

Endangered False Killer Whales of Hawai'i – Cluster 1



HIPc115 sighted 1995-2025



HIPc138 sighted 1988-2026



HIPc203 sighted 2003-2025



HIPc208 sighted 1999-2026



HIPc210 sighted 1999-2026



HIPc217 sighted 2005-2021



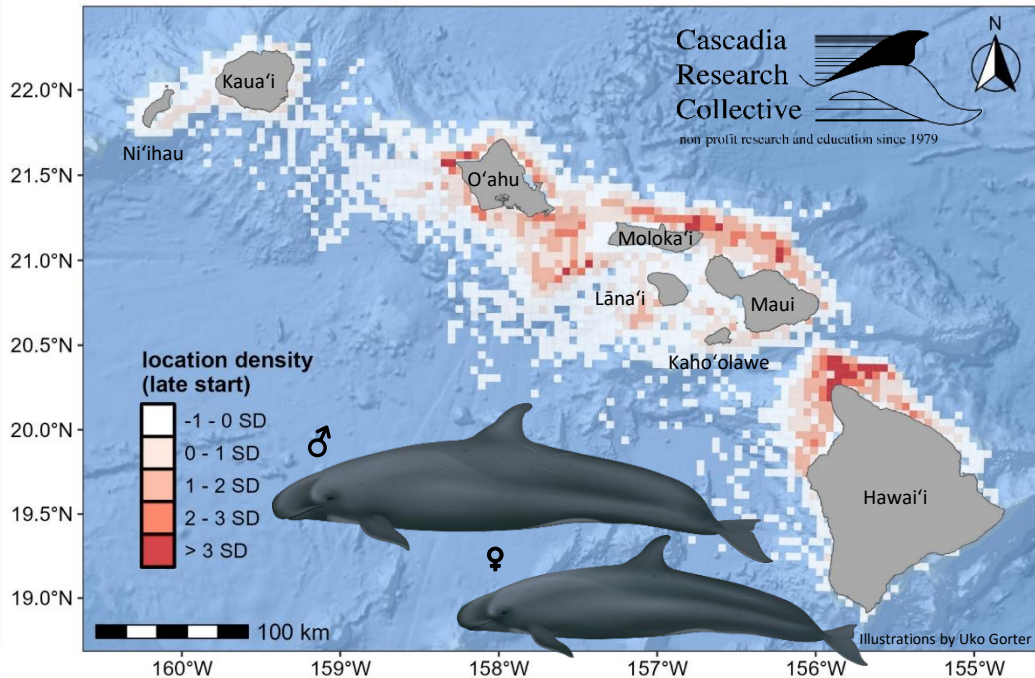
HIPc698 sighted 2016-2026



HIPc808 sighted 2018-2026

Endangered False Killer Whales of Hawai'i – Cluster 1

False killer whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*) are large toothed whales. They are found globally in tropical and subtropical waters but are naturally rare. They are most closely related to pilot whales, pygmy killer whales, and melon-headed whales. False killer whales may live into their 60s, and females only have calves every six or seven years, which makes them particularly vulnerable to human threats like bycatch. There are three populations in Hawaiian waters: the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands population, which primarily inhabits the waters of the Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Sanctuary but occasionally ventures to Kaua'i and Ni'ihau, an open-ocean population, which spends most of its time far offshore, and the endangered main Hawaiian Islands insular population, which ranges from west of Ni'ihau to east of Hawai'i Island. There are currently only about 140 individuals left in the main Hawaiian Islands population, and their numbers are continuing to decline.



Much like a pod of killer whales, false killer whales have close, lasting relationships within matrilineal groups, which we refer to as social clusters. False killer whales are also cooperative hunters and share their prey. Within the main Hawaiian Islands population there are four clusters, and each has unique patterns of habitat use. Cluster 1, which contains around 45 individuals, ranges throughout the main Hawaiian Islands from Kaua'i and Ni'ihau to Hawai'i Island. On the left, you can see a density map illustrating the high usage areas (darker red) for tagged false killer whales from Cluster 1.

False killer whales face a wide array of threats, including high levels of pollutants and interactions with fisheries. Almost a third of the individuals in the main Hawaiian Islands population have scarring that indicates they have survived a prior hooking or entanglement, and about one quarter of the individuals from Cluster 1 have such scarring. Combined with the effects of other stressors, this has resulted in a decline in the population since it was listed as Endangered in 2012. Cluster 1 has been declining faster than any of the other clusters, at an average rate of almost 6% per year.



What can you do to help?

- Keep trash and harmful chemicals out of the ocean.
- Fish responsibly, or prioritize purchasing sustainably caught seafood.
- Share photos and sightings of false killer whales with our researchers.
- Consider making a donation to support false killer whale research.
- Tell a friend about false killer whales!

We need your help!

To contribute your photos of whales and dolphins to our research, scan the QR code below, or email Hawaii@cascadiaresearch.org



For more information on false killer whales, scan the QR code below

