Why Humpback Whales Migrate from Alaska to Hawaii

“A Whale of a Tale”
What is migration?

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Migration is usually a response to changes in temperature or food supply and is often undertaken for the purpose of breeding.
Humpback whales are migratory animals, traveling up to 3,000 miles from their feeding grounds in the cold waters of the Polar regions, to their breeding grounds in the warmer waters of tropical regions.
When do humpback whales migrate?

Humpbacks follow a general seasonal pattern of migration.
During the **summer season** in the Northern Pacific Ocean, humpbacks can be found in their feeding grounds in the waters of British Columbia, Alaska and eastern Russia.
Due to the mild weather during the **summer season** these Polar areas produce an abundance of food including krill, plankton, and small fish for the whales to feed on.

“Humpback whale feeding — straining water out to trap krill in baleen.” Photo by Commander Richard Behn, NOAA
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Question and Answer Time

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   a.) Australia
   b.) Polar region
   c.) Tropical region
   D.) None of these
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   Answer: b.) Polar regions like Alaska, British Columbia and Russia.
Question and Answer Time

3.) Why do the humpback whales spend the summer season in the Polar regions?
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Answer: Due to the mild weather during the summer season the Polar regions produce an abundance of food including krill, plankton, and small fish for the whales to feed on.
Here comes the **COLD!!!!**

When the **winter months** set-in the waters of the Polar regions become too cold and harsh causing the humpbacks food source to become scarce.
Humpbacks then travel to the warm protected waters of the tropics during these harsh winter months.
Tropical waters tend to have much less food available to the whales. The main reason humpbacks travel to these warmer locations is not to feed, but to begin the breeding process.
Humpback whale breeding grounds can be found in Hawaii, Central America, Mexico or Asia.
It is estimated that as many as 10,000 humpback whales travel from Alaska to visit the Hawaiian Islands every winter, starting in November and lasting through about May.
Watch the whales migrate
While humpbacks are found in all regions of the ocean both in the northern and southern hemispheres, the Hawaiian Islands support the only National Marine Sanctuary for humpback whales.
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For additional information on the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary, visit:

http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov/