December 2007

Pacific Islands Region
Marine Mammal Response Network

Activity Update

Dedicated to humane marine mammal response in the Hawaiian Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands

NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office ● January—April 2008

This is the 2008 1st issue of the Pacific Islands Region Marine Mammal Response Activities Report. As always, a special ***mahalo*** *to all agency partners and volunteers for their tireless efforts. Questions, comments, or requests for information can be sent to:*

David.Schofield @noaa.gov

NOAA Fisheries

Pacific Islands Regional Office

1601 Kapiolani Blvd.
Suite 1110
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

www.fpir.noaa.gov

Inside this issue:

HAWAIIAN MONK SEAL UPDATE

RK 15 Chooses Busy Oahu Beach to Molt & Brings a Community Together!

Contributions from volunteers

Jerry Okamoto (Oahu Monk Seal Volunteer) - During the entire month of January 2008, a group of mostly Kailua residents volunteered their time and hearts to watch over a Hawaiian monk seal, Chester, who quickly became a part of their lives and their families. With no formal training, many had never heard of a Hawaiian monk seal, never interacted with each other, and yet formed an *ohana* whose common love was the care for Chester during his extended molting.

During their 24-hour watches, they worked diligently to educate and inform all who traveled Kailua and Lanikai Beaches. For many of the local residents who lived there for over 20 years, it was a special privilege for Chester to visit the popular beach. Daily visits were made by local residents and others from all over the island. Tourists learned of the special gift this descendant of a 13 million year old species brought to our wonderful island.

Donna Festa (Oahu Monk Seal Volunteer) Prior to January 1st, we knew that monk seals were endangered, but that was all. Everything that followed was a blessing, and we were a part of a very special event without knowing the full scope of how this experience would change our lives and have an impact on our community. On the 1st day, we were just a group of neighbors and beachgoers. By day two, a handful of us re-appeared, knowing that we all shared the same interest and enthusiasm in this monk seal's well-being.

As days turned into weeks, Chester didn't realize just how dedicated we were. In the last week of his molting, he would leave for a nightly feed and pop-up on different stretches of the beach. In summary, Chester's molting provided a unique community experience and brought awareness to the plight of the Hawaiian monk seal as well as their environment. This seal will forever be our symbol for helping the recovery of this species.

Patricia Boehm (Oahu Monk Seal Volunteer) - January 1, 2008, was a new year with Chester on Kailua Beach. This event was a catalyst that brought a community together to support the Hawaiian monk seal. I have never seen a monk seal and knew nothing about their history or that they were a critically endangered mammal. I immediately volunteered with other community members to support this Hawaiian monk seal. I learned about monk seal behavior and their need for protection to survive.

Above: **RK 15 ("Chester") resting at Kailua Beach.**

This was the beginning of a volunteer network created to keep this seal safe while promoting monk seal awareness. The volunteer network continues and assisted with the passage of two bills in the Hawaii State Legislature. The first bill established the Hawaiian monk seal as our state mammal, and the second intended to designate the third Saturday of every April as Hawaiian Monk Seal Day.

DB Dunlap (Oahu Monk Seal Volunteer) - I first met this seal in June 2001 at Poipu Beach, Kauai. He was well-documented on Kauai from 2001-2003, and then arrived on Oahu in 2004. One morning in 2004, I saw him at Irma's, which is the stretch of beach just east of Sandy Beach. His body

Continued on Page 2

condition was very poor and emaciated, and he appeared to be in a critical health condition. However, I didn't realize then that he had just finished his molt. Over the following years, I learned that he was not able to maintain his health very well during his molting period. He always made a comeback, though, and within a month, he usually regained his normal "fighting weight". I named him Chester because of a very prominent scar on the right side of his chest. He generally remained on Oahu but was occasionally seen on Kauai in 2007. His range on Oahu was from Kaena Point to Rabbit Island, with a significant amount of time spent at Iroquois Point, Ewa Beach, and Ko Olina Beach.

Chester's best documented media days were first at the beach fronting the Outrigger Canoe Club in 2005, and most recently during his molting period in Kailua, from January 1-26, 2008. His last trip to southeast Oahu was on March 20, 2008. He appeared at Makapuu Beach, and seemed extremely emaciated and weak. He traveled to Rabbit Island later that day, where he spent his last six days. On March 26, 2008, he was unresponsive, and by 5 p.m., I called for assistance. Chester's body was recovered by NOAA Fisheries personnel, and a full necropsy was conducted, the results from which are pending. Although his exact age is unknown, Chester was an older male. He will be missed.

