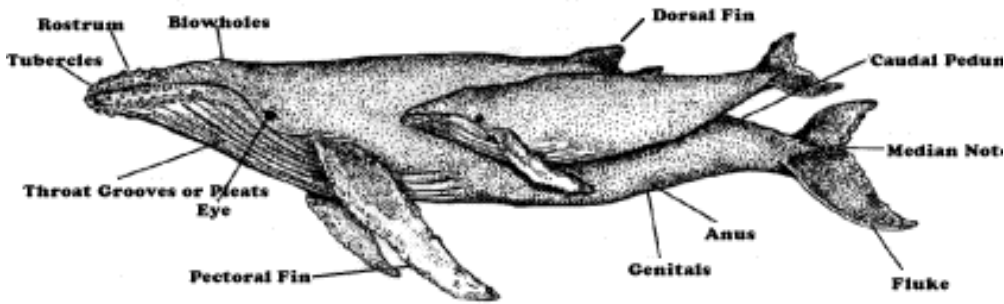


Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)

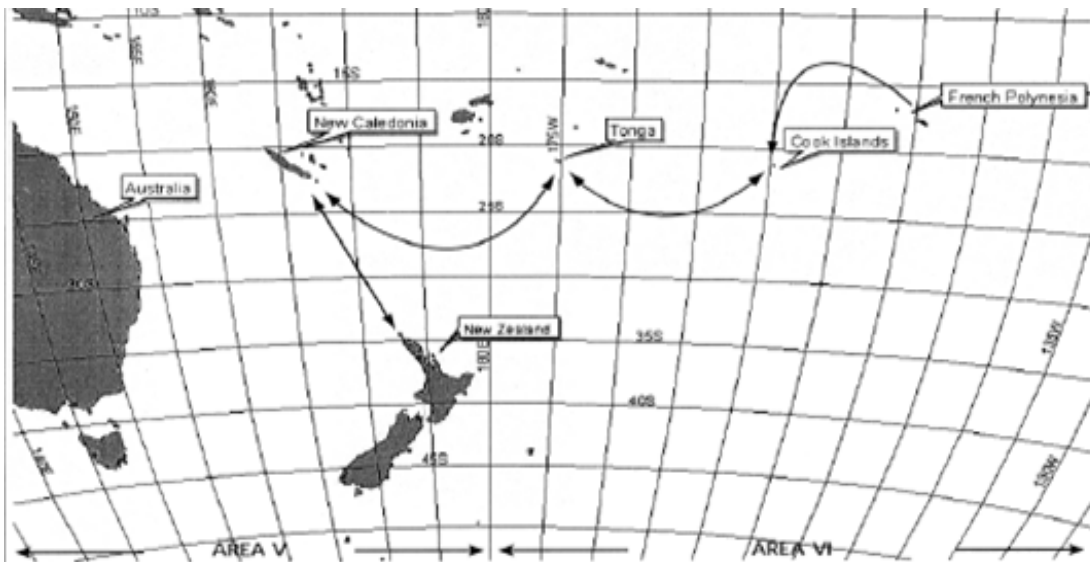
“mega” for “large and “pteron” for “wing, referring to the whales huge flippers; *novaeangliae* refers to New England, where the whale was first described scientifically



1st to Migrate - mixed females (non-pregnant/early pregnancy) and immature males & females, followed by mature males and then females with calves in early lactation.

Interesting Behavior - Humpbacks engage in many interesting behaviors like spy hopping, fluke/pectoral slapping, & breaching, to competition pods (males vie for chance to mate with females in breeding grounds) and bubble netting (cooperative feeding behavior in Antarctica). One of the most fascinating, and least understood, of humpback behaviors is the whale song. This song, sung by males in the breeding ground, varies from year to year and differs in dialect from one area to another. Duration of the song can last between 6 & 35 minutes and can be heard from up to 8 km (5 miles) away in the water by the human ear.

What makes Tonga so special? Pod V, from Antarctica, forms the different breeding groups of the Oceania Humpbacks. Each year these groups travel through Tonga, either on their way to or from their winter breeding grounds. New Zealand & New Caledonia interact with Tonga, but never east of it and French Polynesian & Cook Islands interact with Tonga, though never west of it. This has been shown through the use of mDNA, fluke ID, and study of the song. Making Tonga the center of great importance for the recovery of the Oceania population, as it is shown to be an area of high migratory interchange through the South Pacific.



Size: Maximum 18 m (59') Average for Females 14.5 m (47.6') & Males 13.5 m (44.3')

Weight: 30,000 kg (66,000 lb); up to 48,000 kg (106,000 lb).

Diet: Antarctic krill, *Euphausia superba*

Maximum Age: As old as 77 years

Sexual maturity: 4-6 years (average - 5 years)

Physical maturity: 8 - 12 years

Migration: Antarctica (Feeding grounds) – Tonga (Mating & calving Grounds) over 5,500 Km (3,300 miles)

Gestation Period: ~ 11 - 12 months

Birth Season: In Southern Hemisphere April - November, peaking in ~early August

Calves Size at Birth: ~ 4 - 4.5 m (13-15ft) & ~700 kg (+1500 lbs)

Calf Diet: First 6 months nursing ~ 378.53 liters (100 gallons) 40-50% fat milk from mom, then milk/solid diet to 1yr, then weaned within the 2nd year.

Threats: •climate change • habitat degradation • habitat modification • pollution (both chemical and waste) • disease • noise • whale watching • fisheries interactions (including bycatch and entanglement) • ship strike • whaling (including ‘scientific’ whaling) • depletion of prey species • cumulative impacts.