



Network News

Rescuing Stranded Marine Mammals



A Note from the Staff: We are deep in the heart of ice seal season right now, which got off to a fast start during the month of January and has continued through February. We have sent eight seals to rehabilitation, five juvenile harp seals and three gray seal pups. Last week we had a mass stranding of eight Atlantic White Sided Dolphins in Wellfleet. Four animals were found dead, four were found alive, one of which was euthanized due to poor health. The remaining three were deemed in good health and successfully relocated and released at Herring Cove in Provincetown! The one dolphin affixed with a satellite tag is now out in the Great South Channel, just where he should be! We extend a very warm thank you to all the volunteers who have responded for us thus far in 2005, and an advance thank you to all those volunteers whose phones will ring in the next few busy months.

When we are not keeping up with the animals, we are trying to keep up with all of you! Please bear with us as we reorganize our volunteer program. One of our biggest challenges is maintaining accurate volunteer email and call lists. Filling out and returning the "Volunteer Contact Info Update" form will not only let us know you are still interested in being an active volunteer, but it will ensure that we will be able to contact you when necessary.

Harbor Seal on Her Way to Health: CCSN04-188Pv

On October 1st, 2004, the team at the Cape Cod Stranding Network received a phone call from the rangers at Sandy Neck Beach in Barnstable, MA. The time was 11:50am. A seal was stranded between two of the beach trails and was said to have many large lesions, which were bleeding.

Sarah Herzig, Assistant Stranding Coordinator, and Betty Lentell, former Assistant Stranding Coordinator, went to assess the situation. Upon external examination, it was determined that this seal was a juvenile female harbor seal, *Phoca vitulina*. The seal was alert and responsive, however she was slightly thin. She had large external lesions along her underside and on her flippers, as well as smaller lesions along her entire body surface. There was also a large ulcerated and bleeding lesion on her lower right jaw, and her nose was bleeding. Her eyes were wet and her respirations were normal. Sarah and Betty determined that the seal was a good candidate for rehabilitation. The seal was collected and transported

to the University of New England Marine Animal Rehabilitation Center, located in Biddeford, Maine.

The harbor seal arrived at the rehabilitation center later that day. After further examination, it was found that the seal had parasites. She was immediately treated to combat the parasites and infection. Today, this seal still receives care at the University of New England. She has gained weight and is eating on her own. She shares her living space with a male harp seal, and is competing well with him for food. To get more updates on CCSN animals in rehabilitation at UNE, visit their website: www.une.edu and go to "marine science center."



CCSN04-188Pv 10/01/04



Doing better today at UNE

Time Flew By: 2004, The Second Busiest Harp Seal Year in CCSN History

Stranding Response

- 233 stranded animals required intervention by CCSN staff or volunteers
- The majority of strandings involved pinnipeds (170) and the remaining 63 involved stranded cetaceans

Seasonality

- Pinniped strandings peaked in February (23) and March (41)
- Cetacean strandings peaked in April (21)

Disposition

- 62 marine mammals stranded alive and 171 were found dead
- Evidence of Human Interaction was found in 20 of these stranded animals
- Of the 62 live animal strandings, 5 were released, 23 died, 12 were euthanized, and 22 were placed in rehabilitation facilities. 2004 was the most successful year for placement of animals in rehabilitation facilities!

Spread The Word: If you find a stranded, injured, or dead marine mammal in the Cape Cod region please call:
Cape Cod Stranding Network Hotline (508) 743-9548.

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February

2005

'tis the Season for Ice Seals

The term ice seal refers to the location of the seals' birth. Of the five main seal species seen in New England waters, harbor and gray seals are here year-round, whereas the ice seals (harp, hooded, and ringed seals) are typically here only during the winter and early spring. Juvenile ice seals and some adults travel south from Canadian waters during these months and are often found in New England. Harps and hooded seals are seen more frequently, while ringed seals are rarely spotted on the Cape.

The harp seal is the most common seal in the Northwest Atlantic. Although they received their name due to the 'harp'-shaped marking on the back of the adult coat, the more famous harp seal is the pup, popular for its white coat and recognized as the former target of the seal hunt in the northern latitudes. Most commonly seen on Cape Cod is the juvenile harp seal, or "Beater" identified by "ink blot" spots on a tan/gray coat.

The hooded seal gets its name from the inflatable sac on the head of the adult male. When he inflates this 'hood' he appears larger and more intimidating to other seals. He also has the ability to inflate his nasal septum, making it look like a red balloon hanging over his mouth. Adult hooded seals, however, are rare on Cape Cod; we usually see juvenile bluebacks, distinguished by blue-gray fur on their back, an off-white or silvery underside and the lack of any spots.

Seeing ice seals resting ashore in the winter months is not uncommon. After a long journey south, they will often spend many days out of the water and can also be seen going in and out of the water from one area. They commonly rest on their side in a crescent shape and do not tend to scare back into the water easily. In Canada these seals are often seen in large groups, but locally they are usually seen alone.

How to tell if a seal sighting is actually a STRANDING

- Behavior: ingestion of rocks or sand is a sign of stress; vocalizing and waving front flippers are signs of aggression.
 - Body Condition: presence of a neck and/or visible hipbones are signs of poor body condition
 - Posture: lying flat on its stomach can indicate poor health
- ★ **REMEMBER:** Call CCSN first! Stay 150 feet away unless CCSN gives you permission to approach the animal.

A Look Ahead:

Training Schedule 2005

- Sunday, March 20th: Level A
- Sat., April 23rd: Intro/Advanced
- Wed. (eve.), Aug. 18th: Review
- Sat., Sept. 10th: Intro/Advanced
- Sat. Oct. 1st: Mass Stranding (tentative)

Save the Date!

New T-Shirts

Available!

We have new CCSN t-shirts available for general purchase! Each shirt is \$15. We have Adult sizes small through extra large, and child size large.



Harp Seal, CCSN04-028Pg released W. Dennis Beach 02/27/2004.

Keeping CCSN and You Up To Date

- In the future, if you change your email address, mailing address, or phone numbers, please remember to email us with your new information at ccsninfo@capecodstranding.net!
- There have been some changes in staff since the last Newsletter! Former Asst. Stranding Coordinator, Brian Sharp is now the Rescue Operations Manager for the Large Whale Disentanglement Team at the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown. Betty Lentell, also a former Asst. Stranding Coordinator is concentrating on her studies in Marine Biology at Umass Dartmouth full time now.
- Sarah Herzig, our former AmeriCorps member is the Asst. Stranding Coordinator and Amber Knowles from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science will be the part-time Stranding Technician.
- We also are very fortunate to have weekly office interns: Sherri Heft, an AmeriCorps Cape Cod member and Amy Aieta, a Umass Dartmouth graduate student.

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