Left: a *ho `okupu* or offering for Chester from Native Hawaiian community members who believe the monk seal to be an *amaukua*, or family ancestor. Within the wrapped ti leaf offering is sea salt, a rock, and fruits. *Right*: a *lei* for Chester to wish him *aloha* and farewell on Kailua Beach.

3rd Semi-annual Hawaiian Monk Seal Count April 19th, 2008

The 3rd Semi-annual Hawaiian Monk Seal Count was a success! Over 300 volunteers participated around the state of Hawaii. The table (right) lists the resulting count numbers for this most recent Count as well as the two prior events. The Count raised public attention with extensive media visibility.

Island	April 28, 2007	October 20, 2007	April 19, 2008
Kaua'i	13	6	15
O'ahu	6	5	15
Moloka'i	19	7	8
Maui/Lana'i	1	3	0
Kaho'olawe	2	1	2
Big Island	0	1	1
Total	41	23	41

Left: an image provided by Channel 8 of volunteers walking with Hawaii State Representative Kymberly Pine, who is an avid and valuable supporter of Hawaiian monk seal conservation. *Right*: Aerial photo of monk seal mom and pup from a U.S. Coast Guard flight over Kauai.

Hawaiian monk seal biologist, Thea Johanos-Kam of the NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC), states that the amount of time that a seal spends hauled-out is highly variable depending upon season, size, and sex, as well as food availability. In the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, roughly one-third of the seals in a subpopulation are hauled-out at any one time. Therefore, they spend about two-thirds of their time in the water. Their time spent on shore might be different in the main Hawaiian Islands, and the seals don't travel far offshore to forage. More on this subject is available in the 1985 report titled, "Estimating the 1983 population of Hawaiian monk seals from beach counts."

Monk Seal Pup Requires Umbilical Chord Detachment

At 6:18 a.m. on April 20, 2008, Monk Seal Volunteer DB Dunlap first reported RS00 and her brand new pup on Rabbit Island. This occurred one day after the Semi-annual Hawaiian Monk Seal Count. At 12:00 p.m., it was reported that the pup had not yet shed his umbilical chord and placenta. The pup was observed to be acting as if it were anchored by the placenta, which remained on the wet sand, and it appeared that the pup was having difficulty getting closer to the mom. Chad Yoshinaga (PIFSC), Shawn Farry (PIFSC) and David Schofield (PIRO) traveled to Rabbit Island and removed the umbilical chord and placenta. The pup returned to the mom, and they both seemed to be resting comfortably later that afternoon.

Hawaiian Monk Seal Pups of 2008

Tracy Wurth, NOAA Fisheries PIFSC

The 2008 pupping season began with an early start this year. The first pup of the year was born around March 13th on Kalaupapa, Molokai, to a four-year old mom (RI15). This is the youngest monk seal mom recorded. Her pup, with shiny new tags W00 and W01, is born to a third generation of monk seals on the island of Molokai: both his mom and grandmother were both born at Kalaupapa.

As of early May 2008, eight births were documented in the main Hawaiian Islands (MHI). Five were born at Kalaupapa, two on Kauai, and one on Oahu. It is still early in the pupping season, and we are hoping to surpass last year's record of 13 pups in the MHI. There are still many female monk seals that are expected to give birth later this year, in addition to the several females that may have skipped pupping in 2007. See the table below for the estimated due dates of moms for this year. Not all may be pregnant, but we hope so.

Above: RW00, our first weaned/tagged pup of the year- this pup was born to a 4 year old female!

2008 Predicted Pupping Dates

Seal ID	Island	2008 Predicted Birth Date	*Actual Birth Date*
RS00	Oahu	4/25	*4/20*
R017	Molokai	4/29	*4/29-5/1*
RY30	Molokai	5/2	*4/24*
RH58	Kauai	5/7	
RH44	Molokai	5/10	*4/27-28*
RQ21	Molokai	5/10	*4/26-28*
RK34	Kauai	6/16	*~5/1*
RK06	Kauai	6/18	
R016	Molokai	8/2	
R006	Molokai	8/3	
R015	Hawaii	8/21	
RK12	Kauai	10/25?	

