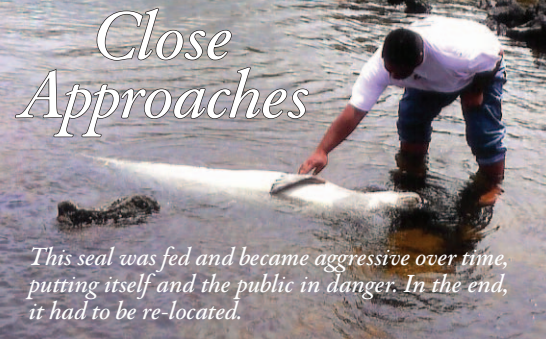


Marine mammals are fascinating creatures. However, getting too close can pose risks to people as well as the animals. Actions like petting monk seals and swimming with whales and dolphins can be dangerous. Additionally, such actions may disturb the animal's natural behaviors and may constitute harassment.



Close Approaches
This seal was fed and became aggressive over time, putting itself and the public in danger. In the end, it had to be re-located.

Signs of disturbance:

- *Evasive behavior*—swimming rapidly away or prolonged dives.
- *Sudden stops or changes in behaviors*—breeding, nursing, feeding, or resting; sleeping monk seals waking up suddenly when approached.
- *Vocalizations*—trumpeting by humpbacks and growling by monk seals.
- *Abandoning an area*—monk seals going back into the water; dolphins leaving a bay.

Regulations require ocean users to not approach within 100 yards of humpbacks. Guidelines recommend a 50-yard distance from monk seals and other marine mammals in Hawai'i. One should not chase, closely approach, surround, swim with, or attempt to touch dead or living marine mammals. Feeding marine mammals is unlawful and can adversely affect their ability to survive in the wild. Getting too close to a marine mammal can pose risks to people. This is especially true of humpback whales because of their large size and monk seals, which may bite.



Ship Strikes

Collisions between whales and vessels occur annually. These events present serious risks to the boaters as well as the whales. Many humpback whales congregate in waters less than 600 feet deep throughout the Hawaiian Islands. However, mariners may encounter whales in deeper waters offshore.

What boaters can do to avoid hitting whales:

- *Slow down*—when whales are believed to be in the area, reduce your speed.
- *Keep a sharp lookout*—post a dedicated person to watch for whales.
- *Be ready to respond*—keep hands on the helm and throttle at all times.
- *Put vessel in neutral*—let whales that have approached within 100 yards move away.
- *Approaches*—don't approach whales from head on or directly behind.

Do not assume that the animal will get out of your way. Hitting a 40-ton animal at any speed greater than 10 knots will likely damage the vessel and injure those aboard. Studies indicate collisions are less frequent and less severe when vessels make 13 knots or less.



If you observe a
marine mammal
in distress,
please call
the 24-hour hotline
(888) 256-9840

Ocean users play an important role in marine mammal conservation. By following the information provided in this guide, you can make a significant contribution in protecting Hawai'i's marine mammals. Ocean users help by avoiding potentially hazardous situations, alerting professionals who can assist, and safely monitoring and reporting details about marine mammals in need of help. Providing accurate information in a timely matter is critical for a successful response.

NOAA Fisheries is the primary agency coordinating response efforts for marine mammals in distress. The Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (HIHWNMS), Hawai'i's Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), the United States Coast Guard, and other state and federal agencies work with NOAA Fisheries. Marine mammal response is a permitted activity and is authorized under NOAA Fisheries' Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP permit #932-1489).

Additional information can be found at:

NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service, Pacific Islands Regional Office
1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110, Honolulu, HI 96822
http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/PRD/prd_marine_mammal_response.html



Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary
<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov/res/welcome.html>

State of Hawai'i, Dept. of Land and Natural Resources
<http://www.hawaii.gov/dlnr/>

NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement, Pacific Islands
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/pi_pacificislands.html

NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/mammals/>



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Hawai'i's Marine Mammals

An Ocean Users Guide and Summary of Threats



What you can do to assist in marine mammal response and rescue

Marine mammals can become entangled in fishing gear and marine debris. For seals and dolphins, death is typically rapid due to drowning. Large whales, whose size and strength allows them to pull or even break away from parts of the entangling gear, are not usually at risk of drowning. However, the risk of death still exists if the animal remains entangled. Entanglement may cause starvation, physical trauma, infections, and may lead to ship strikes since the animal is less mobile.

