HMMC NEWS

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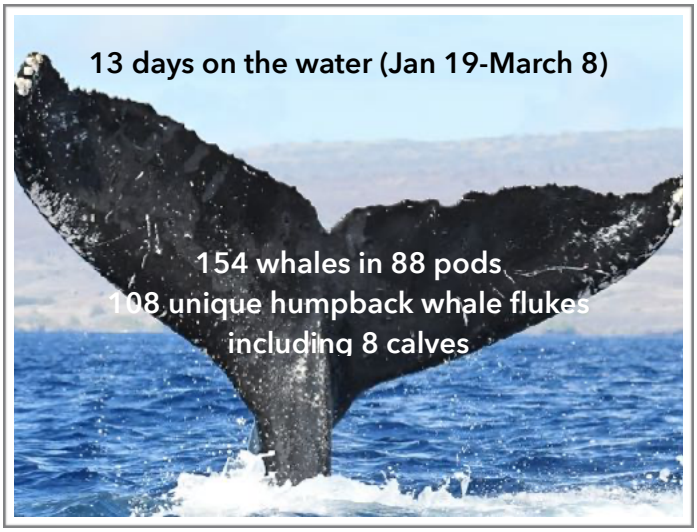
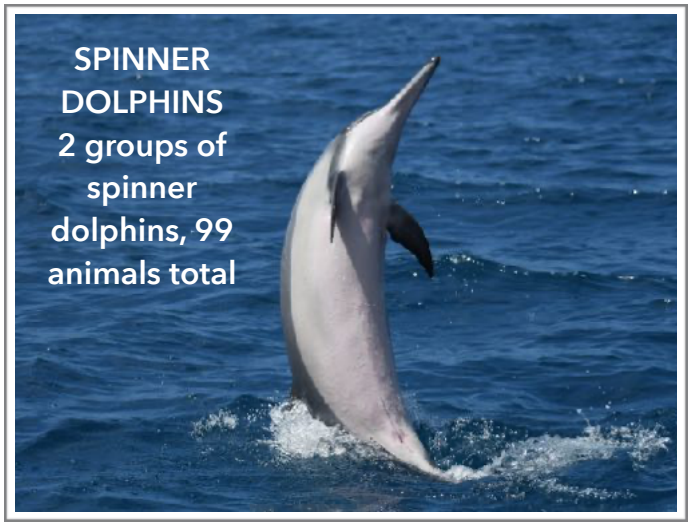
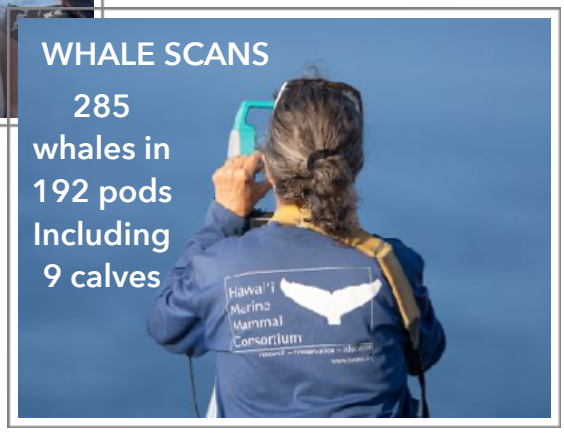
Year End Report 2026





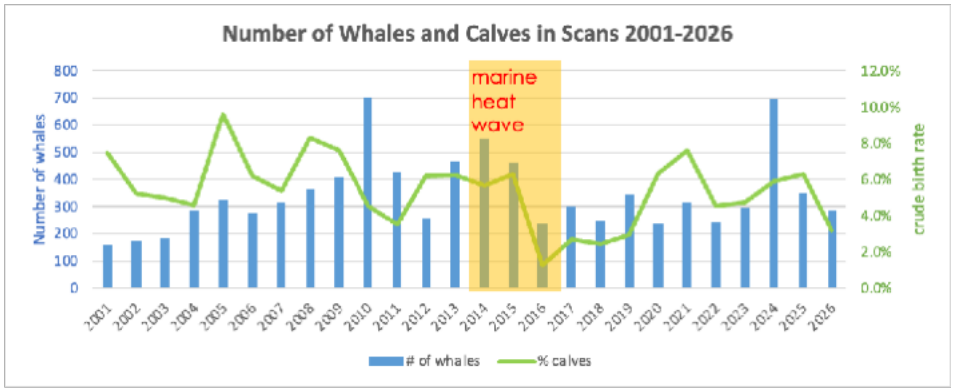
2026 RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS







Above: Yin and Susan photograph spinner dolphins. Middle: Chris "fixes" whales with the theodolite (photo by K Dracott). Right: Ann, Karen, and Yin record whale scan data.



