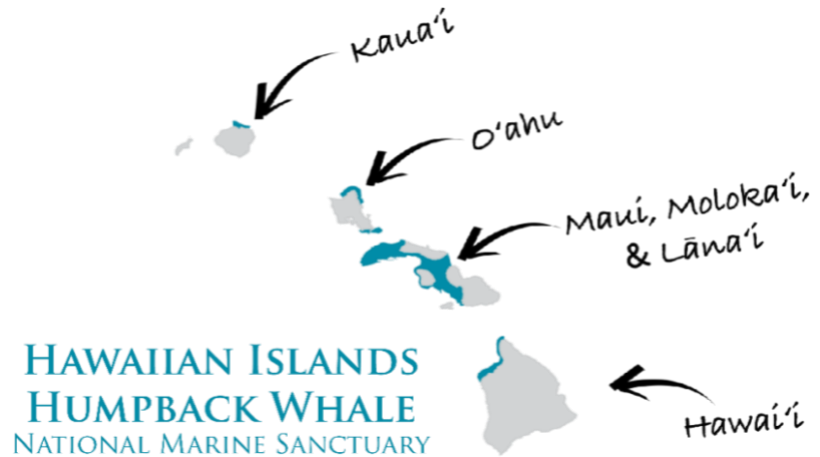




Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Accomplishments Fiscal Year 2021

Every winter, thousands of humpback whales travel to the warm, shallow waters of Hawai'i to mate, give birth, and raise their young. Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary was designated in 1992 to protect and preserve these whales and their habitat. The sanctuary protects waters found around the islands. These areas include Penguin Bank, the Maui Nui region (Maui, Lāna'i, Moloka'i, and Kaho'olawe), Kaua'i, Hawai'i Island, and O'ahu.



Visit hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov for more information.

New Partnership with the Hawai'i State Library System

The sanctuary has a new partnership with Hawai'i State Libraries to connect to local audiences throughout the state. There are 51 libraries throughout Hawai'i, reaching many of the communities that are adjacent to the sanctuary. The libraries can promote and conduct lectures and programming, both in person and virtually, reaching a far larger audience than the sanctuary currently has access to. The libraries can host exhibits, outreach events, and serve as a great opportunity to distribute materials and information. The sanctuary connected to students by supporting the summer reading program.



A new logo, created by a volunteer, is used to promote the partnership between the sanctuary and the libraries. Photo: NOAA

Ocean Classroom Program Debuts

Due to the shift from in-person learning to virtual learning during the pandemic, the sanctuary created the "Ocean Classroom" program, composed of virtual marine science opportunities to support online education. The program engaged over 1,500 students through teacher workshop sessions, programs for classroom use, an at-home series for students, and opportunities for live remote classroom presentations. The programs offer marine science content, writing and art components and demonstrations, hands-on activities, and experiments for students focused on marine life and issues facing our ocean.



Sanctuary staff lead a lesson during a live "Ocean Classroom" program. Photo: NOAA

New Technologies Supports Research Efforts

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary utilizes high-tech tools like drones and underwater cameras to remotely and non-invasively monitor the health and risks to humpback whales. Since 2016, working with partners, the sanctuary has used drones to assess entangled and otherwise compromised marine mammals. The sanctuary also uses an Assessment and Recording Module, a daggerboard-like extension off the sanctuary's research vessel. It holds several cameras and sensors underwater that live-stream data which help assess the health of marine mammals.



Sanctuary researchers prepare equipment to assess the health of this humpback whale. Photo: NOAA

Looking Ahead

- The sanctuary plans to offer research mini-grants to include cultural Indigenous research on the importance of humpback whales to Native Hawaiians.
- The sanctuary plans to debut new exhibits for facilities in Kaua'i, Kīhei, and for a new site on Kona. Exhibits will also include new outdoor signs for some of our partner organizations. Additionally, the sanctuary is optimistic that NOAA will be able to reopen visitor centers in 2022.
- The sanctuary will continue to create new partnerships with Kaua'i Community College, Pu'ukohola National Park, and the O'ahu Visitor Bureau.



The National Marine Sanctuary System is a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters. The network includes a system of 15 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.