



NOAA
FISHERIES

Hawaiian Monk Seals and Fishing Interactions

Guidelines for Prevention and Reporting

Did you know...

...Seals that have been fed (intentionally or unintentionally) are more likely to seek out humans because they learn to associate people with free handouts and an easy meal.

...Seals will investigate new objects in their environment. Taking a short break from fishing while a seal is passing through the immediate area may increase the chances that the seal will move through quickly and allow fishing to be resumed.

To Report Monk Seal Encounters:

24-hour Hotline (toll free)
(888) 256-9840

To directly contact local Monk Seal Coordinators:

- Oahu: (808) 220-7802
- Kauai: (808) 651-7668
- Molokai: (808) 553-5555
- Maui/Lanai: (808) 292-2372
- Hawaii Island - East: (808) 756-5961
- Hawaii Island - West: (808) 987-0765

Email

pifsc.monksealsighting@noaa.gov

Websites

Pacific Islands Regional Office
www.fpir.noaa.gov

Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center
www.pifsc.noaa.gov



NOAA Fisheries recognizes the importance of fishing in Hawaii and the tradition of ocean stewardship in Hawaii's fishing communities. NOAA Fisheries seeks to promote beneficial co-existence between fishermen and endangered Hawaiian monk seals through practical solutions and increased awareness.

When monk seals interact with fisheries, it is generally bad for fishermen and monk seals alike. While other ocean users, such as SCUBA divers, surfers, swimmers, kayakers, may also interact with seals and contribute to potential problems, the guidelines below are specifically designed to help prevent fishing interactions, and to minimize impacts to fishermen and seals when interactions do occur.

The two most important things YOU can do to help fishermen and seals are:

#1 NEVER FEED A SEAL!! – Seals that are fed by people, intentionally or unintentionally, turn into problem seals. It can take only one feeding for a seal to become “trained” to seek out and interact with people and fishing gear.

#2 REPORT ALL SEAL ENCOUNTERS – Above all, NOAA asks that people please report all interactions with monk seals by calling the toll-free hotline at: 888-256-9840.

Why report?

Without your reports, NOAA Fisheries may not have enough information about problem seals to effectively manage their behavior. Your timely reports help document the locations, types and frequency of fishery interactions, as well as the identities and numbers of seals involved. All of this information is needed for NOAA Fisheries to effectively and lawfully apply seal behavior management techniques, such as aversive conditioning or seal relocation.



Examples of “interactions,” what to do when they occur, and how to prevent them:

Remember: **Your safety is the highest priority.** Always take appropriate safety measures before attempting ANY action.

IF AN INTERACTION OCCURS	Hooking	Entanglement	Feeding from net	Taking bait or catch from hooks	Interacting with spearfishermen	Close swimming or “play” behavior	Other Interactions
	REPORT all seal encounters to NOAA Fisheries immediately: 888-256-9840						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monk seals are large wild animals so it is not safe to attempt to reel the seal in or disentangle it without trained response staff. Cut the line as close to the seal as safely possible. 		End the interaction as soon as possible. Take a short break from fishing, change locations or exit the water.				
	Record information about the seal with photos, video, location description, GPS coordinates, or any other useful information to share with NOAA Fisheries.						
	After following suggested guidelines and best practices, as a last resort, defend yourself if necessary. Note: Although the Endangered Species Act prohibits unauthorized “take” (disturbing, harming, killing, etc.) of these animals, it does state that a person may take a threatened or endangered species if it is based on a good faith belief that he was acting in defense of his or the lives of others. The self-defense exception typically does not apply to the protection of property or pets.						

PREVENT THE EVENT & MITIGATION	Hooking	Entanglement	Feeding from net	Taking bait or catch from hooks	Interacting with spearfishermen	Close swimming or “play” behavior	Other Interaction
	Never give a seal a “meal.” In other words... Don’t feed seals by discarding bait or scraps into the water when seals have been seen in the area.						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a barbless circle hook. If you see a seal in the water while you are fishing, take a short break or change locations if possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the State of Hawaii lay gill net rules for your area.* Register all lay nets. Limit the overall size of the net to 125 ft x 7 ft. Keep watch over the net. Nets may not be left unattended for more than a half-hour. Lay net only 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. <p><i>*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</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you see a seal in the water while you are fishing, take a short break or change locations if possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid taking a shot with a seal nearby. Try not to let seals take fish off of your spear, stringer or float. It may help to use enclosed bags or sealable containers for catch, instead of stringers. 	Don’t reciprocate the interaction or encourage the seal to approach you.			