



## 'Āina Momona Place of Abundance



*The natural and  
cultural abundance of  
Papahānaumokuākea are  
inseparably linked*

- One of the world's last apex predator-dominated coral reef ecosystems, abounding in sharks and jacks, a feature characteristic of reefs prior to significant human exploitation.
- A spectacular example of evolution in isolation, with a very high degree of terrestrial endemism occurring and the highest known degree of endemism for any marine ecosystem.
- An unparalleled example of the later stages of volcanic island subsidence and atoll formation.
- Vital habitat for pupping, nesting, and foraging for critically endangered Hawaiian monk seals, Laysan ducks, and threatened Hawaiian green turtles.
- Nesting and foraging area for over 14 million seabirds – making Papahānaumokuākea the world's largest tropical seabird rookery.
- Location of the highest concentration of ritual sites per island area in Hawai'i, bearing remarkable testimony to the shared historical origins of all Polynesian societies.
- A sacred region, in predominant Native Hawaiian cosmology and tradition, where life originates and where ancestors return after death.
- Training grounds for traditional contemporary Hawaiian wayfinders excelling in non-instrument navigation.



Photo: James Watt

## *World Heritage Inscription*

A designation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Heritage sites safeguard for humanity the most universal and significant aspects of our global natural and cultural heritage. Papahānaumokuākea joins New Zealand's Tongariro National Park, East Africa's Serengeti, Australia's Great Barrier Reef, and the Egyptian Pyramids as one of the world's gems. Papahānaumokuākea is Hawai'i's second World Heritage Site, joining Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, inscribed in 1987.

## *Significance*

Papahānaumokuākea was chosen as the first United States nomination to World Heritage in more than 15 years and inscription of this sacred region has given the Nation its first mixed, natural-cultural site. Globally, Papahānaumokuākea is the first site ever inscribed as a 'cultural seascape,' and out of nearly 2,000 sites, it is now one of only about 50 marine sites, and one of only about 40 mixed, natural-cultural, sites in the world.

On July 30, 2010, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument was inscribed as a mixed World Heritage Site for its outstanding natural and cultural attributes. The World Heritage site's designation encompasses nearly 140,000 mi<sup>2</sup> (362,000 km<sup>2</sup>) of remote-ocean and includes the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and a complex array of marine and terrestrial ecosystems. It is a portion of a much larger area expanded in 2016.

## *Papahānaumokuākea: Where Nature and Culture are One*

The cord of small islands, atolls and reefs are the last or only habitat for some of the world's most endangered species, and the region holds status as a sacred place in the history, culture, and cosmology of Native Hawaiian people.



Photo: Randy Kosaki

# Papahānaumokuākea

## World Heritage Site



### Global Contributions

World Heritage sites are nominated under specific criteria and are seen as the best examples of natural or cultural heritage in the world. The following are some of the attributes, for which Papahānaumokuākea was inscribed:

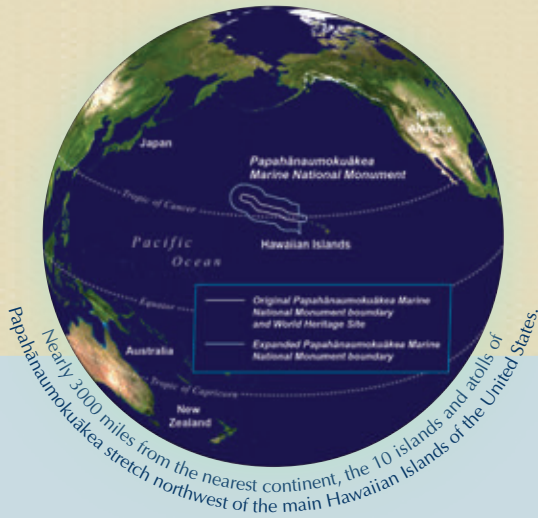
**Culture:** A sacred place in the history and cosmology of Native Hawaiian people, Nihoa and Mokumanamana especially, are considered exceptional for their numerous and intact ritual sites (*heiau* - shrines) and their connection to living cultural traditions. Papahānaumokuākea is also an essential training ground for contemporary Hawaiian wayfinders excelling in non-instrument navigation.



Photo: Naalehu Anthony



Photo: Kalei Nu'uhiva



**Geology:** The scale, distribution and linear nature of Papahānaumokuākea's geologic processes are unrivaled. As the major portion of the world's longest, oldest and most remote volcanic chain Papahānaumokuākea has helped to shape our understanding of plate tectonics and hotspots and the region is home to the world's northern-most true atoll — Kure.

**Habitats:** The deepest reaches of Papahānaumokuākea are 18,382 feet (5,600m) below sea level, with the highest being 902 feet (275m) above and include: abyssal depths, seamounts and submerged banks, two high eroded islands, pinnacles, atolls, coral reefs, shallow lagoons, shoals, dunes, dry grasslands and shrublands, and a hypersaline lake.

**Endemism:** The size of the Hawaiian Archipelago, as well as its isolation from other archipelagos or land masses has led to very high rates of marine and terrestrial endemism – species that are found nowhere else in the world. Within Papahānaumokuākea, up to 60 percent of shallow coral reef fishes, and an amazing 90 percent of deep reef fishes, are represented by endemic species. Additionally, at least 40 percent of the corals are endemic.



Photo: James Watt



Photo: Wayne Levin



Photo: James Watt

### Management and Protection

The World Heritage Committee recognized Papahānaumokuākea's management as unique among large-scale MPAs in that all forms of use, including non-extractive use, are regulated and highly restricted across the site's World Heritage boundary at 140,000 mi<sup>2</sup> (362,000 km<sup>2</sup>). Since World Heritage designation, Papahānaumokuākea was expanded in 2016 to 582,578 mi<sup>2</sup> (1,508,870 km<sup>2</sup>) and now represents a significant portion of all fully protected seas worldwide.

  
PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA  
Marine National Monument



[www.papahanaumokuakea.gov](http://www.papahanaumokuakea.gov)