How you can help an entangled whale:

- *Call*—the Hotline to alert responders.
- *Monitor*—if a response is possible, authorities may ask that you watch the animal from a safe distance (greater than 100 yards and not directly behind the animal).
- *Document the entanglement*—if possible, take photos and video from a safe distance.
- *Stay in the boat*—never get into the water to help a whale.
- *Wait for trained, authorized personnel*—do not attempt to free a whale. Removing trailing lines or buoys diminishes the chances of freeing the animal of all gear, leaving lethal wraps behind.



Entanglements



Strandings

Dolphins and whales occasionally become stranded on shore or in shallow waters. Such events are life-threatening because their bodies are designed for life in the water and do not function well on land. Strandings should be reported to the Hotline as soon as possible. Stay well away from the stranded animal for safety.

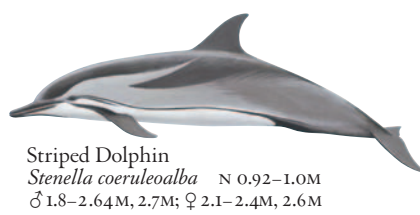
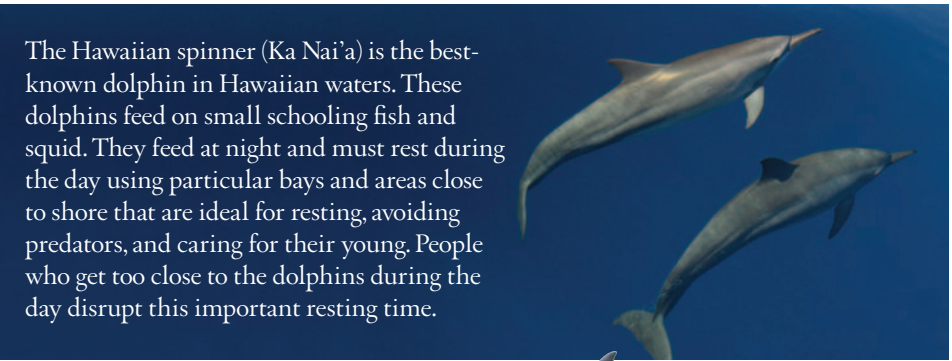
Monk seals will come ashore or haul out to rest, give birth, and nurse their young. This is normal behavior. Human disturbance may cause seals to abandon an area used for resting or feeding. A seal pup that appears abandoned on shore has likely just been weaned from its mother and will eventually figure out what to do on its own. Unless a hauled out monk seal is entangled, injured or being harassed, it is best to let sleeping seals lie. Give them plenty of space (at least 50 yards).



Volunteers were authorized to help this stranded Risso's dolphin.

At least 18 species of marine mammals live in Hawaiian waters for all or part of the year. Many are culturally significant, are indicators of a healthy marine environment, and serve as an attraction for Hawai'i's visitors. The three best-known local marine mammals are the endangered humpback whale, Hawaiian spinner dolphin, and the critically endangered Hawaiian monk seal.

The Hawaiian spinner (Ka Nai'a) is the best-known dolphin in Hawaiian waters. These dolphins feed on small schooling fish and squid. They feed at night and must rest during the day using particular bays and areas close to shore that are ideal for resting, avoiding predators, and caring for their young. People who get too close to the dolphins during the day disrupt this important resting time.



