

# Hawaiian Monk Seal

## How to Prevent Seals from Getting Your Fish and Bait

**What can you do to minimize the possibility of a seal eating your catch or stealing your bait?**

### **1. Don't feed the seals or discard old bait or scraps into the water if seals are in the area.**

One might assume that feeding a seal, or letting it have your old bait and scraps, would keep it satisfied and uninterested in the fish in your net or on your hook - but this is not the case. A seal that has been fed will actually seek out humans because it will learn to associate humans with food and, as a result, become conditioned to not hunt on its own. A seal known as R042 displayed this conditioning response after being fed by spear fishers as a pup. When she got older, she began biting divers, whom she saw as a source for food, and became a public safety hazard. Eventually this seal had to be relocated away from the main Hawaiian Islands.

### **2. If you encounter a seal while fishing take a short break or change locations.**

Seals are curious creatures and investigate everything. Taking a short break from fishing while they are passing through your immediate area may allow them to move through quickly. Another option is to change your fishing location. Boat based spearfishers should keep their catch out of the water when seals are in the area and shore based spearfishers should attempt to do the same if possible. Additionally spearfishermen should not feed the seals or allow them to take their catch whenever possible. If a seal starts acting aggressively towards yourself or your catch it may be advisable to end the dive or change locations due to safety considerations.

### **3. Use a barbless circle hook.**

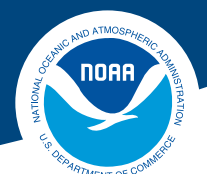
Barbless hooks help minimize post-hooking injuries to seals and can still be used with live bait. To learn how to bridle live bait to a barbless hook, visit the Barbless Hook Project website:  
<http://www.pifsc.noaa.gov/outreach/barblesshook.php>



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#### 4. Follow the State of Hawaii lay gill net rules for your area \*. Highlights of these rules include:

- Register your lay net.
- Limit the overall length of the net to 125ft x 7ft.
- Keep watch over your net. Nets may not be left unattended for more than a half-hour.
- Lay your net during the allowable times and for the allowable length of time. Nets may not be used during the period from a half-hour after sunset to a half-hour before sunrise. There is a maximum set time of 4 daylight hours per 24 hour period.



Adhering to the State fishing regulations and checking your nets frequently to remove fish caught will help prevent seals from being attracted to the free meal in your net.

#### **NOAA collects data on monk seal location, behavior, and feeding behavior in the main Hawaiian Islands!**

**Report All Seal Sightings:** Call 220-7802 or email [PIFSC.monksealsighting@noaa.gov](mailto:PIFSC.monksealsighting@noaa.gov)

**Report Entangled or Injured Seals:** Call 888-256-9840

**NOAA Fisheries Service, Pacific Islands Regional Office**

[www.fpir.noaa.gov](http://www.fpir.noaa.gov)

**NOAA Fisheries Service, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center**

[www.pifsc.noaa.gov](http://www.pifsc.noaa.gov)

\*To access the “Molokai special rules” and a complete listing of the State of Hawaii lay gill net rules, please visit this website: [http://hawaii.gov/dlnr/dar/regulated\\_gear.html](http://hawaii.gov/dlnr/dar/regulated_gear.html)