

# Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument



Photo: Mark Sullivan, NOAA

The monument is an important habitat for rare species such as the threatened green sea turtle and the endangered Hawaiian monk seal.



Photo: Dan Clark, USFWS

The monument is a nesting and foraging area for over 14 million seabirds – making it the world's largest tropical seabird rookery.



Photo: Wayne Levin, NOAA

The monument's coral reefs are home to more than 7,000 marine species.

**Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument** (PMNM) is the largest conservation area in the world, protecting 582,578 square miles of the Pacific Ocean. The extensive coral reefs found in Papahānaumokuākea are home to more than 7,000 marine species, one-quarter of which are found only in the Hawaiian Archipelago. Many of the islands and shallow water environments are important habitats for rare species such as the threatened green turtle and the endangered Hawaiian monk seal. On less than six square miles of land, over 14 million seabirds representing 22 species breed and nest. Land areas also provide a home for four bird species found nowhere else in the world. The monument's vision is to forever protect and perpetuate ecosystem health and diversity and the Native Hawaiian cultural significance of Papahānaumokuākea. In 2010, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated the monument as a mixed World Heritage Site. In 2016, the monument was expanded from 139,818 square miles to 582,578 square miles.

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument is jointly administered by the Department of Commerce, the Department of the Interior and the State of Hawai'i, and in collaboration with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

## Research and Monitoring

Scientific, cultural and maritime research are important parts of the monument's overall operations. The focus of the monument's coral reef research program includes shallow and deep mesophotic reef characterization and monitoring. Reef surveys have recorded the diversity and abundance of fishes, algae, corals and other reef invertebrates at numerous locations throughout the archipelago. Historic resources, such as shipwrecks, have also been documented on shallow reefs by monument and national marine sanctuary Pacific Region archaeologists. Research in deeper offshore waters has utilized multibeam sonar and submersibles to document rarely seen biological resources and topographical features contained within monument waters. The results of these shallow and deep water research efforts will aid in the management of these vast ocean resources.

## Education and Outreach

The focus of the education and outreach program is to increase understanding of ecosystem management, develop an ocean stewardship ethic and train the next generation of leaders to be both scientifically and culturally grounded. The monument's visitor center, the Mokupāpapa Discovery Center in Hilo, interprets the natural science, culture and history of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and surrounding marine environment.



Photo: James Watt, NOAA

The name Papahānaumokuākea celebrates two Hawaiian ancestors, Papahānaumoku and Wākea, who gave rise to the Hawaiian Archipelago, the taro plant and the Hawaiian people.



# Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

## Location

140 miles northwest of the Main Hawaiian Islands

## Protected Area

582,578 square miles

## Designation

June 2006,  
Expansion 2016

## Habitats

Abyssal  
Atolls  
Bank  
Hypersaline lake  
Islands  
Lagoon  
Pelagic  
Reef  
Seamount  
Slope

## Key Species

Calcareous algae  
Corals  
Endemic reef fish  
Green sea turtle  
Hawaiian monk seal  
Jack  
Laysan albatross  
Sharks  
Spinner dolphin

## NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



## Find Us

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 Honolulu, HI 96818  
 808-725-5800

## On the Web

Email: [hawaiiireef@noaa.gov](mailto:hawaiiireef@noaa.gov)  
<https://www.facebook.com/Papahanaumokuakea>

## Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Network of marine protected areas  
 Encompasses more than 620,000 square miles  
 Established October 1972

## On the Web

[sanctuaries.noaa.gov](http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/NOAAOfficeofNationalMarineSanctuaries](https://www.facebook.com/NOAAOfficeofNationalMarineSanctuaries)  
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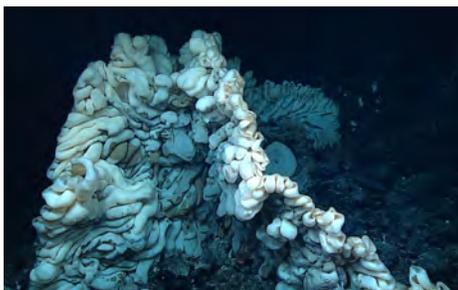


Photo: NOAA

In 2015, NOAA's Office of Exploration and Research discovered the largest sponge in the world in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.



Photo: Mark Sullivan, NOAA

A Hawaiian monk seal rests on a beach in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.



Photo: NOAA

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands contains rich and diverse deep-water fauna, including this newly discovered species of octopus.