Hawaiian Monk Seals:
Overview of Threats, Mitigation Actions, & Management

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Photo: Ilana Nimz
RECOVERY PLAN FOR THE HAWAIIAN MONK SEAL
(Monachus schauinslandi)

REVISION

Estimated Abundance at 6 WMH Subpopulations

Year

National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

August 2007
Northwestern Hawaiian Islands
Major Threats to Survival

- Food Limitation
- Entanglement & Entrapment
- Male Aggression
- Habitat Loss/Climate
- Shark Predation
Food limitation
(mostly juveniles)

Mitigation
Rehabilitation
Translocation (~300 pups)
Entanglement & Entrapment

Mitigation
Since 1982 disentangled 379 seals
Since 2015 released 23 from behind Tern Island sea wall
Marine debris removal (800 metric tons)
Male Aggression

Mitigation

Hazing
Wound treatment
Translocation (pups and/or males)
Permanent captivity (males)
Habitat Loss/Climate Change

Remote Hawaiian Island Nearly Vanished After Hurricane Walaka

October 25, 2016, 6:12 PM ET
Shark Predation

Mitigation
Translocation (73 since 2015)
Monitoring & antibiotics
Shark removal
Main Hawaiian Islands
Major Threats to Survival

- Infectious Disease
- Fishery Interactions
- Intentional Killings
- Disturbance & Habituation
Disease: Morbillivirus

Mitigation

Vaccination program

- Launched 2016
- 84 MHI
- 654 NWHI
Disease: Toxoplasmosis

A Cat-astrophic Threat for Seals

How Toxoplasma gondii makes its way from mountain to ocean

A Microscopic Parasite
Toxoplasma gondii is a parasite that causes the disease toxoplasmosis.

Develops in the Gut of Cats
T. gondii can infect any warm-blooded animal (including humans, birds, and reptiles), but only reproduces in the digestive system of a cat.

Spreads Via Cat Feces
Millions of T. gondii eggs can be spread into the environment via the feces of just one cat and remain infectious for many months. These eggs are the source of T. gondii infections in many seals, as they make the cat’s feces their only source of infection.

Travels Through Waterways
Rainwater and small stream transport the eggs to the ocean through streams and rivers.

Exacerbated by Human Behavior
People can spread the spread of T. gondii by allowing pet cats to roam outside, abandoning un-owned cats, and consuming undercooked meat or uncooked vegetables.

Mitigation
Interagency working group
Outreach
Strategic plan
Fishery Interactions

Mitigation
Dehooking
Disentanglement
Net Removal
Reporting
Volunteer Network
Community Engagement

FISHING AROUND SEALS
Accidents Happen
It’s OK to Call!

- Take care when casting if a seal is in the area.
- Fish with barbless circle hooks.
- Clean catch away from seals.
- Seals are wild and may bite. Never approach a hooked seal, call for help.

Monk Seal Response Network:
(888) 256-9840
www.fisheries.noaa.gov
Intentional Harm/Killing

Mitigation
Community engagement projects (e.g., CritterCam)
Community in-reach
Outreach
Seal Disturbance & Habituation

Mitigation
Volunteer Network Reporting Outreach
Payoff of Interventions

About one-third of monk seals are alive today because of direct interventions

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Mahalo!

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