Hawaiian Monk Seal Disentanglement in NWHI

Shawn Farry, PIFSC

On July 24, 2007, a sub-adult male Hawaiian monk seal (GI40) was observed entangled in marine debris at Pearl and Hermes Reef in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Unfortunately, the seal could not be disentangled and was not observed again during the duration of the summer monk seal field camp. On October 5, 2007, the seal was observed again at Pearl and Hermes Reef, but this time he was more severely entangled. Therefore, it was the primary goal to locate and disentangle GI40. Secondary goals, in conjunction with searching for GI40, were to conduct population assessment patrols with a particular interest in juvenile and sub-adult seals, and to tag "un-tagged" weaned pups, if located.

The team departed from Honolulu, Ohau, on October 11, 2007, and arrived at Lisianski Island on October 16, 2007. Here, a complete monk seal population assessment patrol was conducted. On October 17, 2007, the team arrived at Pearl and Hermes Reef and began searches for GI40 as well as population assessment patrols. On October 18, 2007, an untagged weaned pup was located on North Island. With the assistance of marine debris team personnel (J. Felsing-Watkins and E. Coccagna), the seal was successfully captured and tagged. On October 21, 2007, a dead weaned pup was discovered in the waters off of Southeast Island. The carcass was in an advanced state of decomposition, and a cause of death could not be determined. A partial necropsy was performed, and samples were collected for future analysis. On November 3, 2007, which was the last day of boating operations at Pearl and Hermes Reef, the entangled seal GI40 was located on Southeast Island. With the assistance of marine debris team personnel (K. Koyanagi, S. Charette, and S. Kanhg), the seal was successfully captured, and the debris was removed from its neck. The team departed from Pearl and Hermes Reef on November 3, 2007, arriving at French Frigate Shoals on November 6, 2007. Patrols for untagged weaned pups, including two pups that were known to be nursing at the end of the previous summer field season, were conducted on Tern Island and East Island. While no untagged weaned pups were located, an undocumented mother and pup pair were discovered on East Island, thereby making the stop at French Frigate Shoals well-worth the effort. Finally, the team departed French Frigate Shoals on November 6, 2007 and arrived back in Honolulu on November 8, 2007.

Above: Shawn Farry to the rescue!

STRANDINGS, ENTANGLEMENTS AND COLLISIONS

Summary of 2007/2008 Large Whale Entanglement and Ship Strike Reports

Ed Lyman (Hawaiian Islands Disentanglement Network (HIDN) Coordinator)

The HIDN is a community-based network, coordinated by Ed Lyman and David Mattila of the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (HIHWNMS), that was formed to free endangered humpbacks and other marine animals from life-threatening entanglements and to gather valuable information to mitigate future entanglement and threats. Since its inception in 2002, HIDN has grown, comprising over 100 participants. HIDN and HIHWNMS have received 190 reports of marine mammals in distress, and organized 59 responses. Many of these are incorrect reports, involving misinterpretations of the white-flippered humpbacks as having gear along their sides, which when viewed from a nearby vessel or shore appear blue-green in the water and misinterpreted as netting.

The 51 confirmed reports represented 39 humpbacks, for which HIDN organized 28 on-the-water responses. Some reports were received too late in the day, represented animals too far offshore, or were in rough sea-state conditions not conducive for a rescue effort. Since 2003, HIDN removed approximately 2,400 feet of line from 9 different humpback whales. Six humpbacks in Hawaii were confirmed with gear from Alaska, 5 of which were commercial pot gear.

2007 was characterized by fewer entanglement reports, mostly due to a lack of repeat sightings and fewer misreports. HIDN received 44 reports of distressed animals, 15 of these involving entanglements, 2 of which were entangled monk seals. Of the 13 humpback reports, 2 were not confirmed and 6 were confirmed as not involving an entanglement and misreported. Five reports

were confirmed of humpbacks entangled in gear.

On December 9, 2007, the 1st confirmed report of an entangled humpback for the 2008 whale season was received from Lahaina, Maui (above). The sub-adult animal appeared healthy and was carrying an undetermined amount of monofilament line wrapped at least two times around the tail while trailing at least 25 feet behind. The animal appeared recently entangled, with the line barely cutting in. No response was mounted at the time.

