



# California Wildlife Center

## Patient of the Week

**August 16, 2024**

### Boat Release

On Friday August 2, our Marine Mammal team prepared the last two patients of the seasons for release. This year our team identified two patients that would benefit from a boat release, patient Pink and Blue. We name seals and sea lions by color in order to quickly and easily identify them and paint the color on their heads (with nontoxic/safe coloring). A release to the sea versus the beach gives the animal an opportunity to plunge directly into the water without the added distraction and stress of people around. Additionally, the identified patients had been in care longer than they had been alive, releasing them away from people and near an unpopulated beach gives them the best chance at acclimating to their new environment.

Both patients were rescued in March and came in as many of our marine mammal patients do, malnourished. Pink had several health issues while in care that she had to overcome; during her rehabilitation there were several occurrences in which her lab work indicated that her kidneys were not functioning properly which presented as severe dehydration. Blue was one of the first elephant seals admitted of the season. Blue had a lengthy stay because she refused to eat fish for six weeks. Our team employed several medications and techniques to encourage her to eat. During this period our team supplemented her nutrition by regularly tube feeding her. Then one day, Blue decided she was ready to eat and from there followed the normal eating trajectory that is typical of our elephant seals in care.



Sam wakeup call and meal for the last two CWC patients of the season.

Boat releases are a long day for everyone involved and average 12+ hours. During the most recent release, our staff arrived to CWC at 5:00am to feed Pink and Blue their final meal at CWC and prepare their kennels for the drive to Ventura. Once staff, volunteers and elephant seals arrived at the dock they boarded the boat that would take them to Santa Rosa Island, kindly provided by Island Packers. Santa Rosa Island is often chosen as the release site because it is largely uninhabited and is very close to San Miguel Island, which is a very popular spot for pinnipeds.



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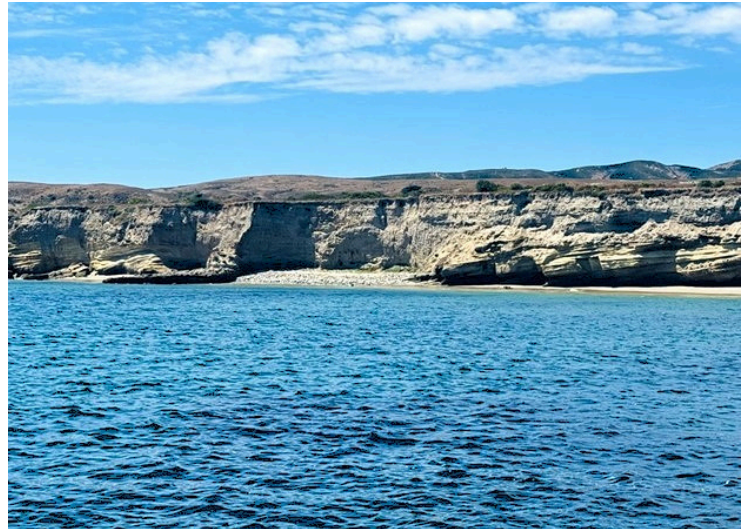
Elephant seal patient ready for release.



Elephant seal snoring before release.



Marine mammal staff and volunteers on the boat to Santa Rosa Island.



Private sandy spot for pinniped relaxing.

Once the boat reached the island, patrons that were not with CWC disembarked, then the boat crew took our team to the surrounding area for the release. Blue was the first to go and happily swam right into the water. Pink was more hesitant to leave the kennel but eventually made her way to the water. The day was a success! We wish Blue and Pink the very best as they reintegrate into the wild.

Click [here](#) and [here](#) to watch the boat releases and underwater footage.