

# HMMC NEWS



## Our Big News

Meet *Sealegs*, our new 25 ft research vessel! This generous gift in March 2023 from an anonymous donor included a custom trailer to haul it safely to and from the harbor. We've only used it once so far, and it worked beautifully. We are very excited to start winter fieldwork with this larger vessel which allows us to safely go a bit farther offshore and potentially carry a larger research team.



Over the summer, Adam worked very hard and found us a used pickup truck that could pull this much larger vessel. However, used trucks are never perfect, so we are now raising funds for a few needed repairs or a new electric vehicle.



Photo by S. Yin 2021

## Happy 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday HMMC!

In October 2003, the Hawai'i Marine Mammal Consortium officially became a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Our board members Adam Frankel, Christine Gabriele, Susan Rickards and Suzanne Yin are still going strong twenty years later! We are excited about the next 20 years of research, education and conservation.



Photo by C. Gabriele 2003



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Photo by C. Gabriele 2003

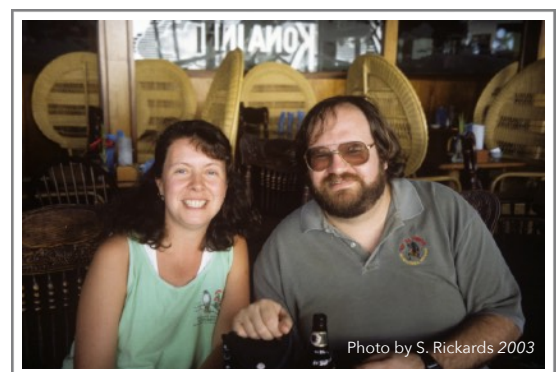


Photo by S. Rickards 2003

## How Many Whales Did We Count?

Whale observations at Old Ruins shore station. From top: Yin; Kim New and Paul Berry; Marilyn Wright; Jarett Trendel; Chris and Adam with Cornell University students; Chris and Susan scan for whales.



**2023 at a glance:**  
**19 scans (Jan 31-Mar 3)**  
**Whale scans found 297 humpback whales in 196 pods, including 14 calves.**

**All of these numbers are slightly higher than 2022, but calf counts are still lower ever since the Northeast Pacific Marine Heatwave.**


## A Near Miss with a Big Fire

On August 8, 2023, a brushfire in gale force winds (with gusts up to 72 mph) burned over 1,800 acres along the Kohala Coast. The fire swept over our beloved Old Ruins shore station and burned to the edge of the neighborhood where Adam and Chris live. It was scary, but our local firefighters did an amazing job - no homes were lost. Our hearts go out to the people of Maui who are still recovering from devastating fires in Lahaina that same day.



## Research on the Water

**2023 at a glance:**  
**19 days on the water (Jan 7-March 26)**



**118 unique humpback whales including 30 calves**  
**Audio recordings of 7 singing males**

Photo by C. Gabriele taken under NMFS Scientific Research permit #26596

Whale fluke and dolphin dorsal fin photos allow us to identify individual whales over days, weeks and years in Kawaihae Bay and wherever else they may go.

**1 group of 6 bottlenose dolphins**

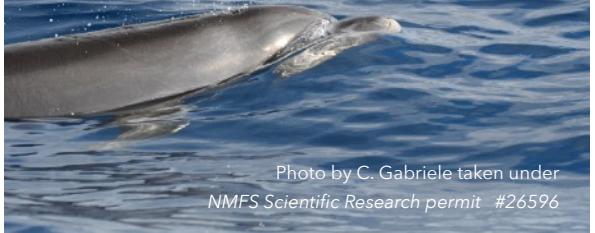


Photo by C. Gabriele taken under NMFS Scientific Research permit #26596



**6 groups of spinner dolphins, groups ranging from 77 to over 250 animals**

Photo by S. Rickards taken under NMFS Scientific Research permit #26596



**We collected marine debris 19 times in 2023, mostly plastic bottles**



**Consider donating to HMMC to help our research and education programs continue.**

# 17th Year of Blacktip Reef Shark Monitoring

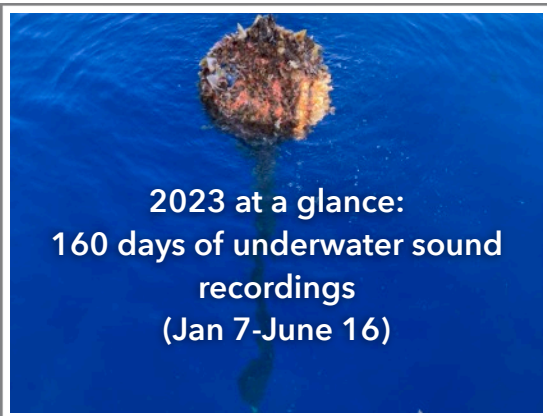


Above: Yin poses with Pu'ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site staff, Mokihana Tadiol, Leanne Baskin and "Bark Ranger" Ocean.

Right: Each shark fin has unique markings.

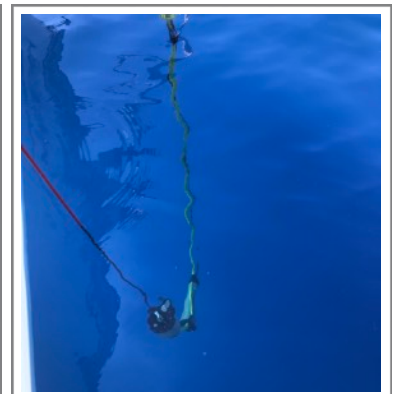
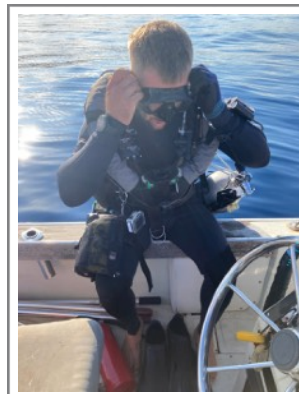


## Underwater Sound Recording



Mele Rickards and Paul Berry pitched in with Adam, Susan and Chris on the SoundTrap hydrophone deployment in January (above).

