



## WHALE HISTORIES FOR WHALE TAIL NOTE CARD



Row 1 left: Mother with 25% white flukes

This mother was sighted with a newborn calf off the Kohala Coast in March 2010. Female humpback whales have a calf every two to three years after they reach maturity. Calves spend their first several weeks of life in warm Hawaiian waters before migrating to their mother's home range in a feeding area along the Pacific Rim. Few if any births are documented in Hawaii suggesting that the mothers give birth in remote locations or during migration.

HAWAII MARINE MAMMAL CONSORTIUM  
PO Box 6107 • KAMUELA, HI 96743 • [WWW.HMMC.ORG](http://WWW.HMMC.ORG)

COPYRIGHT © 2013 HMMC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
PHOTOS TAKEN UNDER NOAA SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PERMIT #1127-1921.



## WHALE HISTORIES FOR WHALE TAIL NOTE CARD



Row 2 left: Singer with 100% white flukes

This whale was documented as a singer in Feb 2010. HMMC researchers determined that this male was singing by listening with an underwater microphone and observing that the singing stopped when the whale came up to breathe every 12 minutes or so. Humpback whale song is one of the most complex animal vocalizations on earth. The reasons that males sing are still elusive, although it is clearly a display related to mating. Some males even begin to sing in late summer in their high-latitude feeding grounds like [southeastern Alaska](#).

HAWAII MARINE MAMMAL CONSORTIUM  
PO Box 6107 • KAMUELA, HI 96743 • [WWW.HMMC.ORG](http://WWW.HMMC.ORG)

COPYRIGHT © 2013 HMMC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
PHOTOS TAKEN UNDER NOAA SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PERMIT #1127-1921.



## WHALE HISTORIES FOR WHALE TAIL NOTE CARD



Row 3 left: One of a pair with 25% white flukes

Humpback whales in Hawaii are most commonly found in pairs. This whale was sighted with another adult whale. Pairing up makes sense given that the whales are in Hawaii for the breeding season. Pairs often contain a male and a female. Male–male pairs are also found but female-female pairs are quite rare. When a group of males forms to compete for mating access to a female, the males can be quite aggressive with one another. But in social groups that lack a female, males can appear passive, companionable or rowdy.

HAWAII MARINE MAMMAL CONSORTIUM  
PO Box 6107 • KAMUELA, HI 96743 • [WWW.HMMC.ORG](http://WWW.HMMC.ORG)

COPYRIGHT © 2013 HMMC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
PHOTOS TAKEN UNDER NOAA SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PERMIT #1127-1921.





## WHALE HISTORIES FOR WHALE TAIL NOTE CARD



Row 1 middle: Joined a singer, 75% white flukes

This whale is very likely an adult male based on the fact that it was observed to join a solitary singing male. Adult males often ‘lurk’ nearby a solitary singer, possibly to capitalize on any mating opportunities that his song may create. The function and intended audience of song are enigmatic, but one thing seems clear – song is not a “chick magnet”. Females do not appear to approach singers, but other males do, like this whale. When a male joins a singer, the song often stops abruptly, and the two males swim off together, and may stay together, or may split up fairly soon, and the singer may resume his song. What does it all mean? So far the whales are keeping that to themselves.

HAWAII MARINE MAMMAL CONSORTIUM  
PO Box 6107 • KAMUELA, HI 96743 • [WWW.HMMC.ORG](http://WWW.HMMC.ORG)

COPYRIGHT © 2013 HMMC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
PHOTOS TAKEN UNDER NOAA SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PERMIT #1127-1921.



## WHALE HISTORIES FOR WHALE TAIL NOTE CARD



Row 2 middle: Member of a pair, 0% white flukes

This whale was slapping its tail on the water when we sighted it in February 2011. Fortunately for HMMC researchers, whales shed flakes of skin when they breach and make other splashy behaviors on the water. When that happens, we wait for the whale to leave the area and carefully motor over to where we can use a dip-net to collect flakes of whale skin off the ocean's surface. The genetic fingerprint of a skin sample can tell the sex, maternal lineage and kinship of this individual. The sexes of pairs of whales are of particular interest to HMMC, because mating has never been scientifically documented and quiet pairs seem a likely group type where mating could happen.

