



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"*

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This is the 1st and 2nd quarter 2007 combined issue of the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Mammal Response Network Newsletter.

Hawaiian Monk Seal Updates:

1st Semi-Annual Hawaiian Monk Seal Count

David Schofield, Pacific Islands Regional Office

On April 28th, 2007 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. over 100 volunteers traversed to many locations in the Main Hawaiian Islands to look for monk seals for the first semi-annual monk seal count. A special mahalo goes out to the members of the community and the following partners who participated:

Kauai: Hawaiian Monk Seal Conservation Hui, Kilauea National Wildlife Refuge, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary (HIHWNMS) - Kauai Office, Kauai Navy Pacific Missile Range Facility, Blue Dolphin Charters

Oahu: Oahu Hawaiian Monk Seal Response team, University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) Marine Science, UHM Law School, Hawaii Pacific University (HPU) Marine Science, Dolphin Quest Oahu, United States Coast Guard (USCG)

Molokai: National Park Service Kalaupapa, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) of Molokai

Maui: Maui Marine Mammal Response Program, Maui Ocean Center, HIHWNMS - Maui Office, Trilogy Charters, Sea Fire Charters, Adventure Charters, Hawaii Wildlife Fund

Lanai: DOCARE, Lanai Elementary, Middle, and High School

Kahoolawe: Kahoolawe Island Reserve Commission

Big Island: UH Hilo Marine Mammal Response Program, Big Island Hawaiian Monk Seal Response Team.

The following is a table of the distribution of the seals counted
(Courtesy of Tracy Wurth, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, PIFSC)

2007 Semi Annual Monk Seal Count

Island	Number of Seals	Known Seals
Kauai	13	RK13, RK03, R018 (N10), RO28, RH58 (N11) & pup
Oahu	6	R013, Temp404, RO40, RS00 & pup
Molokai	19	RH42, RI13, RI11, RO22 Kalaupapa: R011/pup, R017/pup, RY30/pup, RQ21/pup, RH44/pup
Kahoolawe	2	RM32, RV16
Maui	1	
Lanai	0	
Hawaii	0	
Total	41	

PIFSC records document 76 monk seals in the main Hawaiian Islands of known individuals from tags, seals with distinguishing markings, or pups born to known females. This does not include those animals that show up occasionally and that are not identified. From the 41 monk seals that volunteers counted, there may be 2 - 3 times more than that in the water at the time of the count, which was conducted on land. This estimate carries with it many variables and stipulations, but over time, it may provide a more accurate number of monk seals. Another benefit of the count was the new discovery of a mom with a pup!

The count also helped to expose those areas that need more attention. Many of the volunteers covered areas from where we have very little information. In some cases, these previously unobserved areas are now routinely patrolled and have provided interesting results.

NOAA Fisheries intends to host this count twice each year, with the next one scheduled for the 3rd Saturday in October. If you are interested, please e-mail Jennifer Metz at Jennifer.Metz@noaa.gov

Pups born in the MHI so far this “Pupping Season”

Tracy Wurth, PIFSC

The 2007 monk seal pupping season is in full swing. To date there have been 9 pups born in the Main Hawaiian Islands (MHI) this year. The first pup of the year was born on Oahu’s Rabbit Island. The others have been born on Kauai and Molokai (Kalaupapa). Also, Kalaupapa is holding strong at 5 pups so far and hoping to break their record with a few more births by the end of the summer. There are still a few very pregnant-looking females out there. As of early July, seven of the pups have weaned and been tagged. All pups this year will be tagged with red flipper tags that start with the letter “B”.