Another confirmed entanglement was reported from Maalaea Harbor, Maui, on February 10, 2008, involving an adult female humpback in a competitive group. The animal was entangled in heavy gauge line through the mouth and along both sides of body to a bundle of gear just above the animal's flukes. Though late in the day, a response was mounted. The team attempted to attach a telemetry buoy to the trailing gear in order to track the distressed animal. However, the dynamics of the

competitive group, the proximity of the gear to the animal, and the limited amount of time were all factors in the team's inability to attach the telemetry buoy.

The last confirmed entanglement of the season was reported on April 25, 2008, and involved a humpback calf off Maili Point, Oahu (above). The calf was entangled in more than 400 feet of line through the mouth and around the flippers, with 3 buoys attached. David Schofield (NOAA PIRO) and Dave Nichols (Department of Land and Natural Resources) attached a telemetry package to the trailing gear. The next day, a full disentanglement effort was mounted, and the team tracked the transmitter 40 nautical miles west of Oahu, discovering that the calf had dislodged all of the gear during the night. What remained was the line attached to the animal and now drifting with the tracking buoy.

***Above*: U.S. Coast Guard prepares to deploy, with David Schofield and David Nichols ready to attach telemetry buoy to gear trailing entangled humpback calf.**

HIDN understands that large whale entanglements do not always result in finding and freeing every whale, but rather with the gathering and sharing of valuable information to mitigate future marine debris threats and entanglement.

The number of confirmed ship strike reports was greater compared to past seasons. This season, there were 12 humpbacks reported with ship-strikes: 9 reported as hit by vessels, and 3 observed with wounds indicating a recent ship strike. Maui had the most reports at 7 animals, followed by the Big Island with 3, and Oahu at 2. Past reports indicated that 83% of confirmed ship-strike reports involved younger animals (calves and juveniles). Six responses were mounted to document and assess reports of ship struck whales; half of these were successful.

HIDN received considerable assistance from the boating community. All confirmed entanglement reports originated from the tour and sport fishing communities, some of which monitored for several hours until help arrived. Whale researchers also played an important role in helping to relocate entangled animals and document/assess ship-struck animals. The researchers and the tour boat operations made the

***Below:* April 11, 2008 report of ship-struck calf.**

Beaked Whale Stranding on Guam

Valerie Brown (NOAA Coral Reef Ecology Program)

On the evening of January 27, 2008, officers of the Guam Port Authority smelled something unusual during their patrol and discovered the decomposing body of a whale on the outer side of the breakwater surrounding Apra Harbor. Staff from the Guam Department of Agriculture, Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources (DAWR), and NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office responded the next morning.

The whale was approximately 17 feet long and in an advanced stage of decomposition (right). The responders determined that it was a beaked whale, but due to the state of the carcass, it was not possible to identify the species. Knowing that these whales are rare, they immediately called David Schofield (PIRO) for suggestions on how to proceed. They were informed to preserve the carcass so that the skeleton could be used for research into the life of these secretive whales, and at the very least, to get a tissue sample and, if possible, the skull.

Unfortunately, the whale washed ashore on jagged slippery rocks during rough seas. One of DAWR's fisheries technicians (S. Dupree) braved the stench, the waves, and the rocks to obtain a tissue sample which will be used for genetic analysis, but the site was deemed unsafe for skull removal at this time. The responders decided that it would be best to wait until heavy equipment could be used to move the whale or until the conditions were safer. During the first few days, the seas remained rough and the responders were unable to locate the equipment necessary to move the carcass.

Finally, on February 3, 2008, biologists Brent Tibbatts (DAWR) and Valerie Brown (NMFS PIRO/JIMAR) returned to the site to retrieve the skull, examine the stomach, and dispose of the carcass into the sea to help speed decomposition. The skull was nearly disarticulated due to the action of the waves and the decomposition. It wasn't long before they were able to remove the skull, pick up the broken pieces of the jaw and place the foul mass in a carcass bag. The next step was to open the body of the whale and examine the digestive organs for any signs of plastic or other anthropogenic debris. The organs were in surprisingly good shape, and the biologists examined the entire length of the intestines for blockages and opened the stomach to look at the contents. The carcass was too decomposed to look at any other possible cause of death, so the team removed as much of the flesh from the whale as they could and tossed it into the water to the waiting scavengers (reef sharks). The skull was then taken back to the DAWR office and buried in a screen covering to allow the final decomposition of the fleshy tissues. It will eventually be retrieved and sent to beaked whale experts for study. A squid beak was salvaged from the stomach contents, and a picture was sent to an expert for possible identification.