How Many Whales?

Each winter, we do ~20 scans using consistent methods to track the number of whales and the number of calves sighted from shore. This year's crude birth rate (3.2%) was lower than the long term average (2001-2025) of 5.5%. The total whale count (285) was also below average (342).

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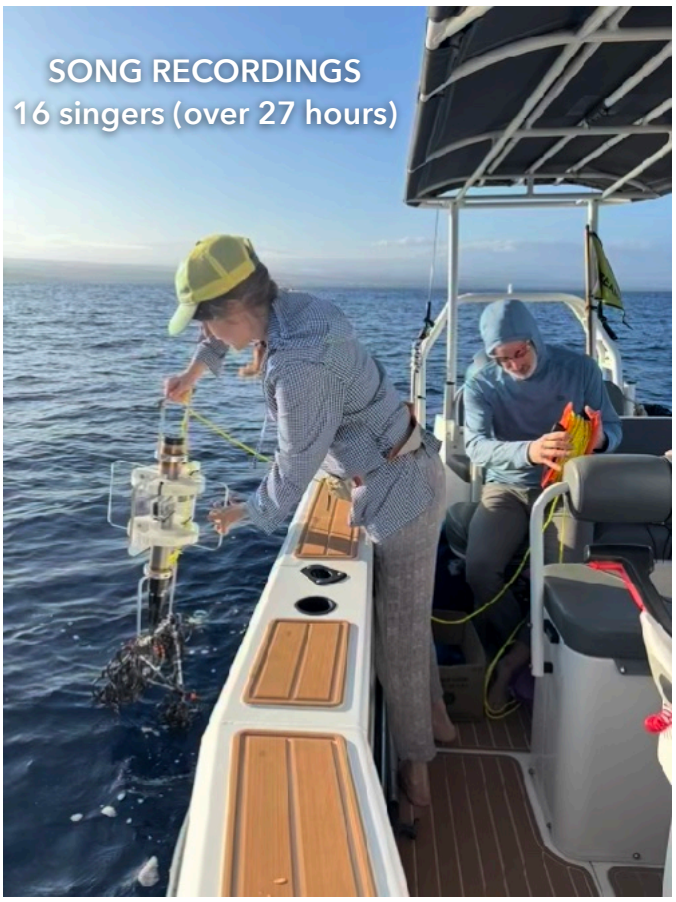

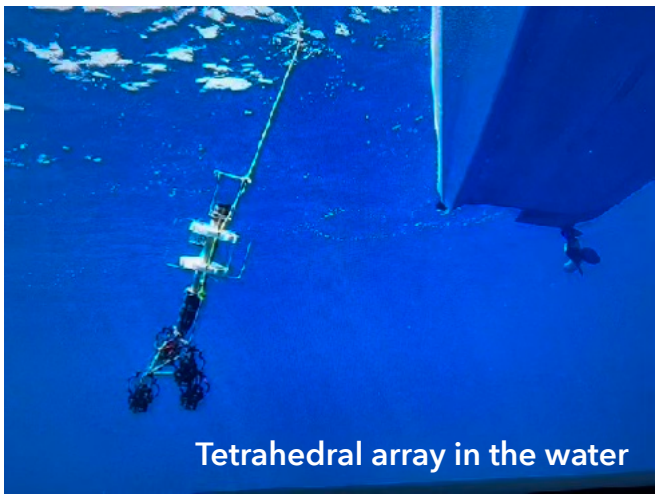
Tetrahedral array in the water

SOUND SCIENCE

This was our third year recording singers with Cornell University Music Department faculty Annie Lewandowski (left). This was the first use of the free-floating tetrahedral array (above) developed in collaboration with the K. Lisa Yang Center for Conservation Bioacoustics and funded by the Atkinson Center for Sustainability. In February 2027, this work will be presented at Whale Tales on Maui. In the meantime, you can listen to these fantastic 4-channel recordings on SoundCloud.



In the 4th year of our collaboration with the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary, we made long term recordings of the underwater soundscape from January to early July 2026. The recorder sits just above the seafloor until we use an "acoustic release" to bring it to the surface (see buoy covered with marine growth, above).


The moored Sound Trap recorded a singer on December 7, 2025 for an epic 7.5 hours! Note: The whale shown here was not the singer, but isn't he impressive too?

Our 2023-2026 song recordings are part of an international study of song similarities and differences across the North Pacific led by Jim Darling of Whale Trust on Maui.

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HMMC IN THE COMMUNITY



HAWAI'I radio hour at KAHILU

Click the links to hear Susan's story about a whale rescue and the interview with Adam and Chris.