Left: Weaned pups on Kalaupapa, Molokai

2007 MHI Birth Record

Island	Location	Mom ID	Pup ID	Pup Sex	Birth Date	Wean Date	Notes
Oahu	Rabbit Island	RS00	RB12	Female	4/10	5/29	The first pup born of 2007. Mom was born and tagged on Midway Atoll in 1992. She made her way down to the MHI in 2000 and has given birth to 4 pups.
Kauai	NE coast	RH58	RB00	Female	4/21-4/28	5/29	This is the second pup for this mother. Mom was born in 2000 on Kauai. She spends most of her time on Oahu, but returns to Kauai to pup. The pup has a large natural bleach on its left flank.
Kauai	NE coast	unk		Female	6/1	died	This was an unknown mother who abandoned her pup. The pup did not survive
Kauai	Napali Coast	RK06		unk	6/4	Still nursing	This mom was first identified as an adult in 2002 on Kauai. She appears to prefer to pup in remote locations along the Napali Coast.
Molokai	Kalaupapa	R011	RB02	Male	4/13	6/2-6/3	This mom has been seen on Molokai, Maui and Lanai. This is her 5th pup since her first confirmed pup in 2001
Molokai	Kalaupapa	R017	RB06	Female	4/14-4/15	6/2-6/3	This is the 2nd confirmed pup for this mom. The pup has a small natural bleach on the top of its head.
Molokai	Kalaupapa	RY30	RB10	Male	4/17	6/2-6/3	Kalaupapa born mom
Molokai	Kalaupapa	RH44	RB08	Female	4/24	5/26-6/1	This is the mom's first pup! RH44 was born on Kauai in 2000. She has been seen on all of the islands. She has a prominent half moon scar on the right side of her head.
Molokai	Kalaupapa	RQ21	RB04	Female	4/25	6/4-6/8	Kalaupapa born mom

RS00 Pupping Event on Rabbit Island

DB Dunlap, Oahu Hawaiian Monk seal Volunteer

“Ewa Girl” (RS00), who is a regular at Hanauma Bay during the year, returned to Rabbit Island, as a very pregnant female on Friday, April 6, 2007. She pupped there in 2005. She skipped a year in 2006, so this means that she is not on a set timeline to have her next one. Though a regular user of Rabbit Island, she had not been there since the end of December 2006. Since I'd known she was pregnant and because she has previously given birth there (“Buster” 2005), I suspected that she had chosen Rabbit Island once again. Sure enough at 10:19 a.m. on April 10, 2007, as I was watching with a 60X Nikon Spotting Scope, from Makai Research Pier, she gave birth to the first pup of the season, right before my very eyes.

Throughout the pup's rearing process of 49 days, mom and pup appeared perfectly normal, and daily growth, both physically and mentally, are apparent. The pup showed an independent streak early on, first moving away from mom by 3 ft and then 15-20 ft toward the end of the first week. Ewa Girl has done nothing to prevent the behavior, but rather she watched the pup's movements closely. After a week was the first observed movement into the water for the pair. The stay was only 15 minutes, and Ewa Girl was never deep enough to get submerged. The pup was getting a good workout. Day by day, the pup moved out a little further, but still within the off shore rocks that provided a bit of a barrier to the wave action. Mom actually took the pup out to those rocks, and climbed up onto the rocks which were just a bit underwater. The pup quickly “got worked” by the waves, and was rolled back into the protected area. Mom and pup worked their way back to the beach for a feed. This water session was approximately 20 minutes.

During the time of rearing there had been up to seven other animals on the island during this period. Though a few of the young males have gotten curious and tried to get a closer look, a few barks from mom at about 15 ft never fail to bring these episodes to an end. Seems the seals respect the barks from a mother seal and get the idea. Humans are not as smart as noted by the picture below of the man who got too close to the mom and pup.

Another Monk Seal Gillnet Entanglement



On May 27, 2007, another monk seal was discovered entangled. NOAA Fisheries conducted a necropsy on an adult male Hawaiian monk seal after it was reported entangled in a lay gillnet. Although the animal did not have tags it was identified by its markings as an adult male that was regularly sighted in the Kaena Point area. The approximately 450 lb male was first sighted on October 2006, and then was not seen again until recently.

DLNR Conservation Officers responded to a report of a dead Hawaiian monk seal entangled in an unattended lay gillnet in the waters off Kaena Point.

Responding officers located the remains but were challenged by the presence of another monk seal that refused to leave the side of the dead seal, causing concern for the safety of the officers. After the officers successfully brought the dead animal ashore, the second monk seal hauled out alongside the dead seal and remained there barking loudly at people as they approached. A third seal was sighted in the water but did not come on the beach.

The seal was transported to a facility where Dr. Robert Braun, NOAA Fisheries contract veterinarian, conducted a necropsy on Monday morning. Dr Braun reported, “Although the results are still preliminary,

the findings are consistent with a drowning.” The seal appeared to be in excellent condition. The body was tightly wrapped in a net with no other significant findings.

Recently passed lay gillnet regulations mandate that nets not exceed 125’ in length. The nets must be anchored, floated on both ends, and have registration numbers attached to it. Within a 24 hour period, a net can remain in the water for no more than a four hour period. After the first two hours the net must be physically checked and after four hours the net must be removed. Nets must be attended and can only be set during daylight hours.

