

# Whales

**COMMON NAME:** Humpback Whale

**HAWAIIAN NAME:** *Kohola*

**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Megaptera novaeangliae*

**LEGAL STATUS:** Protected under the MMPA, State Endangered Species law, CITES, and the International Whaling Commission moratorium against whaling.

**APPEARANCE:** Adult humpback whales range from 40 to 50 feet in length and weigh 25 to 40 tons. Heads are broad and rounded and bodies are round, narrowing towards the tail. There is a dorsal fin on their back and ventral grooves that run from the lower jaw back to the belly area. The top of the head and lower jaw have bumpy knobs. They are black on the upper side and mottled black and white on the underside, with flippers that range from all white to all black. Flippers are long and the tail is up to 18 feet wide, serrated, and pointed at the tips.



**HABITAT:** Humpback whales are found in all of the world's oceans. Most spend summer in temperate and polar waters to feed and winter in tropical waters for mating and calving. The Central North Pacific Stock winters in Hawai'i and migrates to the British Columbia/Alaska area in summer.

**DIET:** Humpback whales are baleen whales and feed on krill, small crustaceans, and fish.

**REPRODUCTION:** Humpback whales reach sexual maturity between 6 and 10 years of age. Females will bear one calf every 2 to 3 years after a 12 month gestation period. Calves nurse for approximately one year.

**POPULATION TRENDS:** For the latest information on population trends, consult NOAA Fisheries' Marine Mammal Stock Assessment Reports posted at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/sars/>

**ECOLOGICAL THREATS:** Whales may be negatively impacted or killed by hooking or entanglement in fishing gear, ship strikes, habitat impacts (reduced water quality and available forage resources), harassment by boats (such as whale watching vessels), and harvest. Acoustic impacts on whales include immediate effects (such as injury and behavioral modification) from exposure to noise from seismic profilers and sonars used in oceanographic research and military operations, as well as construction activities such as pile driving. They also include exposure to rising ambient noise levels, the effects of which are currently not well understood.

**MCBH CONSERVATION MEASURES:** Conservation measures that benefit whales include:

- **Habitat protection and enhancement.** MCBH opportunistically removes marine debris from the water and routinely from land areas within its jurisdiction. Actions are taken to reduce nonpoint source pollution from the land into the sea such as erosion control measures, which reduce damage to off-shore habitat.
- **Restrictions within the 500 yard marine buffer zone at MCBH Kaneohe Bay.** Includes prohibiting entry of commercial fishing and whale watching vessels.
- **Enforcement.** The 500 yard buffer zone is regularly patrolled for violations to regulations. Marines and civilians are made aware of the regulation to stay 100 yds away from whales in the ocean, which includes not placing a boat or kayak in the path of an approaching whale.

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- **Interagency cooperation.** MCBH supports NOAA Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary annual island-wide humpback whale count by providing conditional access passes to specific vantage points on Mōkapu Peninsula for NOAA-sponsored volunteers during designated count weekends.
- **Education and outreach.** Development and distribution of informational material including videos, fact sheets, pamphlets, and briefings for military personnel and civilians on Base including new arrivals, and outreach with volunteers.

**For more information:** MCBH Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan Update. 2016. Sections 7.0, 7.4, 8, 9, Appendix C & D.

## PHOTOS

1. NOAA. [http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2008/20080331\\_sanctuaryoceancount.html](http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2008/20080331_sanctuaryoceancount.html)