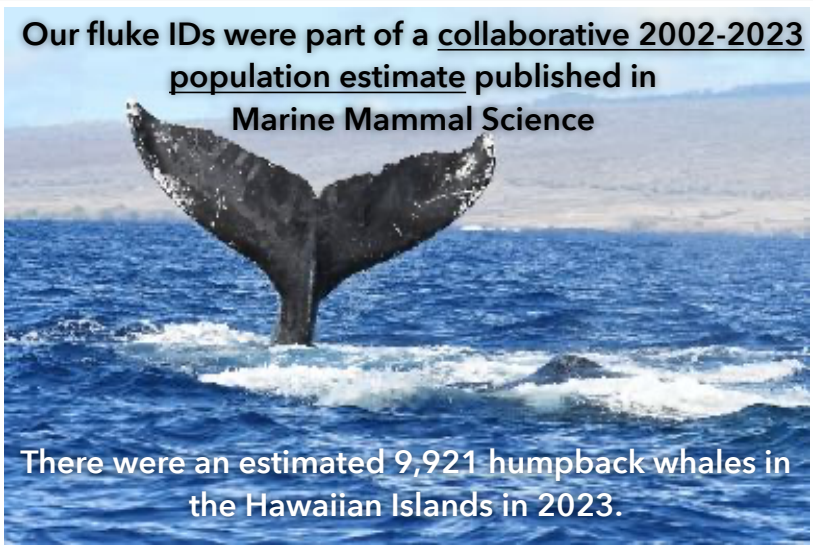




We had a big year getting the word out about whales and the importance of healthy oceans. Our classroom programs, field science volunteers, educational booths, and classroom visits (in person and by video) and reached **694 adults** and **284 kids** (not including an unknown number of listeners to Hawaii Radio Hour)**.** Events included tourism industry Charity Walk, Parker School Love Fest, Makali'i Festival, and the Wiliwili Festival.



We collected a wide variety of marine debris 6 times in 2026, most often food and drink containers.



Our fluke IDs were part of a collaborative 2002-2023 population estimate published in Marine Mammal Science

There were an estimated 9,921 humpback whales in the Hawaiian Islands in 2023.

OCEAN CONSERVATION



We had a rare sighting of a whale shark when we recovered the Sound Trap in June 2025



BLACKTIP REEF SHARKS
4 sightings of 7 sharks

In 10 days of observations
At Pelekane Bay



Consider donating to HMMC to help our work continue.



MONK SEAL
We documented our first ever monk seal sighting, eating a fish

YOUR DOLLARS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

THREE WAYS TO SUPPORT HMMC

-Shop at the HMMC online store

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

-Make a tax-deductible contribution to support our whale and dolphin research and education programs.

Our Board

Contact us at info@hmmc.org

Suzanne Yin
Adam Frankel
Chris Gabriele
Susan Rickards



High winds this summer damaged our research vessel canopy. Repair, replacement, or sunscreen by the gallon will be costly. Your contributions will keep us happy, shaded and productive when we are on the water.

MAHALO!

Thanks to all the volunteers (next page) and donors who help make our work possible. We welcome our new donors: Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, Parker School's LoveFest, Maureen Reyes and Bruce Zentner who donated in memory of Mary Werthwine, Michelle McDonald and Nora Sigrah. Deepest gratitude to our beloved repeat donors: Marilyn Wright, the Koester Family Fund, Sally and Tom Reeve, Wendy Reeve, and the PayPal Giving Fund. The song tetrahedral array work was funded byCornell University's Atkinson Foundation for Sustainability and made possible by Annie Lewandowski with help from Patrick Chaopricha at the Cornell K. Lisa Yang Center for Conservation Bioacoustics, with able field assistance from Todd Cowen. Thanks to Jim Darling at Whale Trust for funding for song recording for the Trans-Pacific song study.We are fortunate for and grateful to returning volunteers Kim New, Ann Komura, Karen Daar, Holly Sargeant, and Paul Berry. Big mahalos to John Bertram for helping rescue Malolo after the wind storm. Thanks to all the friends and the Parker School students, teachers, and 'ohana who dropped by to observe or help out. Eden Zang provided essential help with underwater sound monitoring. Mahalo to the generous donor of Sea Legs, and Kona Coast Marine and Dragon Run for vessel support. The photos shown here were taken under NMFS Permit # 26596. Thanks to Robin Baird, Marie Hill, Amanda Bradford, and Erin Oleson for permit assistance.

VOLUNTEERS 2026

We greatly appreciate that so many people take the time to make the drive to our observation site (some of them coming from from great distances) to help with our observations. We missed getting a photo of two volunteers: Karina Dracott and Scott Lee.



ITEMS FOR SALE

Contact info@hmmc.org for details