Anyone with information on any illegal or unattended nets can report it anonymously by calling the DLNR Enforcement Hotline at 643-DLNR. To report an entangled or otherwise injured seal, call the NOAA Marine Mammal Hotline at 888-256-9840.

Hawaiian Monk Seal Hookings



Seal hooking on Kalaupapa 6/29/07 dehooked by National Park Service. Another dehooking took place on 8/8/07.



Seal hooking on 6/0707 on the Big Island. When dehooking was attempted the hook circle hook. fell out on its own because it was a barbless circle hook.



Seal hooked on Kauai dehooked by Kauai Monk Seal Program at Poipu on June 13th. The hook was located on the right side of the seal's face.

Barbless Circle Hooks Can Make a Difference

Kurt Kawamoto, PIFSC

Recently, a monk seal was able to shed a barbless hook from its mouth without intervention from researchers; demonstrating that barbless circle hooks can make a difference. Kurt Kawamoto (Fishery Monitoring and Analysis Program) and John Henderson (Protected Species Division) along with Shawn Murakawa (Marine Turtle Research Program) have joined together to interact, communicate, and work with recreational shorefishermen on the use of barbless circle hooks during their fishing activities. The program is in its third year and has made progress every year. The specially created barbless circle hook category (like the specially created tag and release category) when incorporated into public tournament formats has seen increased participation annually. Inclusion in the largest public shorecasting tournaments like the Tokunaga Ulua Challenge and Atlapac Weighmaster Tournament have brought the efforts into the public eye such that fishermen are starting to use the barbless circle hooks outside the tournament formats more frequently. The concept has been embraced by leaders in the fishing community who have also put some of their hard earned resources behind it. Mike Tokunaga, of the well known Hilo tackle shop S. Tokunaga Store, featured his daughter Mykala in a 2 minute TV spot (Mykala's Fishing Tips) which promoted the use of barbless circle hooks. The spot ran on a local Island of Hawaii station every day for a month in 2006. Mykala's Fishing Tips also highlighted the 117 lb ulua that was caught on a barbless circle hook that was given away in 2005 by Kawamoto and Mitsuyasu (Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council) at the Parks and Recreation's Ohana Fishing Tournament weigh in.

Starter packs of barbless hooks are freely distributed at various tournaments and upon request to any interested individuals or organizations by NOAA Fisheries. Requests have been received from fishing clubs, tournaments, teachers, fishermen, agencies, etc. Over the last three years, the “give away hook” count is somewhere near 35,000. Outreach has been conducted at tournaments on the Island of Hawaii, Oahu, and Kauai and through the State Ulua Tagging Project at different venues on the Island of Hawaii and Molokai. Additionally, outreach to fishing tackle sellers and distributors have been conducted at the invitation of Izuo Brothers Ltd. who host the largest fishing tackle products show in Hawaii. Two of the largest public tournaments in the State now have a barbless circle hook competition within the larger tournament itself.

Fishermen are making efforts to fish responsibly and are aware that interactions with marine mammals happen occasionally. They also know that things can be done to reduce post-hooking injury that will not appreciably affect the fishing activity itself. NOAA Fisheries has asked fishermen to voluntarily use barbless circle hooks when they see seals and turtles in the immediate area or when they fish areas that have been known to have high levels of interactions in the past. Although the use of barbless hooks are not necessary in the vast majority of fishing areas because chances of interactions are so low, these barbless hooks are another tool in our fisheries management tackle box.

Cetacean Strandings/ Entanglements/ Collisions

Pilot Whale Stranding on Laysan

Erin S. Green, HPU

On February 28, 2007, Nicholas Metheny of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) discovered a dead pilot whale on a Laysan Island beach in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). The animal was seven miles from the team’s base camp, but despite this, they were able to take photos, collect samples to be sent back to Honolulu and bury bones for later recovery and analysis. The blubber sample was sent from Laysan Island back to Honolulu via the MV Searcher, and was received by the HPU Marine Mammal Stranding Team. The blubber and skin sample will be sent to the mainland for DNA analysis and possibly stable isotope analysis; the bones will be recovered later. The teeth will be used to age the animal and eventual disposition of the skull will be at the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institution. Special thanks to Brenda Becker, PIFSC, and Cynthia Rehkemper, USFWS, for coordinating the collection and transport of the samples.

