



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

January 9, 2026

A New Arrival: Our First California Sea Lion Pup of the Season

Last week, our Marine Mammal team rescued and admitted the first California Sea Lion pup of the season. The patient was reported by two attentive community members who responsibly monitored the animal from a distance until our team arrived. Off-leash dogs pose a frequent and serious risk to marine mammals in distress. When dogs approach, sick or injured animals often flee back into the ocean, preventing responders from providing necessary care.

Upon admission, the sea lion pup was underweight, dehydrated, and lethargic. This young male pup is estimated to be only seven months old. He experienced early maternal separation, as California Sea Lions are typically weaned at around 10 months of age (closer to April). Our medical team has also noted a higher-than-usual parasite load, and he is currently battling an infection of unknown origin that is causing inflammation around his neck and jaw.

In the wild, California Sea Lions are born in June and remain with their mothers for an average of nine to ten months. During this critical period, pups learn essential survival skills, including where and how to forage effectively. They continue to nurse until these skills are sufficiently developed to support independent survival. When young sea lions are weaned or separated from their mothers too early, they may struggle to find enough food to meet their nutritional needs and can fail to thrive on their own.

Our dedicated team is providing attentive medical care while treating this pup for malnutrition, dehydration, parasites, and a soft-tissue infection.



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We are thankful to the community members that reported this patient. This pup has a long rehabilitation ahead of him, but our team is committed to helping him heal and grow stronger.

If you encounter a stranded marine mammal, please keep your distance, leash your pets, and observe the animal from at least 50 feet away (ideally 150 feet). Do not feed or pour water on the animal. Marine mammals often haul out onto the sand when they are cold, tired, or resting. Forcing them back into the ocean can be life-threatening, as they may be too exhausted to swim, and it also prevents our rescue team from providing potentially life-saving care.

If you find an injured or sick marine mammal, contact your local Marine Mammal Stranding Network. In Malibu, text California Wildlife Center's Marine Rescue line at (310) 924-7256. Please be prepared to provide a zoomed-in photo, a description of your concerns, and a location pin or address so our rescue team can quickly locate the animal in need.



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