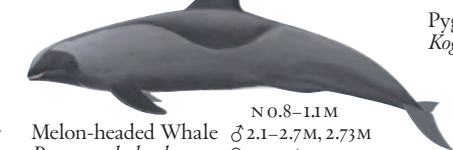
Striped Dolphin
Stenella coeruleoalba N 0.92–1.0M
♂ 1.8–2.64M, 2.7M; ♀ 2.1–2.4M, 2.6M



Hawaii Spinner Dolphin
Stenella longirostris N 0.9M
♂ 1.7–2M, 2.1M; ♀ 1.6–1.9M, 2M



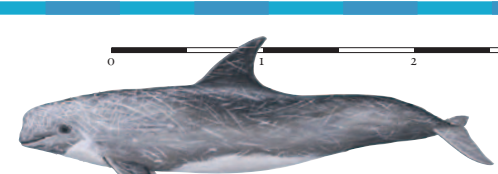
Pantropical Spotted Dolphin
Stenella attenuata N 0.8–0.9M
♂ 1.6–2.2M, 2.6M; ♀ 1.6–2.1M, 2.4M



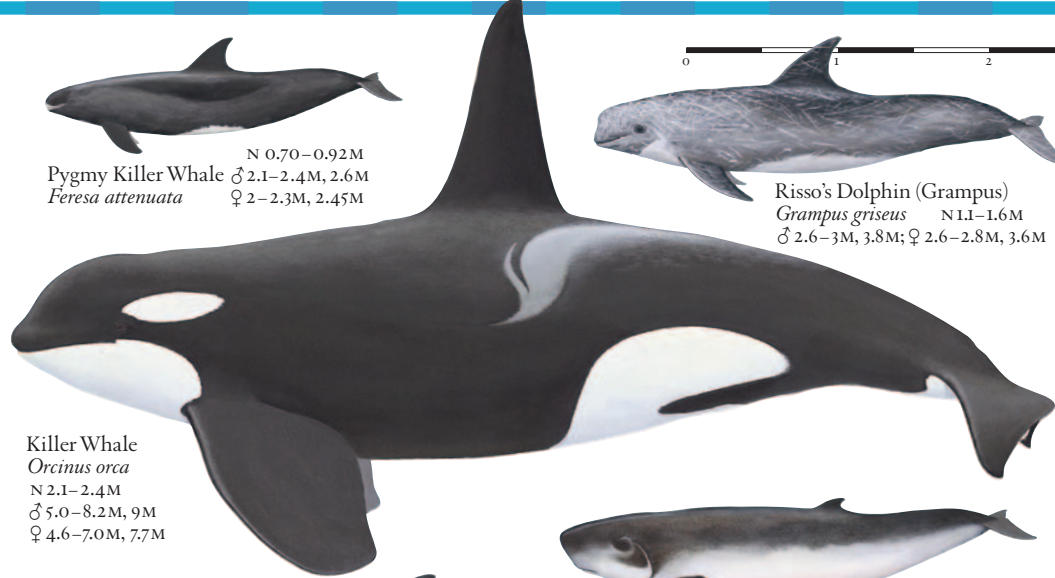
Melon-headed Whale
Peponocephala electra N 0.8–1.1M
♂ 2.1–2.7M, 2.73M
♀ 2.1–2.6M, 2.75M



Pygmy Killer Whale
Feresa attenuata N 0.70–0.92M
♂ 2.1–2.4M, 2.6M
♀ 2–2.3M, 2.45M



Risso's Dolphin (Grampus)
Grampus griseus N 1.1–1.6M
♂ 2.6–3M, 3.8M; ♀ 2.6–2.8M, 3.6M



Killer Whale
Orcinus orca N 2.1–2.4M
♂ 5.0–8.2M, 9M
♀ 4.6–7.0M, 7.7M



Pygmy Sperm Whale
Kogia breviceps N 1.1–1.24M
♂ 2.7–3M, 3.4M; ♀ 2.66–2.8M, 3.3M



Dwarf Sperm Whale
Kogia sima N 0.95–1.0M
♂ 2.1–2.4M, 2.7M; ♀ 2.1–2.18M, 2.34M



Short-finned Pilot Whale
Globicephala macrorhynchus N ~ 1.85M; ♂ 5.5–6.1M, 7.2M; ♀ 3.9–5.1M, 5.5M