Floating Whale Carcass of Hilo

Melissa Netze, UH Hilo Marine Mammal Response Network (MMRN)



A floating mass of deteriorated whale off Hilo, HI with at least 3 large tiger sharks feeding upon it.

On the morning of March 16, 2007, a dead whale was reported floating roughly one mile off Honoli`i, a popular surf beach on the Island of Hawaii. I confirmed the report at 8:30 AM as we visually spotted the whale off Honoli`i beach, approximately four miles north of Hilo. Between 8:30-9:30 a.m., Trisha Atwood (MMRN volunteer), and I kept visual contact with the carcass. At 10:30 a.m., we boarded the USCG Cutter Kiska and headed out to locate the whale carcass. It took about 10 minutes to spot the whale as it had drifted south since the morning report. The body of the whale was extremely decomposed and much of the skeleton was visible (including its skull and vertebrae). There was no skin remaining, and therefore, it was impossible to determine the cause of death from gross examination. However, we were able to collect tissue from the carcass for subsequent genetic identification. There were several sharks surrounding the whale carcass (mainly tiger sharks) ranging in length from approximately 5 – 15 ft. Due to the state of decomposition and the number of sharks present, it was deemed unsafe to attempt towing the carcass. Once samples had been collected and other boats had been cleared from the area, one of the Coast Guard officers took multiple shots at the whale with the intention of sinking it, which was unsuccessful. It was decided that due to the direction that the carcass was drifting, the best course of action would be to closely monitor its movement and not take further action unless it appeared that the whale was drifting towards shore. Beaches were carefully monitored over the following week to ensure that the carcass did not float back to shore, which it did not.

Pygmy Sperm Whale Stranding on Lanai
Report by Dr. Kristi West, Hawaii Pacific University
Principle Investigator, Marine Mammal Response Program.

Kogia breviceps (Pygmy sperm whale) - Adult female
Lanai
Date Sighted: April 15th, 2007
Date of Necropsy: April 16th, 2007

Stranding response team:
Mike Coelho, DOCARE (DLNR), Maui County (Lanai)
Dr. Kristi West (Hawaii Pacific University)
Dr. Andrew Brittain (Hawaii Pacific University)
Luke Hofacker (Volunteer)
Erin Green (University of Hawaii student)

Carcass Condition:

This carcass was found on the island of Lanai at 20°55.38 N, 156°57.25 W. The animal was in a state of moderate to advanced decomposition which prevented a thorough necropsy from being conducted on site. Please see photos below of the carcass which were taken prior to sample collection.



External Examination:

An external examination was not conducted due to the state of decomposition. It was not possible to move the animal due to weight limitations.

Morphometrics:

A straight length measurement was obtained, and the length of the animal was 315 cm. No other measurements were obtained due to the state of decomposition. The dorsal fin height was estimated at 12 cm, but this is only an estimate due to the deterioration of the fin. The placement and height of the dorsal fin relative to the total length of the individual aid in distinguishing between *Kogia breviceps* and *Kogia sima*. This individual was identified as a pygmy sperm whale (*Kogia breviceps*) because of its large size, placement of the dorsal fin and a dorsal fin height that was less than 5% of the total body length.

Internal Examination:



It was not possible to conduct an internal examination due to the deterioration of tissue. The stomach was located and removed intact to allow for an evaluation of stomach contents. Stomach contents have now been removed and shipped to Dr. Robin Baird for identification by William Walker. Shrimp remains and large squid beaks (>10) were collected. See photo of stomach contents at left.

A full-term fetus was surprisingly located

within the abdominal cavity of this individual. The fetus was in remarkably good condition despite the decompositional state of the mother. The fetus is now frozen but will likely be perfused to ensure the long-term preservation of this specimen. It is believed that this represents the largest fetus reported for the species *Kogia breviceps* at an estimated length of 130 cm and weight of 65 kg. See photo of fetus at left.



Other Sample Collections:

Three skin samples were collected and frozen to allow for DNA analysis. Skin samples will be distributed to Dr. Susan Chivers at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center. Skin samples will also be sent to Dr. Jason Turner at the UH at Hilo for stable isotope analyses. The skull was also collected, is currently frozen and will be distributed to Dr. Heather Koopman. Eventual disposition of the skull will be at the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institution.

Carcass Disposition:

With the exception of the collected samples, the carcass was buried. The burial site is clearly marked with a stake and debris tied to the mesh bags that contain the skeleton near the stranding site.

