



# HMMA Waves

You Can Help Save A Species | Support Hawaii's Endangered Marine Mammals

## Making a difference

The Hawaiian monk seal is one of the most endangered marine animals in the world. In 2015, there were only about 1,300 left.

Hawaii Marine Mammal Alliance (HMMA) is a nonprofit group dedicated to the preservation, recovery and stewardship of the state's marine mammals and coastal ecosystem.

Our field teams patrol shorelines, respond to reports of marine mammal activity, and contribute vital information for research. Our responders and approved animal intervention activities assist government partners such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with animal rescue, medical care, rehabilitation and release. Our staff and volunteers also provide important educational outreach to the public to foster stewardship of endangered marine mammals by all Hawaii residents and visitors.

One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, "What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?"

—Rachel Carson (1907-64)  
American conservationist



Ka'ale, a one-month-old monk seal, rests on Mokuleia Beach on Oahu's North Shore. HMMA staff and volunteers kept beachgoers and pets a safe distance from his resting area daily until early September, when he matured enough to expand his habitat. Photo by Robyn Squire

## Obama protects home of 1,000 Hawaiian monk seals

Just before his visit to Oahu in August for the International Union for Conservation of Nature's World Conservation Congress, President Barack Obama created the world's largest protected marine area. He expanded the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaii Islands to 582,578 square miles. This more than quadrupled the monument that President George W. Bush created in 2006 and further protects the area from commercial fishing and mining.

*Continued on page 2*

HMMA is always recruiting volunteers! Go to [monkseals.org](http://monkseals.org) to find out more.



## Monk seal facts & stats

- The Hawaiian monk seal is native to Hawaii and lives only in its waters.
- Only about 250 live in the main islands of Niihau, Kauai, Oahu, Molokai, Maui, Lanai, Kahoolawe and Hawaii Island.
- It's the state mammal of Hawaii.
- Monk seals are named for the folds of skin at their neck that look like a monk's hood and because of their solitary nature.
- Hawaiian monk seals have lived in the waters and on the coastlines of Hawaii for an estimated 3-10 million years.

## Obama, continued

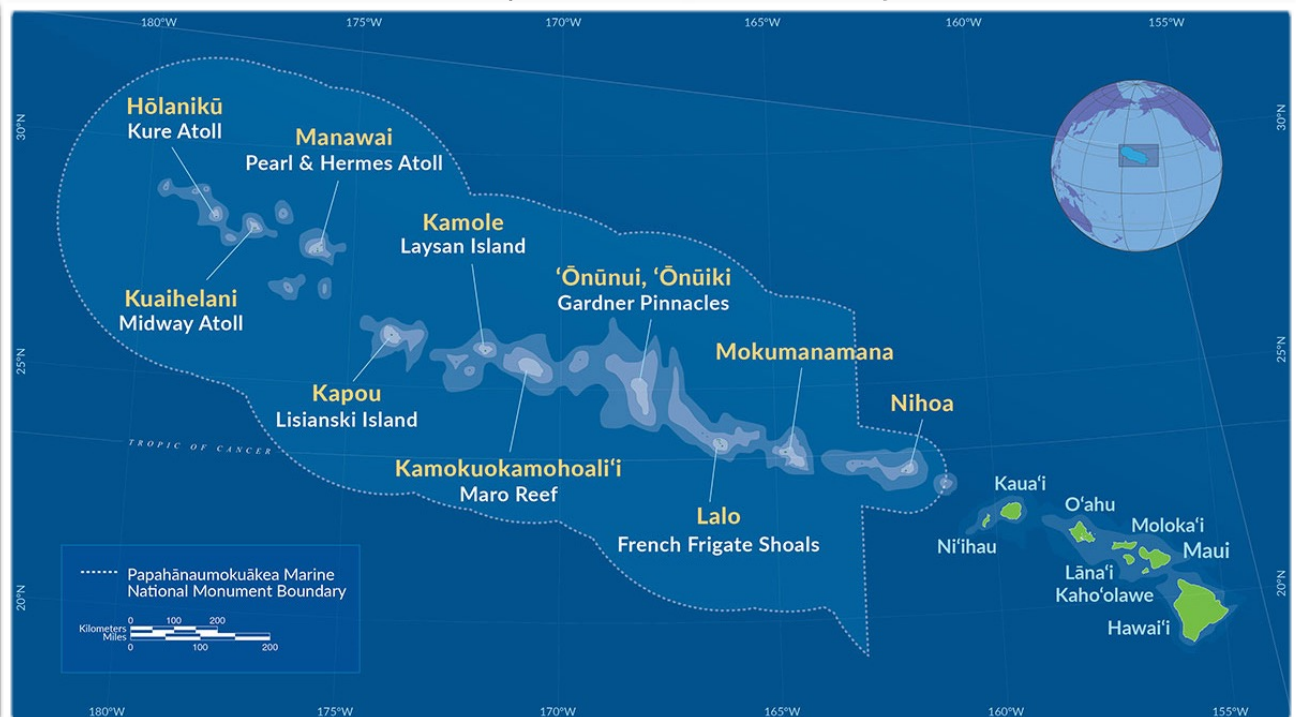
“The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are home to one of the most diverse and threatened

ecosystems on the planet and a sacred place for the Native Hawaiian community,” U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell said in a statement. “President Obama’s expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument will permanently protect pristine coral reefs, deep sea marine habitats and important cultural and historic resources for the benefit of current and future generations.”