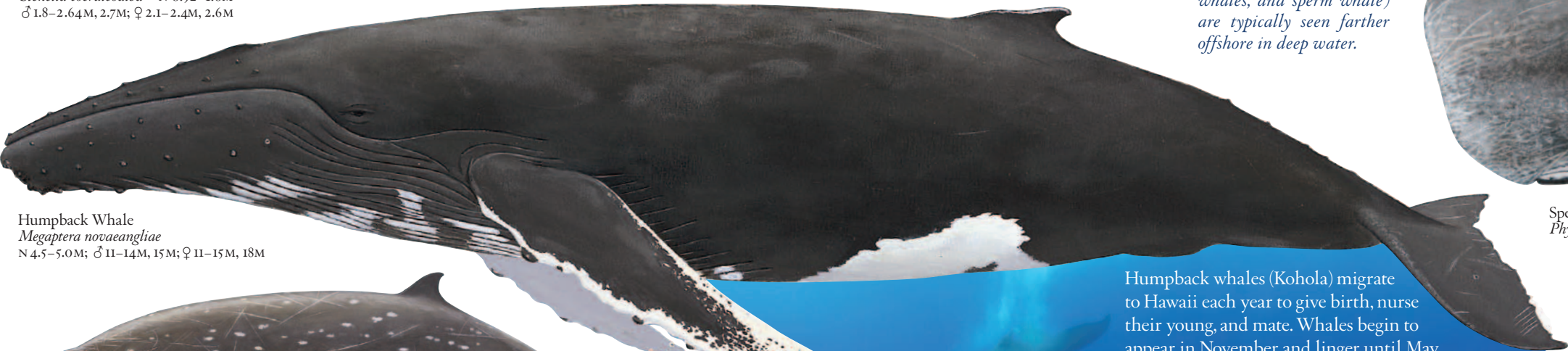
False Killer Whale
Pseudorca crassidens N 1.5–1.9M; ♂ 3.9–5.5M, 6.1M
♀ 3.6–4.58M, 5.06M



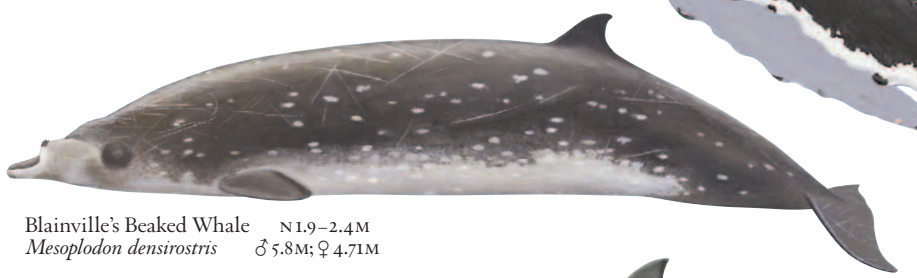
Bottlenose Dolphin
Tursiops truncatus N 0.9–1.2M
♂ 2.4–3.3M, 3.8M
♀ 2.3–3.1M, 3.5M



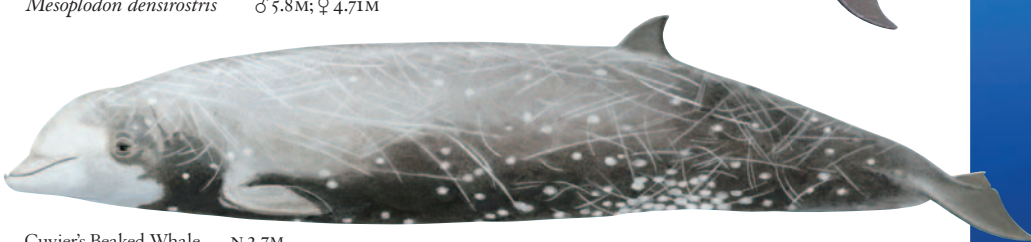
Rough-toothed Dolphin
Steno bredanensis N ~ 0.88M
♂ 2.2–2.6M, 2.8M
♀ 2.3–2.5M, 2.6M



