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Three endangered Hawaiian monk seal pups admitted to Ke Kai Ola, a dedicated hospital for monk seals on Hawai'i Island

(Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i – September 13, 2024) – The Marine Mammal Center has admitted three Hawaiian monk seal pups to Ke Kai Ola, the Center's hospital and conservation program in Kailua-Kona that is dedicated to the endangered marine mammal. The successful rescues, made in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the United States Coast Guard (USCG), and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service demonstrates the continued need to maintain regulatory protections and fund continued conservation efforts to help recover the species.

“Treating three young seals that were unlikely to survive the coming months without intervention is at the heart of why this important work matters,” says Dr. Sophie Whoriskey, Associate Director of Hawai'i Conservation Medicine at The Marine Mammal Center. “We're thrilled to help give these three pups an opportunity to return to their ocean home and contribute to the growth of the Hawaiian monk seal population.”

Last month, scientists aboard the vessel *M/V Kahana II* performed physical exams en route to Honolulu and initial treatment on the three seals from Manawai (Pearl and Hermes Atoll). NOAA scientists rescued these three pups while deploying seasonal field camps to conduct monk seal research in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. On arrival in Honolulu on August 20, the seals were transported the same day via a USCG C-130 aircraft to Ke Kai Ola for treatment.

“This is an enormous team effort, from the rescue led by Manawai camp lead James Yost, to 10 days of animal care led by Claudia Cedillo, RVT, and around-the-clock monitoring by the entire team aboard the *Kahana II*. It is an honor to support conservation in Papahānaumokuākea with this effort and we appreciate Ke Kai Ola's expertise in providing everything these patients need to return to health,” shares Michelle Barbieri, Lead Scientist, NOAA Fisheries Hawaiian Monk Seal Research Program.

The three seals, DT12, a female pup and oldest of the group, DT48, a female pup, and DT46, a male pup, all likely weaned early at a small size. NOAA experts determined they were unlikely to survive the winter season due to their poor body condition.

The three seals are following a strict treatment regime at Ke Kai Ola, including oral multivitamins and electrolytes added to their daily feedings to help boost hydration. The seals are progressing in terms of

feeding on sustainably caught fish already. All three animals are settling in well and are bright, alert, and active. The Center's veterinary team also took a series of tissue samples to check for signs of disease.

The Center's partnership with NOAA Fisheries and other cooperating agencies is more important than ever to prevent this endangered species from becoming extinct. Together, the Center works with NOAA to identify seals in need, rescue and rehabilitate them, and give them a second chance at life.

HOW THE PUBLIC CAN HELP

The public should keep a safe distance of [at least 50 feet](#) from Hawaiian monk seals and at least 150 feet from monk seal mothers with pups.

Report hooked, stranded or entangled monk seals to the statewide NOAA Fisheries Marine Wildlife Hotline at 1-888-256-9840.

INTERVIEWS

Please contact Media@tmmc.org to arrange interviews.

ABOUT THE MARINE MAMMAL CENTER

The Marine Mammal Center advances ocean health through marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation, research, and education. As a leading contributor to the global body of research and knowledge about marine mammal medicine and ocean health, the Center generates research findings and scientific outputs at volumes comparable to top academic institutions and prides itself on gathering and providing open research data that is free to access, reuse, repurpose and redistribute. The Center's teaching hospital and training programs operate globally with headquarters in Sausalito, CA. The Center has rescued more than 24,000 marine mammals from 600 miles of authorized rescue area along the California coastline and Hawai'i. The Center's mission is to advance global ocean conservation through marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation, scientific research, and education.

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