



NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 2012

February is Humpback Whale Awareness Month

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Tip Sheet

- **Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary** (sanctuary) was created by Congress in 1992 to protect humpback whales. Every winter, humpback whales return to the shallow, warm waters surrounding the main Hawaiian Islands where they were born to mate and calve. Humpback whale season in Hawai'i generally runs from November through May, with January through March being the peak time for sightings.
Contact: Malia Chow, 808-397-2651 ext. 251, malia.chow@noaa.gov
- **Whale Watching:** In Hawai'i, humpback whales can be easily spotted from land or sea as they frequent Hawai'i's nearshore waters. The whale watching industry plays a strong role in the state's economy as it contributes approximately \$11 million in total revenues, and up to \$74 million in total economic impact per year.
Contact: Joe Paulin, 808-397-2651 ext 257, joseph.paulin@noaa.gov
- **Endangered:** The humpback whale is an endangered species. Commercial whaling reduced the numbers of North Pacific humpback whales to fewer than 1,000 which prompted international protection treaties in 1966. The population is estimated to be growing at around 6% per year. Today, as many as 12,000 humpback whales may visit Hawai'i each year.
Contact: Ed Lyman, 808-879-2818 ext. 27, ed.lyman@noaa.gov
- **Entanglement Response:** The sanctuary leads a network of partner agencies and non-government organizations to provide a safe and authorized response to entangled large whales, one of the primary threats to marine mammals today. The goal is not only to free the animal, but also to gain valuable information to help reduce the threat of entanglement in the future. Since 2002, the community-based Large Whale Entanglement Response Network has removed enough lines and other debris from whales in the main Hawaiian Islands to stretch more than 22 football fields. To report an injured or entangled marine mammal, call the NOAA Marine Mammal Hotline at 1-888-256-9840.
Contact: Ed Lyman, 808-879-2818, ext. 27 ed.lyman@noaa.gov
- **Approach:** Federal regulations prohibit approaching within 100 yards of whales when on the water, and 1,000 feet when operating an aircraft. During the humpback whale season, vessel operators should keep a sharp lookout, watch their speed, and keep their distance in order to avoid collisions and disturbance. To report a suspected approach violation, please call the NOAA Fisheries Enforcement Hotline at 1-800-853-1964.
Contact: Paul Wong, 808-397-2657 ext 250, paul.wong@noaa.gov





- **Management Plan:** Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (sanctuary) is jointly managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the State of Hawai‘i. Management plans, the “blueprints” for sanctuary operations, are periodically reviewed to ensure that they address current issues and resource protection needs. Currently, NOAA is conducting a process to update the management plan for the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary.
Contact: Malia Chow, 808-397-2651 ext. 251, malia.chow@noaa.gov
State of Hawai‘i- Elia Herman, 808-397-2626, elia.y.herman@hawaii.gov
- **Living Classroom:** The beachfront setting of the sanctuary headquarters in Kīhei, Maui offers a living classroom of scenic beauty and ecological significance. During winter, koholā (humpback whales) are seen on the horizon with frequent activity close to shore. 15,000 people visit the site annually for lectures, education programs, exhibits and artifacts highlighting the significance of humpback whales from the perspectives of both science and culture.
Contact: Ka‘au Abraham, 808-879-2818 ext. 30, kaau.abraham@noaa.gov
- **Communities:** Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary is comprised of five separate areas adjacent to six of the main Hawaiian Islands. The sanctuary sponsors and participates in a variety of community events around the state each year. During the last five years the sanctuary participated in over 150 community events, reaching over 100,000 people with important messages about NOAA and the sanctuary.
Contact: O‘ahu Fiona Langenberger, 808-397-2651, fiona.langenberger@noaa.gov
Kaua‘i Jean Souza, 808-246-2860, jean.souza@noaa.gov
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Maui Ka‘au Abraham, 808-879-2818 ext. 30, kaau.abraham@noaa.gov
- **Sanctuary Ocean Count** is an annual effort to monitor humpback whales in Hawai‘i. Approximately 1,500 volunteers count whales and record their behaviors from over 60 designated shore sites on the islands of O‘ahu, Kaua‘i, and Hawai‘i. This popular outreach effort continues to grow each year and has become a favorite project of many Hawai‘i residents and tourists.
Contact: Fiona Langenberger, 808-397-2651, fiona.langenberger@noaa.gov

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary is administered jointly by a partnership of NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources. The sanctuary works to protect humpback whales through research, education, conservation and stewardship. For more information, please visit www.hawaiihumpbackwhale.gov