Humpback Whale
Megaptera novaeangliae N 4.5–5.0M; ♂ 11–14M, 15M; ♀ 11–15M, 18M



Blainville's Beaked Whale
Mesoplodon densirostris N 1.9–2.4M
♂ 5.8M; ♀ 4.71M



Cuvier's Beaked Whale
Ziphius cavirostris N 2.7M
♂ 5.4–6.7M, 6.9M; ♀ 5.1–6.6M, 7M

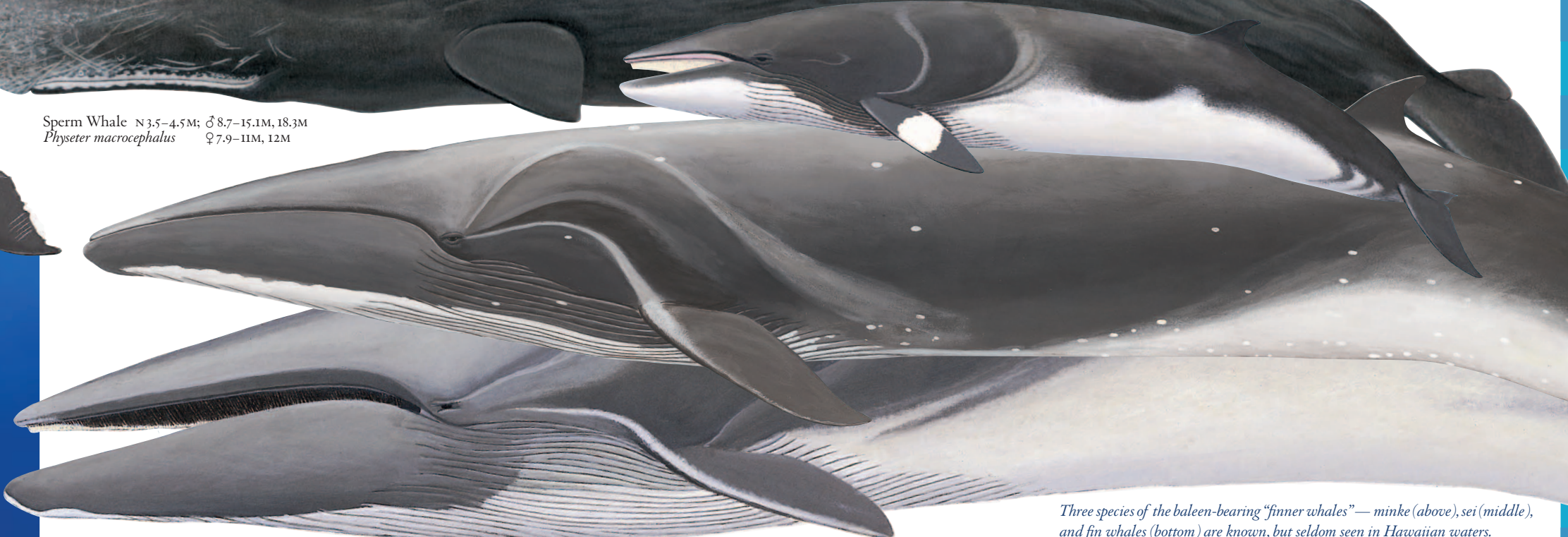
Some toothed whale species (pilot whale, beaked whales, dwarf and pygmy sperm whales, and sperm whale) are typically seen farther offshore in deep water.