Maui Pygmy Sperm Whale Stranding

Nicole Davis, Maui Marine Mammal Response Program

A Pygmy Sperm whale was reported to the NOAA hotline at around 6:30 a.m. of April 25, 2007. The Maui County Police Department was on scene for public safety and were essential in coordinating the carcass removal. The Maui County Department of Parks and Recreation Park Rangers provided on site support.

Maui County Public Works and Environmental Management Department were a major asset. The Highways Division (Wailuku) provided equipment and crew for carcass removal. The Solid Waste Division (Central Landfill) arranged for disposal. State DLNR DOCARE provided exceptional logistical, and all-around support for the entire day and the following morning. State DLNR DOFAW Forestry workers were an incredible help with equipment support, transportation, supplies and facilities. State DLNR DOFAW NARS Rangers were an extraordinary help in every way, including first and final response, logistics and documentation. NOAA HIHWNMS was ready to assist at just a moments notice. NOAA PIRO on Oahu provided logistical support, public relations and immediate transportation of the two veterinarians to Maui to assess the whale. HPU was responsible for the necropsy and results on the tissue samples collected are still pending. And finally, it was an honor to have the Hawaiian cultural resource specialist from KIRC providing us with the knowledge of the significance of this event to Hawaiian culture and guiding us in the proper and culturally respectful ways to handle the whale.

Without the cooperation, participation and willingness to assist by everyone, we would not have had such a high level of efficiency and ultimate success in removing the carcass and getting the necropsy done in a timely manner.



Maui pygmy sperm whale Stranding event.

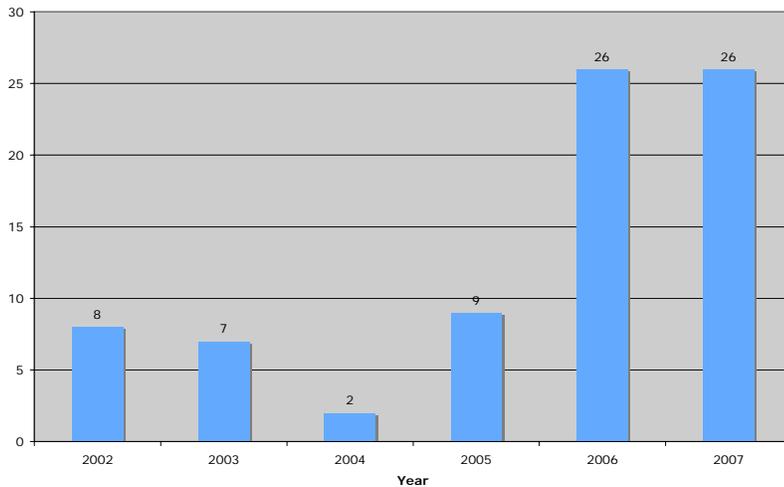
Whale Entanglements and Vessel Collisions

Humpback Whale Entanglements

Ed Lyman, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

The 2007 season was another busy season for the Hawaiian Islands Disentanglement Network. The community-based Network, coordinated by David Mattila and Ed Lyman of the HIHWNMS, works under and receives authorization from NOAA PIRO Marine Mammal Response Network (PIRO), and NOAA Fisheries' Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP; permit # 932-1489-08) respectively. The network was formed in an attempt to free endangered humpbacks and other marine animals from life-threatening entanglements and, at the same time, to gather valuable information that will help mitigate the issue of marine debris and entanglement in the future.

During this last whale season (November 1, 2006 – April 30, 2007) the Network received 57 reports of distressed animals, 26 of these involving entanglement. The Network carried out 30 responses, 14 of them to entangled animals. By the end of the season, the Network confirmed that these reports represented at least 7 confirmed entangled humpbacks and 2 entangled dolphins. The first report was received on November 1, 2006, and was the earliest report of an entangled whale received by the Network since its inception back in 2002. The animal was a humpback reported entangled off of Oahu's Barber's Point.



Fortunately, and just as a Network response team from Oahu was getting underway aboard a USCG vessel, the animal was observed by the reporting vessel to be freeing itself. It was possible that the animal was in fact not entangled, but rather just playing with the gear. The last confirmed entanglement report of the season was March 17, 2007, of a humpback off Honolua Bay, Maui.