As an education and outreach effort, the biologists were joined by a local television news journalist (J. Tyquiengco) to film a segment for his "Guam's Tough Jobs" news series. The biologists used the news segment to explain the significance of the stranding, as well as the importance of retrieving the skull and looking at the stomach contents. They reminded people to report distressed or beached marine mammals to DAWR. The segment aired the same week as Schofield's visit to Guam for Marine Mammal Response Training. It can be viewed at the following website: http://www.pacificnewscenter.com

Humpback Whale Calf Stranding on Maui

Nicole Davis (Hawaii Pacific University (HPU)/NOAA Fisheries PIRO)

On February 25, 2008, a humpback whale calf stranded at Puamana Beach, Lahaina, Maui. The Maui marine mammal response team received the call at 11:00 a.m. and quickly responded. Surfers observed the calf alive and being followed and/or attacked by large sharks. NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, the Maui Police, the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE), and Maui County Lifeguards secured the area and closed the beach to the public. The humpback whale calf was freshly dead and lying inshore. HIHWNMS staff documented details about the calf, while Nicole Davis and Joe Fell-McDonald assisted with the coordination of logistics. With help from the Maui Mayor's Office (K. Paracuelles), Maui County Highways and Public Works offered heavy equipment and services to relocate the carcass. A front-end loader carried the carcass from the beach into a large flatbed truck that transported it to a location where Dr. Gregg Levine (PIRO contract veterinarian) and the HPU Response Team (W. White and J. Aschentinno Walkins) arrived from Oahu and conducted the necropsy that evening. The initial cause of death could not be determined, but tissue samples were collected and sent for analysis. A Native Hawaiian cultural practitioner performed a blessing of the whale carcass before the necropsy and a second time before the carcass was buried. The team performed a full necropsy well into the next morning and transported tissues and samples back to Oahu for further culture and analysis. Rojac Trucking Company offered to bury the carcass. The response to this stranding was very successful due to the cooperation of many agencies.

Spinner Dolphin Stranding on Maui

Whitney White (Student Stranding Response Coordinator for HPU)

Only a few weeks after the humpback whale stranding on Maui, a call was received regarding a dead spinner dolphin that beached on Maui on March 15th. DOCARE was called to confirm the stranding, and once on the scene, contacted David Schofield (PIRO) for further assistance. Due to the fresh condition of the carcass, Schofield called the United States Coast Guard (USCG), and requested their assistance with the quick transportation of the carcass from Maui to Oahu. The USCG generously assisted in the transportation. After retrieving the carcass, David was met on Oahu by HPU's stranding team member (J. Aschentinno Watkins and W. White) and an HPU Public Relation Representative (JJ. McDunn). The carcass was taken to Kapiolani Medical center for CAT-scanning, after which the spinner dolphin was then transported to the University of Hawaii's necropsy facility. The necropsy was performed later that evening by Dr. Gregg Levine, with the aid of HPU's stranding team volunteers and the assistance of David Schofield.

Dead Pygmy Sperm Whale Washes Ashore at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge

John Klavitter, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge

On January 1, 2008, a volunteer at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge observed a small, dead pygmy sperm whale (*Kogia breviceps*) that had washed ashore on North Beach. The whale was freshly dead with large shark bites. The volunteer was concerned about sharks in the area and alerted U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge staff. Refuge staff and volunteers dragged the animal up the beach above the high tide line.

On January 2, 2008, the staff contacted Dr. Kristi West about the types of information and samples to collect from the specimen and instructions to bury the carcass so that the skeleton could be retrieved in approximately two years. The following information and samples were requested: species identity of whale, photographs, total length, gender, teeth count, blubber sample, 2 teeth, and the entire stomach.

