

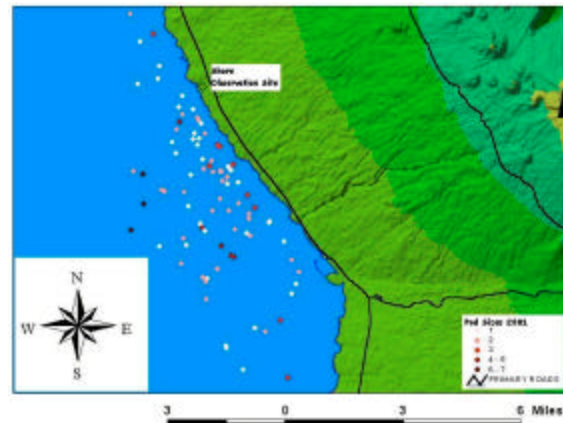
HAWAII MARINE MAMMAL CONSORTIUM NEWS

January 2003

Summary of 2002 Field Season

During the 2002 field season, the Hawai'i Marine Mammal Consortium (HMMC) between 3 Feb and 8 March, conducted 43 scans on 17 days, resulting in 52.9 hours of observations at our shore station overlooking Kawaihae Bay, on the island of Hawai'i. Our main field crew consisted of Suzanne Yin, Chris Gabriele, Adam Frankel and Jan Östman-Lind. Loyal local volunteers included Ania Driscoll-Lind, Emily Herb, Holly Sargeant-Green, and Greg Timmel. Under the guidance of HMMC researchers, three local high school students, several community college students and thirteen members of an Explorer's Club expedition participated in the data collection. The season could not have succeeded without the support and energy of all these people, and we sincerely appreciate all of their contributions.

Scan samples are timed 15-minute observations to find all whales and vessels. In addition to numerous humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), in 2002 we also observed spinner dolphins (*Stenella longirostris*) on nine days and false killer whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*) on two days from the shore. False killer whales were first sighted by scan crews in 2001, but had not been seen in previous years, so it was interesting to see this species in the area again in 2002. The 2002 scans add to what we hope will become a long term database on the relative distribution, behavior and seasonal presence of humpback whales off the Kohala Coast. The HMMC started the scan project in 2001, but it builds on work done with the same methods by other research groups (that included Adam, Chris, Susan or Yin) in the 1980's and 1990's. We also make the data available to high school students



Whale Sightings During Scans 2001 (map courtesy of Alan Nakagawa)

and teachers who are learning GIS (Geographic Information System) techniques through a collaboration with Alan Nakagawa of Honoka'a High School. Check out our whale data on his website: <http://165.248.169.12/humpback/>

Upcoming 2003 Field Season

The big news is that in December 2002, the HMMC was awarded funding by the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary for "Shore-based Acoustic and Visual Monitoring of Humpback Whales along the Kohala Coast". This year's main field crew will be comprised of Chris Gabriele, Adam Frankel, Suzanne Yin, Susan Rickards and local volunteers. We are looking forward to hosting an Explorers Club group again in early March, and possibly hosting at least one school field trip to keep the essential public education component in our research program.

From early February through mid March 2003, from our shore site we will:

- ✍ Build and install a four-element hydrophone array that will allow us to observe and locate singing humpbacks and their interactions with other whales

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2003 Field Season, continued

- ✍ Continue to collect shore-based scan samples and compare them to archival scan data from the 1980s and 1990s
- ✍ Conduct at least two photographic identification surveys to begin to document the age-sex composition of whales in the study area.
- ✍ Collect humpback whale song samples for comparison with Alaska songs collected in Glacier Bay National Park.
- ✍ Host a "Listen to the Whales" community involvement day at the shore observation site inviting visitors to watch and listen to whales singing LIVE.

Need for Kohala Coast Research

Studies of marine mammals and their habitats along the Kohala Coast have never been more important. Formerly undeveloped shorelines are under pressure for resort, residential and commercial development that will likely result in erosion, marine pollution and increased vessel traffic, degrading near-shore waters. Three prominent examples of development projects follow. First, the proposed Ahi Nui aquaculture facility plans to anchor large tuna pens over 216 acres of ocean about a mile offshore of our observation site. The pens could provide an entanglement threat for whales and other marine mammals in the area, and increase vessel traffic needed to tend the facility. Second, planned resort development at Mahukona, several miles north of Kawaihae harbor, would increase the potential for marine pollution and vessel traffic. Third, planned upland development at the "Project IV" area of Kohala Ranch aims to build a 25-acre shopping area and at least 1,100 condominium units in a previously rural area. This urban development would have a large effect on area traffic patterns and create water supply, waste disposal and



marine access issues that could eventually be expected to affect waters offshore. HMMC aspires to provide the rigorous scientific information on marine mammals and other marine resources along the Kohala coast that will be needed by State and Sanctuary managers to evaluate the potential effects of these and other projects in West Hawai'i.

HMMC Mission Statement

The Hawai'i Marine Mammal Consortium is composed of marine mammal scientists from institutions around the country who share an interest in marine mammal research and conservation in the waters surrounding the Hawaiian Islands. We have a strong commitment to increase and promote knowledge and education about marine mammals and the marine environment to help island communities value, understand and protect Hawai'i's marine life. A fundamental tenet of this consortium is that it is larger than any of its individual members, that it will outlive all of us and that it is founded on a vision of collaboration and excellence.

For More Information

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Check Out Our Web Site! www.hmmc.org