About 1,000 Hawaiian monk seals live in the Northwestern Hawaii Islands, as well as endangered whales and sea turtles. The diverse reef ecosystem has more than 7,000 marine species.

Hawaiian Senator Brian Schatz, who formally proposed the expansion of the monument to President Obama in June, lauded the decision. “This is one of the most important actions an American president has ever taken for the health of the oceans,” he said in a statement.

On Aug. 26, 2016, President Obama signed a proclamation expanding the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. The expanded boundaries make it the largest protected area on the planet at 582,578 square miles (1,508,870 km<sup>2</sup>), nearly the size of the Gulf of Mexico.



# How We're Hurting Endangered Monk Seals

This North Shore monk seal mom had a tough week fighting off things that could harm her weeks-old pup.

By Nathan Eagle, *Civil Beat*

*This article first appeared July 19, 2016, on CivilBeat.org. Used with permission.*

Nihoa had a bad week.

First it was a startling mylar balloon that was blowing down the beach on Oahu's North Shore. Then a 25-foot boat unexpectedly came ashore after breaking its mooring. To top it off, she had to bite an off-leash dog in the butt to protect her pup, who's just a few weeks old.

Scientists know this 400-pound critically endangered monk seal as R912, but volunteers with the [Hawaii Marine Mammal Alliance](#) fondly call her Nihoa. They ask that her specific location not be divulged.

Volunteers and scientists alike are worried that all of these preventable human interactions may cause her to abandon her pup. There are only about 1,300 monk seals left in the world.

"This past week was a pretty good snapshot in time of what these animals face," said David Schofield, who coordinates the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's [Protected Resources Division](#).

Monk seal mothers generally rear their pups for just six to seven weeks before sending them off on their own. They spend these days nursing and teaching them life skills, like how to forage for food.



Photo by Anthony Quintano

"This is a very important time," Schofield said.

Jon Gelman is president of the nonprofit Hawaii Marine Mammal Alliance, which includes a team of roughly 70 volunteers on Oahu who help monitor the seals and report incidents to NOAA.

On a recent Friday morning, Gelman was checking up on Nihoa along with Don Porter, who has volunteered for the alliance for a decade and serves as a board member.

"These are very dedicated, specially trained folks who spend many hours a day helping these animals," Gelman said, adding that [more volunteers are sought](#).

The volunteers don't enforce laws – that's left to state and federal officers – but they do work to educate the public about preventable disturbances and other aspects of the seals' behavior.

Schofield said it's important for people to consider how their decisions and actions can impact endangered species, whether it's releasing balloons or lanterns into the air, not properly anchoring a boat or letting dogs roam free in areas known to have monk seals. In the case of dogs, it's as much as about protecting pets as seals.

"These are things you can control," he said.

Nihoa appeared in good shape during the visit. She took her pup through a small shore break, fended off an interested male monk seal and then hauled out on the beach to nurse.

*Editor's note: Sadly, on September 23, Nihoa was found dead on Mokuleia Beach. NOAA is performing tests to determine the cause of death.*

Support the work of HMMA by going to [monkseals.org](#) and clicking on "Donate Now."



## HMMA Impact

These metrics show the impact we've made this year. They're from May 23, the start of our 3-year grant from NOAA, and are estimated until Sept. 30.

- ✦ Hawaiian monk seal sightings reported: 782
- ✦ Responses dispatched to sightings: 524
- ✦ Volunteers engaged in responses: 892
- ✦ Volunteer miles driven: 11,028
- ✦ Interactions with members of the public on responses: 7,260
- ✦ School outreach: 34 classroom presentations to 791 students and adults
- ✦ Member of the public engaged with community outreach: 800+ at Sea Life Park over 4 days, plus 500+ during the annual Ocean Fest at Turtle Bay Resort in June
- ✦ Volunteer hours: 4,838

## Acknowledgements

**HMMA President:** Jon Gelman

**Newsletter Editor:**  
Robyn Squire

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# Five ways you can help

Hawaii Marine Mammal Alliance counts on the generous support of people like you. Get involved and make a difference today!

## 1. Donate

You can make a one-time or recurring tax-deductible donation at [monkseals.org](http://monkseals.org). Donations help us...

- Offset the costs of equipment, staff expenses, gasoline, tools, online systems and more.
- Produce the materials and purchase equipment used in education and outreach.
- Create a revenue base to pursue matching funds from government agencies and private foundations.
- Develop fundraising campaigns and special awareness events.

## 2. Adopt a monk seal

For \$150 a year, you get an HMMA "You Can Help Save A Species" T-shirt; photos of your adopted Hawaiian monk seal to use as your computer desktop, phone screen and more; plus the satisfaction of helping one of three popular seals who are "VIPs" on Oahu and Kauai (pictured below).

## 3. Join as a member

There are three levels of annual membership, ranging from \$50 to \$300. At each level you get thank-you gifts.

## 4. Volunteer some time

Our volunteers are at the core of our work, assisting with field response, dispatch, education, outreach, fundraising and corporate partnership. Sign up today at [monkseals.org](http://monkseals.org)!

## 5. Become a corporate sponsor or partner

Whether it's with matching donations, a grant, sponsorship or a contribution of supplies or equipment, your company can help in our cause and get public recognition. Please email [info@monkseals.org](mailto:info@monkseals.org).

## Contact Us!

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Benny



Honey Girl



Holokai (Sea Farer)