By that afternoon, after information and samples were taken as requested, the staff moved the whale to the burial site on the eastern portion of Sand Island. The whale was a small female pygmy sperm whale with fresh large shark bites on its dorsal surface and several small cookie cutter shark bites. No teeth were present on the upper jaw and 13 pairs of teeth were on the lower jaw. The stomach was not emptied, but appeared to be partially full. Approximately 1 m of sand and dirt was placed on top of the animal. A sign will be placed to relocate the site in two years,

at which time the carcass may be exhumed. The collected samples were frozen and shipped to Dr. West.

RESPONDER PROFILE

This issue is dedicated to all the volunteers who provided around-the-clock care for RK15 (“Chester”), who spent 27 days on Kailua Beach. They are:

- Donna Festa
- Patricia Boehm
- Gerry Okamoto
- Sharon Cosma & Family (Jason, Kalei, Jayna, Ka'oli, Camile & Kekama)
- Alissa Rogers
- Brook Scharrer
- Linda Doyle
- Linda Voellmy

- Glen & Hester Olson
- Betsy & Tom Lyons
- Michael O’Sullivan
- Damion Kahaulelio
- Byron Akiona
- Mark Cabral
- George Kaiwi
- Val Ching
- Charlene Pacheco

And of course DB Dunlap!

Also, a special *mahalo* goes to the Hawaiian Monk Seal Count Coordinators:

- Kauai: Mimi Olry
- Oahu: Patricia Boehm
- Maui/Lanai: Nicole Davis
- Molokai: Julie Lopez, Diane Pike & Christina Smith
- Big Island: Melissa Netze & Justin Viezbicke

NETWORK UPDATE

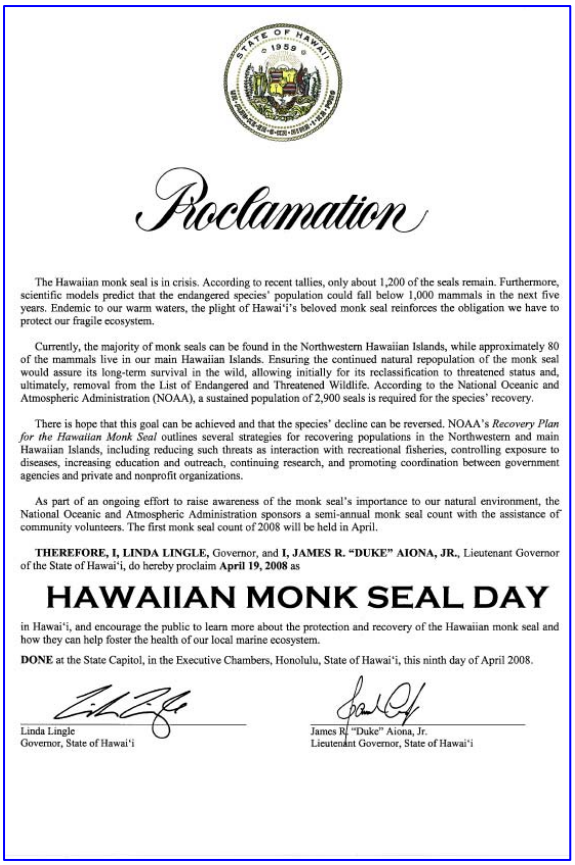
Oahu Volunteers Work to Promote Hawaiian Monk Seal Awareness Legislation

Georgette Yaindl and Gerry Okamoto – Oahu Monk Seal Volunteer Team

The volunteers of Kailua and others around Oahu became fervent advocates for the Hawaiian monk seal as a result of the molting event on Kailua Beach. They visited the Hawaii State Capitol to ask for legislation to designate the Hawaiian monk seal as the State Mammal and to establish an annual Hawaiian Monk Seal Day. The primary purpose for the State Mammal designation is to raise public awareness of this highly endangered species with the ultimate hope for increased protection as well as its repopulation. The State Mammal bill was introduced to the Hawaii State Legislature on January 18, 2008. It has received a tremendous and overwhelming amount of testimony and support from various State of Hawaii departments, environmental organizations, hundreds of students ranging from elementary to university levels, and the dedicated legion of NOAA stranding response volunteers. The community support for this designation is a demonstration of the high level of interest and concern among the people of Hawaii. On April 18, 2008, a conference committee of State Senators and Representatives met to discuss the differences in the bills that had passed their respective chambers. In a unanimous roll call vote, the members approved a bill that later received passage by the full legislature, with an effective date of July 1, 2008.

