



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

January 12th, 2024



First sea lion rescued from Surfrider Beach.

The First Sea Lion Pups of 2024

The first week of 2024 has been a busy one for our Marine Mammal Department. On January 4th, our Marine Mammal Response Team received a call about a California Sea Lion pup in need of help on Surfrider Beach. The 6 1/2-month-old pup was malnourished weighing just 30 pounds. He was rescued and brought to CWC for care.



Rescue at Topanga State Beach.

Within the next 36 hours, patient #1 was joined by three more emaciated sea lion pups in need of help. Our team rescued one pup from Topanga Beach, another from Westward Beach, and the third was picked up in Paradise Cove. All four are currently in our care, and benefiting from the socialization that accompanies being rehabilitated with other sea lions.



Sea lion from Topanga.

When we see California Sea Lion pups stranding during the winter months, it is usually because they have been weaned early from their mother and are struggling to find enough food. All the pups are undersized with weights ranging from 24 pounds to 33 pounds. A healthy pup of this age should weigh 50-60 pounds. Our patient that was found wedged in between rocks south of the pier at Paradise Cove is not only thin and dehydrated, he is also displaying gastrointestinal issues which is being treated with medication. The pup from Topanga arrived with a swollen muzzle, a couple of missing vibrissae, and mild congestion, while the patient from Westward exhibited mild flipper abrasions. During the past five days in care, patient #1 from Surfrider has already started to eat fish. Overall, all four sea lion pups are responding well to medical and supportive care and are all gaining weight.



Westward Beach rescue.

As we help our patients become healthy and strong, they are housed with other sea lions to encourage natural interactions and practice competitive foraging in the pool. The pups will remain in care until all ailments have healed and they are in good health and body weight.

We expect to experience the busiest stranding season in five years. This is due to the predictions of a strong El Nino year and based on the health at the time of rescue of the sea lion pups currently in care.

If you find a sea lion in need of help on the beach in Malibu, please contact our Marine Mammal Rescue Team at 310-458-9453, option 1. Never attempt to get close to a distressed animal. Give all marine mammals plenty of space on the beach as approaching is harassment and may frighten them, forcing them back into the water before aid can be provided. This is a violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Be sure to keep any dogs away from the animals for both of their well-being.



Pup from Westward Beach.