Hawaiian Monk Seal Critical Habitat

The Hawaiian monk seal is one of the rarest marine mammals in the world. Part of the "true seal" family (Phocidae), they are one of only two remaining monk seal species. The other is the Mediterranean monk seal. A third monk seal species--the Caribbean monk seal--is extinct (gone forever). Hawaiian monk seals are considered a "living fossil" because they have remained unchanged for 15 million years.

The Hawaiian monk seal has been endangered since 1976! In 2012 there were only 1153 Hawaiian Monk Seals left in the world. 1015 of the seals live in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands and 138 live in the main Hawaiian Islands. The 2010 annual Monk seal count in the main Hawaiian Islands found 13 monk seals on Oahu, zero on Maui, one on Big Island and 7 on Kauai.

**Critical habitat**

The majority of monk seals live in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI), are the geologically oldest and smallest islands of the Hawaiian Archipelago. They extend from the island of Nihoa to Kure Atoll in the northwest.

Today the area is known as Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. In 2010, Papahānaumokuākea was named a World Heritage Site, becoming the only location in the United States to be listed for cultural and natural reasons.

The continuing decline in the NWHI monk seal population is a primary concern. Ongoing efforts focus conservation resources to address factors detrimental to survival and which foster the recovery of the Hawaiian monk seal.

Unfortunately, on the Island of Kauai monk seals are being killed by humans. In 2014, a 6 month old female seal was found dead from blunt force trauma at a beach in Anahola. In 2009 a 78 year old man killed a pregnant monk seal on Kauai’s North Shor. Killing a monk seal is a felony and carries a penalty of up to five years in prison and up to $50,000 in fines. Anyone having information related to these deaths should call the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement at 1 (855) DLNR-TIP or 643-DLNR. (There is a 5,000 reward for any information leading to a conviction)

**Hawaiian Monk Seal Locations and Populations 2012**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Location** | **Population Size** | | Kure Atoll | 104 | | Midway Atoll | 40 | | Pearl and Hermes Atoll | 160 | | Lisianski Island | 161 | | Laysan Island | 223 | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | French Frigate Shoals | 177 | | Mokumanamana (Necker) Island | 50 | | Nihoa Island | 103 | | Main Hawaiian Islands | 138 | | Total | 1,153 | |