Humpback whales (Kohola) migrate to Hawaii each year to give birth, nurse their young, and mate. Whales begin to appear in November and linger until May. Peak numbers of whales occur between January and March. Females typically give birth to a calf every two to three years. Calves nurse for about a year. The male humpback sings an elaborate song, which apparently has social significance. Humpbacks feed on small schooling fish and krill (a shrimp-like organism) during

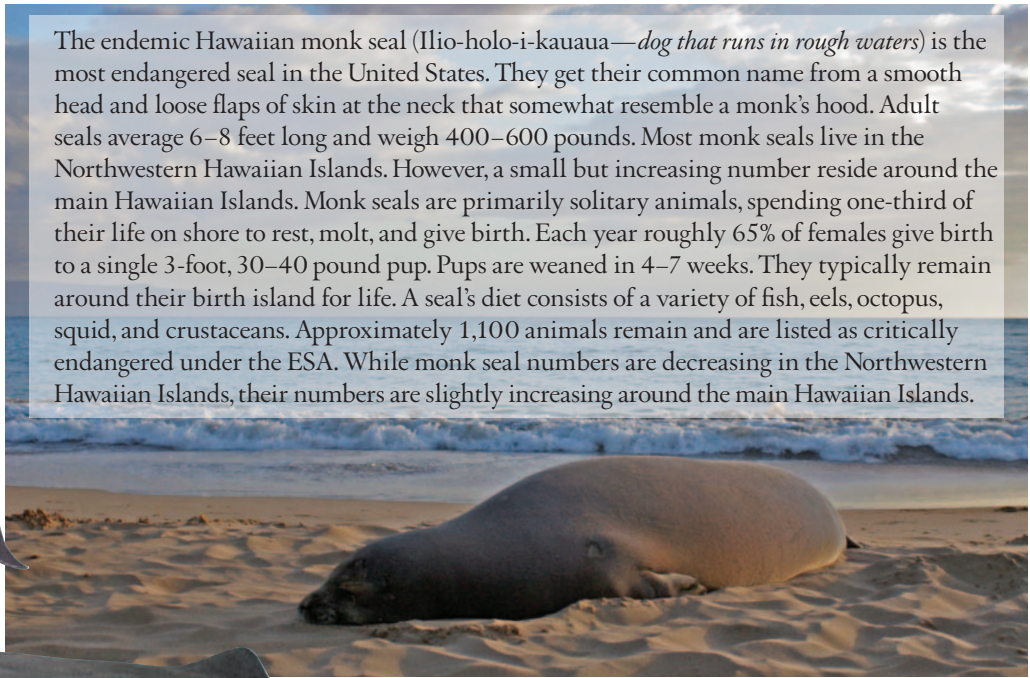
the summer and fall months in productive areas of the North Pacific, like Alaska. Humpbacks are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). They are afforded additional protection from the state wildlife laws, and the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. Thanks in part to these protective measures, humpback populations are recovering. Approximately 10,000 humpbacks migrate to and from Hawaiian waters each year.



Sperm Whale
Physeter macrocephalus N 3.5–4.5M; ♂ 8.7–15.1M, 18.3M
♀ 7.9–11M, 12M



Three species of the baleen-bearing "finner whales"—minke (above), sei (middle), and fin whales (bottom) are known, but seldom seen in Hawaiian waters.



Hawaiian Monk Seal
Monachus schauinslandi N 0.8–1.2M
♂ ~ 2.1M, 2.3M; ♀ ~ 2.3M, 2.4M

The endemic Hawaiian monk seal (Ilio-holo-i-kauaua—*dog that runs in rough waters*) is the most endangered seal in the United States. They get their common name from a smooth head and loose flaps of skin at the neck that somewhat resemble a monk's hood. Adult seals average 6–8 feet long and weigh 400–600 pounds. Most monk seals live in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. However, a small but increasing number reside around the main Hawaiian Islands. Monk seals are primarily solitary animals, spending one-third of their life on shore to rest, molt, and give birth. Each year roughly 65% of females give birth to a single 3-foot, 30–40 pound pup. Pups are weaned in 4–7 weeks. They typically remain around their birth island for life. A seal's diet consists of a variety of fish, eels, octopus, squid, and crustaceans. Approximately 1,100 animals remain and are listed as critically endangered under the ESA. While monk seal numbers are decreasing in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, their numbers are slightly increasing around the main Hawaiian Islands.