

Hanauma Bay Education Program's Creature Feature

Hawaiian Name: 'Opihi

Common Name: Limpet

Scientific Name: *Cellana sandwichensis*



Endemic

Family: Patellidae

Name Origin: In Hawaiian, 'opihi means limpets. 'Opihi are an aumakua for some families. Hawaiians recognize three types, kō'ele, 'ālinalina, and makaiauli.

Size: Ranges from 2 to 10 centimeters in length.

Current Fishing Regulations: Minimum size 1-1/4 inches (shell diameter), 1/2 inch (meat diameter, if meat only).

Description: The shell of the 'opihi is usually light brown, grey-brown, or dark brown in color. They have high ribs which extend to beyond the edge of the shell. They also have yellow feet.

Habitat: The 'opihi live at the low tide mark and just below it where they receive a consistent splash of water.

Diet: 'Opihi typically feed in algae.

Cultural Significance: "It was kapu for anyone to eat 'opihi on shore while a companion was out gathering more. If one broke this kapu, the one still collecting would be pounded by the sea. An 'opihi gatherer was warned never to turn his back on the sea... Gathering of 'opihi was so dangerous that it was called a fish of death."

The Hawaiians used the 'opihi shell as scrapers for shredding coconut meat.

'Ōlelo No'eau:

Kūpihipihi loa kāhi koena 'opihi. *The remaining limpets have dwindled in size.* A modern saying – the finances have dwindled in size.

He i'a make ka 'opihi. *The 'opihi is a fish of death.* The 'opihi is usually found in rocks where the sea is rough. There is always danger of being washed away by the waves when gathering 'opihi.

'Opihi kauwawe lehua o Hōpoe. *'Opihi covered by the lehua blossoms of Hōpoe.* The fringes of lehua a Hōpoe fall into the sea, and are washed up over the rocks, hiding the 'opihi.