In regard to response to the seven confirmed entangled humpbacks, two animals were not responded to due to time-of-day constraints and the remoteness of the animal's position. One of the whales was not relocated after an extensive search, and four were disentangled. David Schofield (PIRO) and the USCG attempted to disentangle one of the dolphins, a spinner dolphin reported off Waikiki Beach, but after considerable and valiant efforts, they were unsuccessful. The disentangling of small cetaceans requires a different strategy and set of tools than what we use for freeing large cetaceans. In addition to this event, the USCG assisted with three other disentangling responses and was instrumental in many of this year's rescue efforts.

Of the four humpbacks freed of entangling gear, two were partially disentangled, while the other two were completely freed of all gear. The two partial disentangles also represented animals that had been already severely compromised by their entanglement. Both animals were emaciated and had large numbers of cyamid amphipods or whale lice on their bodies. Whale lice feed on the dead tissue sloughing off the animal and are a reliable indicator that all is not well. Fortunately, the two animals that were freed of all gear, were much healthier and now have a better chance of surviving their ordeal.



Left: From forward to aft, David Mattila, Alastair Hebard and Ed Lyman of HIHWNMS trying to free a humpback of gear. *Right:* David Mattila and Ed Lyman of HIHWNMS, along with Russell Sparks of DAR attempt to free an entangled humpback.

Of the gear removed from the animals this season, one set of represented crab/cod trap gear from Kodiak, Alaska. This is interesting in that one of the whales disentangled last season also had crab/cod trap gear set off Kodiak, Alaska. This type of gear involves heavy lines, approximately 1" in diameter, and pots or traps that can weigh over 700 lbs. It is a testament to the animal's strength that they can haul even portions of this gear some 2500 nm or more from Kodiak, Alaska and other high latitude feeding areas to Hawaii's waters. Another set of gear is believed to also represent crab/ cod trap gear from Alaska, but its exact origin is unknown. All that is known presently about the other gear removed from the disentangled animals is that

they were, at least in part, buoy lines: the vertical lines that mark a piece of gear on the bottom and that allow for it to be haul to the surface. While some of the gear recently removed from entangled animals has come from higher latitudes, humpbacks here in Hawaii have also gotten entangled in gear that was set locally. Essentially, wherever gear and whales are found together there is a threat of entanglement.

In addition to the large number of reports and successful responses, the season was unique in several other ways. It marked the first time that satellite tags were used to track entangled whales in Hawaii. Two of the entangled humpbacks were tagged with Argos-based satellite transmitters. One of the transmitter packages, attached to an entangled humpback off the Big Island by Justin Viezbicke, the Hawaii Island



Marine Conservation Coordinator, was instrumental in relocating the animal and allowing the team to disentangle it. Also noteworthy, was that five network members got hands-on experience disentangling whales this season. Russell Sparks and Brent Carmen of the state of Hawaii’s Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR), Justin Viezbicke of Hawaii’s Department of Land and Natural resources (DLNR)/ HIHWNMS, David Schofield of PIRO, and Alastair Hebard of HIHWNMS all assisted directly with disentanglement efforts.

Overall the Network was very successful in its disentanglement efforts this year, and much of the credit should go to the boating community. Almost all the entanglements this season were reported by commercial operations: dive boats, whale watches, tour boats. Some of these operators stood by for many hours and even cancelled trips until relieved or help for the animal could arrive. In many ways, they made the difference in what really is a community-based response network.

Left: Justin Viezbicke of DLNR and HIHWNMS pulling up to an entangled humpback.

Vessel Collisions with Whales Reported for 2006/2007 Season

David Schofield, NOAA Pacific Islands Regional Office

This past whale season saw an increased number of vessel collisions over last year. And the trend appears to be increasing. Of the 8 collisions, 3 were known to cause injury. Below is a table of the collisions and an image of the last collision reported in the season with a rather fresh injury shown.

