving and nursing activities.

Humpback whales are known for their acrobatic behaviors and the shores of Hawai'i offer perfect viewing conditions. Take time to head outside and catch a glimpse of these "gentle giants" before they head back to colder waters.

## FACTS

<b>Group</b>	Mammalia	<b>Type of whale</b>	Baleen
<b>Order</b>	Cetacea	<b>Hawaiian name</b>	koholā
<b>Sub-order</b>	Mysticeti	<b>Weight</b>	40 - 45 tons
<b>Family</b>	Balaenopteridae	<b>Length</b>	45 feet
<b>Genus</b>	Megaptera	<b>Life span</b>	40 - 60 years
<b>Scientific Name</b>	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	<b>Gestation</b>	10 to 12 months



**Want to know more? Want to help? Keep reading!**  
- Over, Please. -

# THREATS AND HOW YOU CAN HELP!

**Entanglement in marine debris, such as fishing gear, is a growing problem for marine mammals.** It can hinder diving, swimming, feeding and surfacing activities as well as the overall behavior of the animal.

- ~ Choose reusable items instead of disposables.
- ~ Cut six-pack rings before disposing of them as they may become entangled on marine life.
- ~ Properly dispose of your trash, including cigarettes and fishing gear.
- ~ Recycle plastics, bottles, cans and paper at the appropriate locations.
- ~ Get involved in a beach or reef clean-up.
- ~ Do not release balloons as they often end up in the ocean and pose a threat to marine life.

**Habitat is critical** for the conservation and health of humpback whales. Any activity which can lead to poor water quality can affect the habitat and ecosystem of the humpback whale.

- ~ Dispose or recycle hazardous materials such as batteries, oils, paints and chemicals properly.
- ~ Be aware that pesticides, herbicides, cleaning products, soil and fecal matter wash out to sea untreated during heavy storms.

**Vessel-whale collisions** have been known to cause injury to humpback whales and may result in serious injury to both humans and whales. It is illegal to approach a humpback whale within 100 yards in the water, as well as disrupt the normal behavior of a humpback, including its prior activity.

- ~ Know that it is illegal to approach a humpback whale within 100 yards by sea and 1,000 feet by air. Share your knowledge with others.
- ~ Avoid collisions with humpback whales, watch your speed and post a lookout for humpbacks while underway during humpback whale season (November - May)
- ~ Be aware of vessel and safety regulations. Make others aware as well.

**Acoustic disturbance** due to dredging, blasting, shipping, recreational, testing and other activities may affect humpback whales and their behavior.

- ~ Be aware of issues in your area and get involved. Public involvement helps to ensure successful conservation strategies are put into place.

## SUPPORT THE SANCTUARY

Visit [hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov](http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov) or [nmsfocean.org](http://nmsfocean.org) to find out how to support the sanctuary through the Kohola-Campaign.

## REPORTING INFORMATION

- ~ Report violations of the Marine Mammal Protection Act & Endangered Species Act to the NOAA Fisheries Enforcement Hotline at 1-800-853-1964.
- ~ Report marine mammal emergencies (including injuries and entanglements) and monk seal sightings to NOAA Fisheries at 1-888-256-9840.
- ~ Report injured, sick, stranded or dead sea turtles to NOAA Fisheries at 1-808-983-5730.
- ~ Report oil or hazardous material spills to the U.S. Coast Guard at 1-800-424-8802.



**Sign-up to receive Sanctuary announcements by  
visiting us online at <http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>**

