

General Information

Humpback whales can be seen in Hawai'i's nearshore waters during the winter. Their impressive acrobatic displays are often visible from miles away.

To locate whales, scan the surface of the ocean from left to right, looking for the humpback's blow which can be 10-20 feet tall (for an adult humpback). Depending upon ocean conditions, the blow can be spotted easily.

Once you have spotted a humpback, use your binoculars to get a closer view of their behavior. If you're lucky you will have the opportunity to see a whale breach right in front of your eyes.

The Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary was designated to protect humpback whales and their habitat in Hawai'i. Remember, by regulation, humpback whales cannot be approached closer than 100 yards.

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Humpback Whale Behaviors

Typical humpback whale behaviors seen in Hawaiian waters

Blow



Adult humpbacks surface to breathe every 7-15 minutes but can remain submerged for up to 45 minutes. Calves must rise to the surface every 3-5 minutes.

Head Rise or Spy Hop



A whale rises vertically toward the surface, with its head out of the water. Some believe this behavior allows the whale to look at activity going on above the surface.

Tail Slap



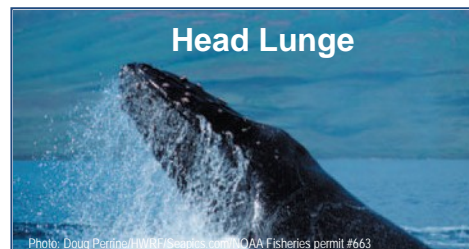
A humpback raises its tail flukes out of the water and slaps them forcefully on the surface of the water. This behavior is often repetitive.

Pec Slap



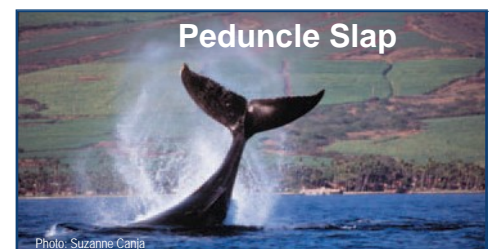
Humpbacks will slap the water's surface with one or both fins simultaneously. The slapping of fins may serve as a communication signal to other whales.

Head Lunge



A competitive display in which the humpback whale lunges forward with its head raised above the water.

Peduncle Slap



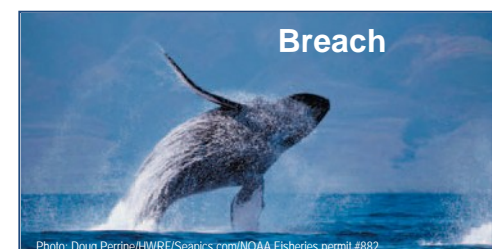
A whale throws its tail out of the water and in the process, slaps its peduncle (name for the body part connecting the tail) on the surface.

Fluke Up Dive



The tail of the humpbacks appears out of the water in an upward arch and slowly rolls underwater in conjunction with a dive.

Breach



An acrobatic display where the humpback uses its tail to launch itself out of the water and then lands back on the surface with a splash.



The Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary is jointly managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the State of Hawaii.



How You Can Help!

You can help support the efforts of the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary by donating to the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation's Koholā Campaign (NMSF). The NMSF is a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, created to assist the federally managed National Marine Sanctuary Program with education and outreach programs designed to preserve, protect and promote the nation's marine sanctuaries. Mail a direct donation in the form of a check made payable to NMSF to the address below or visit <http://nmsfocean.org>. Your contribution will help to ensure the future protection of Hawai'i's humpback whales.

Please mail to: NMSF Koholā Campaign c/o HIHWNMS
6600 Kalia Drive, Suite 301
Honolulu, HI 96825

To find out more, please visit <http://www.nmsfocean.org> or <http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>.
The NMSF's tax identification number is: 94-3370994.

The Sanctuary

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.

Hawai'i's Humpback Whale Population

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, as many as 12,000 animals may migrate to Hawai'i each year. This endangered species is slowly making a comeback to its estimated pre-whaling population of 15,000 to 20,000 animals.

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 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 mating, calving, and nursing activities.

Facts - Scientific Name - *Megaptera novaeangliae*

Group	Mammalia
Order	Cetacea
Sub – order	Mysticeti
Family	Balaenopteridae
Genus	Megaptera



Type of whale	Baleen
Hawaiian name	koholā
Weight	40-45 tons
Length	45 feet
Life span	40-60 years
Gestation	10-12 months

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<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>