HAWAII MARINE MAMMAL CONSORTIUM  
PO Box 6107 • KAMUELA, HI 96743 • [WWW.HMMC.ORG](http://WWW.HMMC.ORG)

COPYRIGHT © 2013 HMMC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
PHOTOS TAKEN UNDER NOAA SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PERMIT #1127-1921.



## WHALE HISTORIES FOR WHALE TAIL NOTE CARD



Row 1 right: Mother

The 'Plain Jane' black flukes of this female sighted in March 2010 with her calf suggest that she may be from Southeast Alaska, where almost 60% of whale flukes are black. Even without white pigmentation, the shape and trailing edge of the whale's flukes allow scientists to identify them as individuals.

Whales are creatures of habit and tend to be sighted year after year in the same feeding grounds, starting when their mother takes her calf to her home range in its first year of life. The mother and calf will stay together for about 11 months, but they are rarely found together in subsequent years, even though a female's offspring will continue to inhabit her home range for the rest of his or her life. In contrast, only about 13% of whales are sighted in consecutive years in the Hawaiian Islands.

Try your luck at matching this fluke to Southeast Alaska whale catalog at [www.alaskahumpbacks.org](http://www.alaskahumpbacks.org) or British Columbia and let us know if you find her!

HAWAII MARINE MAMMAL CONSORTIUM  
PO Box 6107 • KAMUELA, HI 96743 • [WWW.HMMC.ORG](http://WWW.HMMC.ORG)

COPYRIGHT © 2013 HMMC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
PHOTOS TAKEN UNDER NOAA SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PERMIT #1127-1921.





## WHALE HISTORIES FOR WHALE TAIL NOTE CARD



Row 2 right: Primary Escort

Mothers with a calf are frequently accompanied by an adult male who presumably is interested in mating with the mother, if she were to become receptive. This is an adult male who was the 'Primary Escort' to a mother with a calf and two adult males in March 2010. This means that there was more than one male, but this guy managed to maintain a position closest to the female. Escorting behavior is intriguing because only a small percentage of females apparently later give birth to offspring sired by these escorts.

HAWAII MARINE MAMMAL CONSORTIUM  
PO Box 6107 • KAMUELA, HI 96743 • [WWW.HMMC.ORG](http://WWW.HMMC.ORG)

COPYRIGHT © 2013 HMMC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
PHOTOS TAKEN UNDER NOAA SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PERMIT #1127-1921.



## WHALE HISTORIES FOR WHALE TAIL NOTE CARD



Row 3 middle: Singer with 100% white flukes

This whale is a male that we saw in February 2009 as a singer and February 2010 as an escort in a competitive group. He was first sighted in 2006 as a singer and an escort off Maui by researchers at the [Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary](#). The red vertical lines on his right fluke blade are bloody scratches that he likely received from competing with other males for access to a female. The males are anything but 'gentle giants' when they are vying for access to a female, and have been known to strike each other with their flukes and tails, or purposely hold one another underwater. It's serious business!

See the [HMMC whale tail poster](#) (Row 3, Photo 5) for the 2010 photo.

HAWAII MARINE MAMMAL CONSORTIUM  
PO Box 6107 • KAMUELA, HI 96743 • [WWW.HMMC.ORG](http://WWW.HMMC.ORG)

COPYRIGHT © 2013 HMMC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
PHOTOS TAKEN UNDER NOAA SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PERMIT #1127-1921.





## WHALE HISTORIES FOR WHALE TAIL NOTE CARD



Row 3 right: Member of a trio with black flukes

This black-fluked whale was with two other whales off the Kohala Coast in February 2010. With the distinctive white scar on its right fluke blade, this whale should be easily recognizable if we see it in future years. As you can tell from these whale tales, HMMC researchers can make inferences about the sex of a whale based on its behavior and choice of companions. Alas, we can't infer much about the age-sex class of this whale in a trio, because a trio could have been a female who was being pursued by two males, or the trio could have been three rowdy males out looking for a competitive group to join.

HAWAII MARINE MAMMAL CONSORTIUM  
PO Box 6107 • KAMUELA, HI 96743 • [WWW.HMMC.ORG](http://WWW.HMMC.ORG)

COPYRIGHT © 2013 HMMC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
PHOTOS TAKEN UNDER NOAA SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PERMIT #1127-1921.