This story was an incredible journey for this bill to reach the Governor's desk, including early discussions last summer among a group of communications students at Hawaii Pacific University. In winter 2007, the drafting of the bill and identification of legislative co-sponsors began. The spring legislative session was filled with public hearings before one Senate Committee and two House committees. That journey was advanced at critical stages along the way via phone calls, emails, faxes, and office visits from hundreds of advocates from all over the state and country.

While waiting for the legislation to pass, volunteers requested a one day acknowledgement of the April 19, 2008, as Hawaiian Monk Seal Count Day and received a proclamation from Governor Linda Lingle and Lt. Gov. "Duke" Aiona.



Proclamation

The Hawaiian monk seal is in crisis. According to recent tallies, only about 1,200 of the seals remain. Furthermore, scientific models predict that the endangered species' population could fall below 1,000 mammals in the next five years. Endemic to our warm waters, the plight of Hawai'i's beloved monk seal reinforces the obligation we have to protect our fragile ecosystem.

Currently, the majority of monk seals can be found in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, while approximately 80 of the mammals live in our main Hawaiian Islands. Ensuring the continued natural repopulation of the monk seal would assure its long-term survival in the wild, allowing initially for its reclassification to threatened status and, ultimately, removal from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a sustained population of 2,900 seals is required for the species' recovery.

There is hope that this goal can be achieved and that the species' decline can be reversed. NOAA's *Recovery Plan for the Hawaiian Monk Seal* outlines several strategies for recovering populations in the Northwestern and main Hawaiian Islands, including reducing such threats as interaction with recreational fisheries, controlling exposure to diseases, increasing education and outreach, continuing research, and promoting coordination between government agencies and private and nonprofit organizations.

As part of an ongoing effort to raise awareness of the monk seal's importance to our natural environment, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration sponsors a semi-annual monk seal count with the assistance of community volunteers. The first monk seal count of 2008 will be held in April.

THEREFORE, I, LINDA LINGLE, Governor, and **I, JAMES R. "DUKE" AIONA, JR.,** Lieutenant Governor of the State of Hawai'i, do hereby proclaim **April 19, 2008** as

HAWAIIAN MONK SEAL DAY

in Hawai'i, and encourage the public to learn more about the protection and recovery of the Hawaiian monk seal and how they can help foster the health of our local marine ecosystem.

DONE at the State Capitol, in the Executive Chambers, Honolulu, State of Hawai'i, this ninth day of April 2008.

Linda Lingle
Governor, State of Hawai'i

James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr.
Lieutenant Governor, State of Hawai'i

Come one, Come all!

Marine Mammal Response Network Meeting June 11 -12, 2008 at the Ala Moana Hotel

The NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO) will host the 3rd Annual Marine Mammal Response Network Meeting from June 11 – 12, 2008. The first day and a half is open to the public and will include neighbor island updates and specialized response network updates. On the morning of June 12th, participants will engage in a simulated beach response drill at Ala Moana Beach Park.

IMAGES FROM THE FIELD

Right: In January K30 was seen with a hook and a small amount of monofilament leader coming out of the mouth of the seal. *Far right*: This seal is an adult female and was seen on Milolii, Kauai, in July 2005 with a fishing line scar around her neck. (Mimi Olry, DLNR/NOAA Fisheries PIRO)

Above: This is an adult male with a right flipper amputation. This male was seen on Molokai several times since the fall of 2005 (Bill Puleloa DLNR/DAR).

Left: On Kauai, this monk seal has a fishing lure attached to its back. The line was cut by responders, and the lure eventually fell out. (Mimi Olry, DLNR/NOAA Fisheries PIRO)

Below: Unidentified seal at Kaena Point (Joanne Tabor, Oahu Monk Seal Response Network)

What can you do to help?

Go to NOAA Fisheries Monk Seal Recovery Partner — The Marine Mammal Center

http://www.marinemammalcenter.org and click on the link at left with the Monk Seal Photo or go to http://www.marinemammalcenter.org/learning/comm/monksealrecovery.asp.