We don't usually need a SCUBA diver to retrieve the SoundTrap, but this year, the acoustic release (yellow instrument, at right) malfunctioned. Diver Mark Mohler volunteered to fly over from O'ahu to help. He made a tri-mix gas dive 230 feet to the ocean floor to bring it up, saving the day and the data!



# Photo Highlights from the Field



Sea turtle near the boat ramp.

This brown booby caught a very large fish.

A diving whale strikes a perfect pose in front of Pu'ukoholā Heiau.

A floating volcanic rock (pumice) found several kilometers offshore was an exciting discovery for Susan to share with her Earth Science students.

Doing whale science under sail with Cornell students led by our longtime friend Russ Charif on the *S/V Pua* with Captain Ralph.



# HMMC in the News

In February, local journalist Naka Nathaniel covered our whale counting work in a [Civil Beat](#) article.

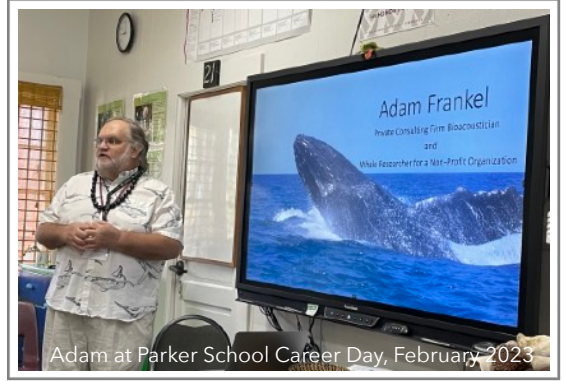
In October, Chris was part of a National Park Service team that disentangled a whale near Glacier Bay, Alaska. Be sure to [check out the video](#)



HONOLULU CIVIL BEAT

Commentary Naka Nathaniel: The Mystery Of Whales

Photo by N. Nathaniel



Adam at Parker School Career Day, February, 2023



npr How wildlife officials saved a humpback whale found 'hogtied' to a 300-pound crab pot

NOVEMBER 6, 2023 - 5:00 AM ET

Sean Neilson/NOAA NMFS/GRP Permit No. 24259



Susan at NOAA whale disentanglement training, November 2023

# HMMC in the Community



Susan and Adam at Kawaihae Welcome the Whales event, December 2023



Cornell University students Viral Joshi & Kevin Souhrada recording a whale song aboard S/V Pua.

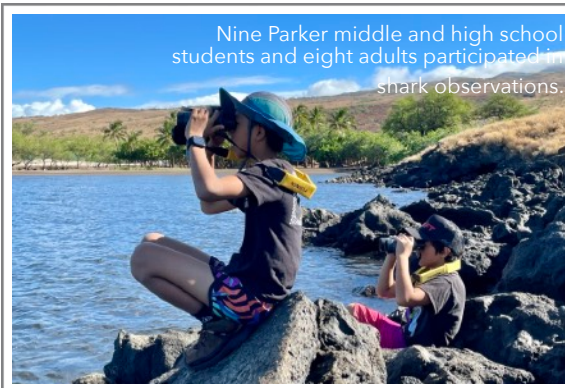


Yin on classroom zoom class while on NOAA ship Oscar Elton Sette, October 2023



Parker School student and parent scanning for whales, February 2023

Help spread the word about HMMC by sharing this newsletter.



Nine Parker middle and high school students and eight adults participated in shark observations.



Chris at Wiliwili Festival, February 2023

A special *mahalo nui loa* to the generous donor who provided us with our new vessel and trailer. Thanks to all the donors who help make our work possible, especially our repeat donors: Marilyn Wright, the Koester Family Fund, Annette Henry, Sally and Tom Reeve, AmazonSmile Foundation, Network for Good, and the PayPal Giving Fund. Deep thanks to SCUBA diver, Peter Mohler, for rescuing the wayward SoundTrap. We are supremely grateful to returning volunteers Kim, Paul, Jarett, Mele, Holly, Tamera and Molly. Thanks to all the friends and the Parker School students, teachers, and 'ohana who dropped by to observe or help out. For permit assistance we thank Robin Baird, Marie Hill, and Erin Oleson. Eden Zang helped with underwater sound monitoring, and Pu'ukoholā Heiau National Historic Site facilitated shark monitoring. Mahalo to Joe Mobley (University of Hawai'i), Honda Motor Corporation and Kona Coast Marine for vessel support.

## Our Board

Suzanne Yin  
 Adam Frankel  
 Susan Rickards  
 Chris Gabriele



Contact us at [info@hmmc.org](mailto:info@hmmc.org)

## Our Piggybank is Running Low

Buying a truck has put us in a budgetary pinch for the upcoming field season. Please think of us in your year-end giving. **CLICK ON THE PIGGYBANK TO DONATE.**



Icon by Freepik

Every donor will get an HMMC breach sticker, designed by Alaskan artist Kathy Hocker (sticker shown below).

Your tax-deductible donation will be used 100% to support our whale and dolphin research and education programs.

You can also support us by shopping at the HMMC online store for posters, cards, tees, stickers or hats.

Use our Amazon Wish List to donate something specific that we need.



# Superstar Volunteers 2023

