



Icy Strait Whale Sighted in Hawaii



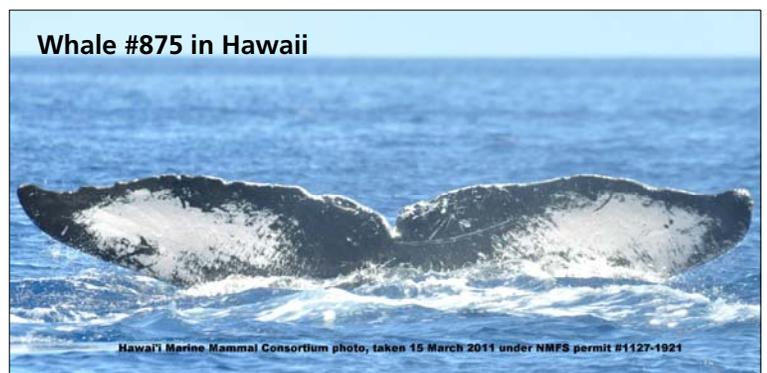
Hawai'i Marine Mammal Consortium photo, taken 15 March 2011 under NMFS permit #1127-1921

Each year, humpback whales migrate from high latitude feeding grounds such as Glacier Bay to tropical waters to breed in the winter. Using photographs of the unique markings on each whale's tail flukes, researchers have determined that most of the whales from southeastern Alaska winter in Hawai'i, although some migrate to Mexico. On March 15, 2011, researchers from the non-profit Hawai'i Marine Mammal Consortium (www.hmmc.org), including Glacier Bay National Park's whale biologist Chris Gabriele, encountered a very familiar whale off the west coast of the Big Island of Hawai'i. Gabriele recognized #875, a whale regularly seen in Glacier Bay and Icy Strait each summer. In 1990, researchers from the University of Hawai'i documented whale #875 as a singer and recorded his song off the west coast of the Big Island, only a few miles from where he was sighted in 2011. Researchers thus presumed #875 to be male because song is a display made by males during their winter mating season. His sex was confirmed by genetic analysis of a few flakes of skin which were sloughed when he breached in Icy Strait in 1997 and 1998.

Whale #875 was first documented in Seymour Canal, southeastern Alaska in 1985 by researcher Jan Straley, who has also sighted him in Tenakee Inlet, Chatham Strait, and Frederick Sound several times over the past three decades. In 1987, Glacier Bay biologist C. Scott Baker observed #875 with fresh propeller scars, still visible in the 2011 photo from Hawai'i, which he believed to have resulted from a collision with a small vessel whale-watching in Icy Strait. Whale #875 has frequently been documented as a leader in coordinated feeding groups eating herring in Chatham Strait by Fred Sharpe and others from the Alaska Whale Foundation, who nicknamed the whale "Arpeggio."

Collaboration among researchers studying in different areas is clearly the key to learning more about the long and interesting lives of this wide-ranging whale species. To see a catalog of humpback whale flukes from southeastern Alaska, and learn more about whale biology, migration and behavior, visit www.alaskahumpbacks.org. This web site was developed by Jan Straley and Jen Cedarleaf of the University of Alaska Southeast, in collaboration with Glacier Bay National Park, gathering photographs contributed by many research groups and individuals into a single catalog available to all.

Gabriele commented "Even though as a scientist I know that humpback whales commonly migrate from Alaska to Hawai'i, it is always a thrill to see a familiar whale who has made that trip. That's at least a 2,700 mile swim! I look forward to seeing #875 again in Alaska in summer 2011."



Whale #875 in Hawaii

Hawai'i Marine Mammal Consortium photo, taken 15 March 2011 under NMFS permit #1127-1921



Whale #875 in Alaska

Glacier Bay National Park photo, taken 30 June 2005 under NMFS permit #945-1776