Year	Month	Date	Location	Island	Initial Live Animal Disposition
2006	12	28	outside Salt Pond Beach Park	Kauai	Swam away after collision
2006	12	29	Outside Lahaina Harbor	Maui	Left at site
2006	12	30	Outside Lahaina Harbor	Maui	injured
2007	02	07	2.5 mi Outside Lahaina Harbor	Maui	U
2007	02	13	Off Olowalu	Maui	injured
2007	03	08	1 nm SW of Big Beach	Maui	U
2007	04	01	~1 mile south of Nohili Point	Kauai	U
2007	04	13	1.5 nm off Club Lanai	Lanai	injured



4-13-07 Humpback whale shortly after the vessel strike off Lanai. NOAA permit number 932-1489-08

Network News

Melissa Netze and Dr. Jason Turner, UH at Hilo MMRN on the Big Island

The Hilo chapter of the MMRN was initiated in December 2006, and now has more than 25 volunteers. Meetings are held regularly where volunteers and community members gather to hear experts present their research on Hawaii's marine mammals. The volunteers of Hilo's MMRN have responded to many sightings of our local seal (RO15), collected data and tracked her movements. In addition, volunteers have participated in the state-wide Hawaiian monk seal count, the first annual Ocean Day, and have responded to a dead whale event where they were asked to collect tissue samples. Upcoming events include continued tracking of RO15, and a potential monk seal pupping event.

Erin S. Green, Hawai'i Pacific University Marine Mammal Response Program

The MHI stranding response team has been working for many months to secure the use of UH Small Animal Facility as its site for conducting necropsies and we're proud to announce that we're up and running! Our brand new stainless steel necropsy table has been delivered, we've secured the proper permissions and training, and the facility is ideal to fit the program's needs. We're very excited about the joint venture between Hawaii Pacific University and the University of Hawaii to share resources and provide the best stranding response while providing students at both universities the opportunity to grow and learn through hands on experience.

Responder Profile

Mahalo goes out to all the volunteers who work tirelessly within the **Pacific Islands Marine Mammal Response Network**.



Kathy Brown is a retired middle school teacher and member of the Monk Seal Response Team who has lived on Oahu for two years. After learning about children bothering monk seals on the beach, she volunteered to create a monk seal curriculum integrated with Hawaii state science standards. It encourages students to be a hero or heroine by learning about monk seals and then educating parents and others about the appropriate behavior around these endangered mammals. Currently in draft form, the Endangered Hawaiian Monk Seal Program is aimed primarily at the 4th - 7th grade curriculum, and has been tested with 100 seventh graders headed on a nature walk to Kaena Point. The free CD

includes teacher presentation notes, a Powerpoint slide presentation, classroom posters, suggested activities, and a list of related internet web sites. It is designed for teachers to use on their own or by inviting Kathy as a guest speaker. Initial reaction to the curriculum has thus far been positive, and Kathy hopes that more widespread use can be made in the 2007/2008 school year. She thinks that through this and other curricula young students will develop a lifelong appreciation of Hawaiian marine life and learn how

to care for endangered species.

An Army wife, Kathy earned a M.Ed. from the University of Washington and taught in Okinawa, Germany, Kentucky, New York, and California before she and her husband retired to Hawaii. They locate seals on leeward Oahu beaches and photograph them in addition to participating in local whale counts.

[Headquarters News](#)

[Environmental Impact Statement \(EIS\) on the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program \(MMHSRP\)](#)

Currently the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program under which the Pacific Islands Region responds to strandings is under review for more information check out the following website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/eis.htm>

[Prescott Grant](#)

House Passes Marine Mammal Stranding Legislation: On March 19, 2007, under Suspension of the Rules, the House by voice vote extended the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program. The program was first authorized in 2000 to address the funding needs of facilities assisting the NOAA Fisheries with the recovery and rehabilitation of stranded marine mammals. The Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Act Amendments (HR 1006) was introduced on February 13, 2007, by the House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Minority Member Don Young (R-AK).

"This program has been very successful in supporting facilities around the nation to rehabilitate marine mammals and return many of them to the wild," Rep. Young said. "For those animals that cannot be returned to the wild, due to illness or other factors, the facilities have taken on the responsibility of caring for those marine mammals."

2008 Prescott Grant proposals are being excepted until October 1st, 2007
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/prescott/proposals/solicitation.htm>

Images from the Field



Left: Poipu Beach with Seals and People in Close Proximity.

Right: Man gets too close to a mother and pup pair on Oahu.



Left: Mom and Pup discovered during the 1st annual seal count on Kauai near a pile of marine debris.



Seal: "Hey, mind if I use your beach...I hear they have a pretty good protection program for us "endangered types"? Turtle: "Yea...these volunteers are the best!"

Hawaiian monk seal (5AY) and a green turtle (L-1) "hailed out" together on the beach of Laniakea, Oahu - 5/23/07. (Photo: Joanne Pettigrew, volunteer for the *Honu Guardians*)