



The Marine
Mammal Center

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 9, 2008

THE MARINE MAMMAL CENTER AIDS ABANDONED HAWAIIAN MONK SEAL PUP

(SAUSALITO, Calif. – May 9, 2008) The Marine Mammal Center is working in collaboration with NOAA Fisheries and Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center to help rehabilitate an abandoned neonate Hawaiian monk seal that was found on May 2, 2008 on the island of Kauai. A rescue team attempted to reintroduce the one to two days old pup to its mother but she appeared to have no interest. This pup's mother abandoned another pup last year and it died a week later. Rescuers determined that the neonate would die if left alone, so with the help of the U.S. Coast Guard, the young seal was transported to Oahu for rehabilitation. Two trained personnel from The Marine Mammal Center were dispatched to the island to help care for the pup, which weighed 32.5 lbs. They are currently feeding him a diluted milk formula and hope to graduate him to solid fish in the coming weeks.

"The population of Hawaiian monk seals has dwindled to 1,100 and continues to decline at around 4% each year," said Dr. Frances Gulland, Director of Veterinary Science at The Marine Mammal Center. "Every effort we can put forth in helping this young pup and others like him to survive can make a difference in helping the entire species continue to thrive in the wild."

Hawaiian monk seals are nearly at the brink of extinction. Conservation efforts to help this animal are crucial to the long-term survival of the species. The Center's 33 years of expertise in working with young harbor seals and elephant seals was a key component in the recent success of a captive care project – an effort to provide nutritional supplementation to juvenile female Hawaiian monk seals in hopes of improving their chances of surviving in the wild in order to reproduce. Six seals in the project were rehabilitated and released, including twin female monk seals, the fourth known occurrence of twins in this species ever documented. The Center, along with NOAA Fisheries, hopes to repeat those successes with this young pup as well as other Hawaiian monk seals in the future. The public can learn more about Hawaiian monk seals by visiting the Center's homepage at www.marinemammalcenter.org.

About The Marine Mammal Center:

Headquartered in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in Sausalito, California, The Marine Mammal Center is a nonprofit veterinary hospital, research and educational center dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of ill and injured marine mammals - primarily elephant seals, harbor seals and California sea lions - and to the study of their health. Patients that become healthy again are released back to the ocean. Since 1975, the Center has rescued and treated more than 13,000 marine mammals and has accumulated a body of knowledge about marine mammal and ocean health from its patients. By educating the public about marine mammals, the Center hopes to foster ocean stewardship and conservation.

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