



Photo: Cynthia Vanderlip

Marine Debris

Every year over 50 tons of marine debris drift into Monument waters. On otherwise pristine and unpopulated beaches, television tubes, bottles, shoes, and every kind of plastic material can be found from countries surrounding the North Pacific.



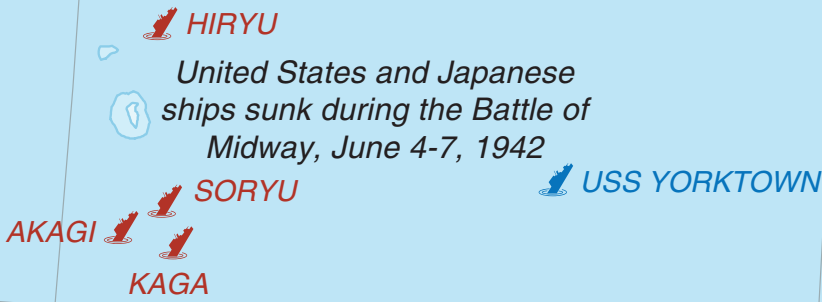
Photo: Wayne Levin

Monk Seals Foraging in Darkness

Hawaiian monk seals descend into the dark twilight, more than a thousand feet beneath the surface, to forage among huge branching formations of gold and bamboo precious corals. Monument waters and unpopulated beaches provide a last haven for these critically endangered marine mammals.



Photo: James Watt



Unnamed Seamount

Gledstanes

Hōlanikū,

Mokupāpapa & Kānemilohaʻi

Kure Atoll

Parker

Pihemanu

Midway Atoll

Pearl

Holoikauaua

Pearl & Hermes Atoll



Photo: Ray Boland/NMFS

Green Turtle Sanctuary

More than 90% of Hawaiʻi's Green Turtles breed and nest in the Monument's protected waters. Monitoring of this species for the last 30 years, since its protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1978, has shown a steady recovery.



Photo: Greg McFall

Unique life in Twilight

Below recreational scuba depths of 90 feet lies one of the least explored marine habitats on the planet, the mesophotic zone. In this area of fading light many undocumented species are thought to exist. Recent explorations in the Monument have shown that the vast majority of the fish in these habitats are unique to the Hawaiian Archipelago.



Photo: Pete Leary/USFWS

Short-Tailed Albatross Nesting

Three species of albatross breed and nest in the Monument. The rarest of these is the Short-tailed albatross, whose world population is estimated to be only 2200 birds. In 2011 the first documented chick born outside of Japan was banded on Eastern Island, Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. Since discovery of this rare bird hatchling, it has survived two intense storms, and the tsunami produced by the Great East Japan Earthquake. In August of 2011 the chick successfully fledged.

Acropora Table Corals

Fifty seven species of stony corals have been documented within the Monument. Many can be seen on main Hawaiian Island reefs. Table corals (acropora) (shown at right) are abundant on reefs surrounding French Frigate Shoals but are nearly absent on main Hawaiian Island reefs.



Photo: James Watt



Photo: Wayne Levin

Atolls

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands contain the only coral atolls in the United States. Atolls are unique geological features produced as volcanic islands erode and collapse back into the sea. In tropical and subtropical areas they feature coral rings surrounding a central lagoon where a volcano once existed.

Predator-dominated Coral Reefs

The Monument protects one of the world's last apex predator-dominated coral reef ecosystems. More than half the weight (biomass) of all fish on its coral reefs consists of apex predators like sharks and jacks. In the main Hawaiian Islands only three percent of the biomass is contributed by these large fish.



Photo: James Watt



Photo: Kaleomanuiwa Wong

Division Between Birth and Afterlife

Papahānaumokuākea is considered a sacred area from which Native Hawaiians believe life springs and to which spirits return after death. It is also a place for Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners of today to deepen their lineal ties to their ancestors and gods who they understand are manifested in nature.

PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA Marine National Monument



19th Century Whaling Vessels Discovered

Kilometers
Miles

0 100 200
0 100 200



www.papahanaumokuakea.gov

The Hawaiian placenames for Papahānaumokuākea's islands and atolls derive from diverse historic sources (for instance, from ancient chants, historic newspapers, and others) and are still being studied.