

Endangered False Killer Whales of Hawai'i – Cluster 4



HIPc105 sighted 2000-2023



HIPc125 sighted 1999-2025



HIPc270 sighted 2003-2020



HIPc353 sighted 2009-2024



HIPc511 sighted 2010-2025



HIPc518 sighted 2012-2025



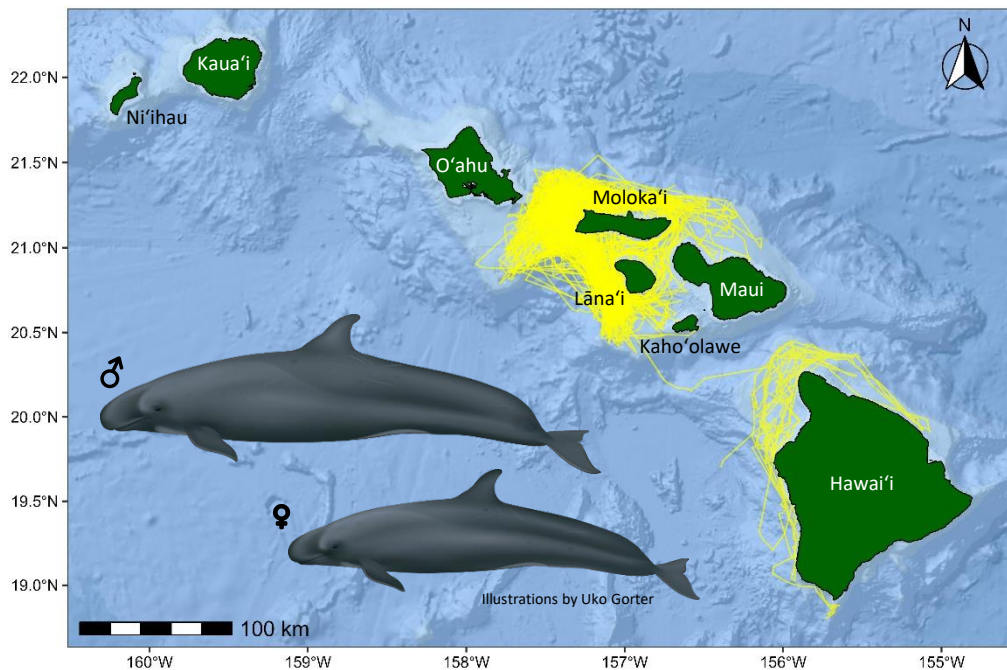
HIPc701 sighted 2017-2024



HIPc711 sighted 2000-2024

Endangered False Killer Whales of Hawai'i – Cluster 4

False killer whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*) are large toothed whales with dark grey bodies that can be found globally in tropical and subtropical waters. 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 fisheries interactions. There are three populations in Hawaiian waters: a 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 an 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 pack of wolves, false killer whales have close, lasting relationships within family 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 4, which contains between 30-40 individuals, is most frequently found off Moloka'i and west of Lāna'i, and is one of the least known social groups in the population. On the left, you can see the tracked movements of nine satellite-tagged false killer whales from Cluster 4, tagged between 2009 and 2023.

False killer whales from the main Hawaiian Islands population face a wide array of threats, including high levels of pollutants and interactions with fisheries. Almost a third of the individuals have scarring that indicates they have survived a prior hooking or entanglement, and about one quarter of the individuals from Cluster 4 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.

What can you do to help?

- Keep trash and harmful chemicals out of the ocean
- Fish responsibly
- Share photos and sightings of false killer whales with our researchers
- Tell a friend about false killer whales!



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

