

# Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary



Photo: HIHWNMS, NOAA Fisheries Permit #782-1438

The sanctuary constitutes one of the world's most important humpback whale habitats.



Photo: Ed Lyman, NOAA

The sanctuary recognizes the importance of Native Hawaiian cultural traditions and their relationship to the long-term health of Hawai'i's oceans.



Photo: James Watt, NOAA

The main Hawaiian Islands are surrounded by small, fringing reefs.

## Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

(HIHWNMS) was designated to protect the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) and its habitat in Hawai'i. The sanctuary enables citizens and government to work collectively on safeguarding humpback whale breeding, calving and nursing grounds in waters around the main Hawaiian Islands, an area that supports more than half of the North Pacific humpback whale population. Encompassing 1,370 square miles of federal and state waters surrounding the main Hawaiian Islands, the sanctuary extends from the shoreline to the 100 fathom isobath (183 meter or 600 foot depth contour) and is composed of five separate marine protected areas accessible from six of the eight main Hawaiian Islands.

## Research and Monitoring

Research and long-term monitoring are essential to achieve the sanctuary's primary goal to protect humpback whales and their habitat in Hawai'i. Although past research efforts have made significant advancements in characterizing and monitoring humpback whales and their habitat, many unanswered questions and unknowns remain, including habitat requirements, population size, distribution and dy-

namics, threats and impacts, and other important biological and ecological parameters. Research funded or coordinated by the sanctuary focuses on the sanctuary and its surrounding area as well as other areas in the Pacific. The sanctuary also collaborates with scientists working in other parts of the humpback whale's range around the world.

## Education and Outreach

Outreach and education programs and projects are conducted to foster awareness of sanctuary resources and to promote ocean stewardship among Hawai'i's residents and visitors. Information about humpback whales and their habitat in Hawai'i is made available to the public through educator and student workshops, community lectures, shore-based whale watches, volunteer and naturalist training sessions, and sanctuary publications. On Maui, the Sanctuary Visitor Center in Kihei is a beachfront facility with year-round exhibits. The sanctuary's signature project, the Sanctuary Ocean Count, is a great way to get involved. Volunteers count whales and record their behaviors from over 60 designated shore sites on the islands of O'ahu, Kaua'i and Hawai'i.



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# Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

## Location

Shoreline to a 600 foot depth contour around the four main Hawaiian Islands

## Protected Area

1,366 square miles

## Designation

May 1992

## Habitats

Coral reefs  
Humpback whale breeding, calving and nursing grounds  
Sandy substrate  
Seagrass beds

## Key Species

Coral  
False killer whale  
Hawaiian monk seal  
Humpback whale  
Reef fish  
Sea turtles  
Sharks and rays  
Spinner dolphin

## NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



## Find Us

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Kihei, Hawai'i 96753  
808-879-2818

## On the Web

Email: [hihumpbackwhale@noaa.gov](mailto:hihumpbackwhale@noaa.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/hawaiihumpbackwhale](http://www.facebook.com/hawaiihumpbackwhale)  
 Twitter: @Hihumpbackwhale

## Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Network of marine protected areas  
Encompasses more than 170,000 square miles  
Established October 1972

## On the Web

[sanctuaries.noaa.gov](http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/NOAAOfficeofNationalMarineSanctuaries](http://www.facebook.com/NOAAOfficeofNationalMarineSanctuaries)  
 Instagram: @noaasanctuaries  
 Twitter: @sanctuaries  
 Tumblr: @noaasanctuaries



Photo: NOAA

Sanctuary Ocean Count offers the community a chance to monitor humpback whales from the shore.

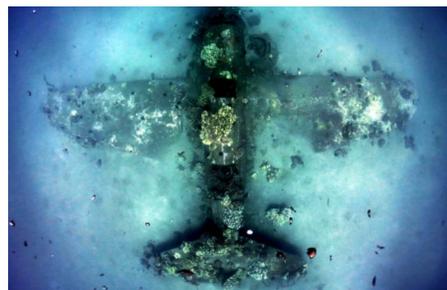


Photo: Hans Van Tilberg, NOAA

A World War II aircraft lies on the sanctuary's seafloor.



Photo: HIHWNMS, NOAA Fisheries Permit #782-1719

The main Hawaiian Islands may contain the world's largest seasonal population of North Pacific humpbacks.

<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov/>