



Flippers & Fins

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2010

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- View current patients during daylight hours at the NMMC
- Gift Shop Hours open daily, contact us for hours
- Volunteers needed in the gift shop and hospital
- Don't forget to re-new your annual membership!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Marine Trash 2

New Board of Directors 2

Henry Needs a Home! 2

Medical Director's Message 3

The Center Needs Your Help! 3

The Great Gatsby, A Success Story 4

Upcoming Crab, Wine, & Cheese Festival

Come out and support the Northcoast Marine Mammal Center by attending the Annual Crab, Wine, and Cheese Festival on Saturday, February 12th! The event will begin at 3 pm and end at 9 pm at the Cultural Center on Front Street in Crescent City. This festival has taken place for over forty years, but this will be the first year that the NMMC will be hosting it.

There will be great food and events that are family friendly, and admission is free. Kids of all ages will find it hard to resist the coloring contest, radio controlled "crab" racing and other activities throughout the Festival. A seafood championship contest will be held featuring area restaurants. Trophies will be awarded for "Best in Crescent City" for the crabbiest dish, best seafood chowder and best clam chowder. Trophies and awards will be given to the world famous crab race, recipe and coloring contest winners. Give us your crabbiest and we will make chowder!

This year's event will also be hosting the "World Famous Championship Crab Races". If you've attended the crab races in the past, you will be pleasantly surprised to see the races return to the way they were done at their inception over forty years ago. Live crab can be sponsored and will be taken to the beach behind the Cultural Center, released, and the 'winner' is the crab to reach the ocean first! We are excited about the return of this event, and while the crabs may not run as fast as the sea lions toward the ocean when they are released, we are sure it will be an exciting event!



In addition to all of the fun festivities, it wouldn't be the Crab, Wine, and Cheese Festival without great food! Cooked crab will be served and you will also have the opportunity to purchase delicious side dishes of your choice. For those over 21 years old, you can purchase a bottle of wine from our 'Wall of Wine' to accompany your meal.

So, mark your calendar and come out to support the Northcoast Marine Mammal Center! All proceeds will directly benefit the Center so that we can continue to care for marine mammals along our Northern California coastline and provide educational outreach to local children.

Please contact the NMMC at 707-465-6265 or email us at rescue@northcoastmmc.org for more information. Thanks in advance for your support, and we look forward to seeing you in February!



Marine Trash, A Growing Problem

Here is a photo of 'Mufasa', a California sea lion that was rescued in October. As you can see, he has what turned out to be box packaging



around his neck, which was successfully removed by our medical team. Unfortunately, entanglement issues are all too common, especially with sea lions.

The Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, California recently had a similar rescue and this is what they had to say:

"Although sea lions can live with entanglements for a long time, one like this - a circumferential foreign body that is not coming off on a growing

animal - would eventually be fatal. A major blood vessel would erode and the animal would bleed to death, the esophagus would erode and the animal would starve to death, or the trachea would erode and the animal would drown."

Beach clean-up events take place annually in all coastal areas—please join these efforts if you are able, and let's do our part to keep our beaches and oceans clean!

A New Year and a New Board of Directors

In December, the Northcoast Marine Mammal Center started fresh with almost an entirely new Board of Directors. The previous Board of Directors, who gave many years of hard work, identified key areas that needed improvement and actively recruited new Board Members that they felt could be an asset to the Center by serving as Directors and filling these gaps.

Dr. Dennis Wood founded the Center in the 1980's and continues to serve as our Veterinarian and Medical Director.

Monica Hiner, who served as the Center's Director of Op-

erations during 2009 and 2010 was elected as the new President of the Board. She brings to the Board her experience with day-to-day operations of the Center, grant management experience, and a scientific background.

Bill Renfroe was elected as Vice-President, and he brings fundraising skills, experience securing grants, and is knowledgeable about non-profit organizations. He is also the Executive Director of the Tri-County Agency Economic Development Authority.

Melissa Blackburn, a long-time resident of Del Norte County, was elected to serve as

Secretary. She has extensive experience with grant writing and financials, and is a commercial loan officer.

Shannon Grapes-Kelley will serve as the new Treasurer, and has been an animal care volunteer at the Center for several years. She has a great knowledge about the Center's work and also a background in bookkeeping.

We are also honored to have Jon Alexander, who was recently elected to serve as District Attorney for Del Norte County, to assist us with legal issues that may arise and guide our policy development.

Henry Needs a Home

As most of you know, we have been looking for a home for "Henry", a yearling California Sea Lion who was admitted last summer. After being diagnosed as blind, he was deemed unreleasable and we are currently looking for his forever home.

We will keep everyone updated on Henry's status, and will keep working with the National Marine Fisheries Service to find Henry a permanent home. If you want to stay up-to-date on all of the activities going on at the Center, and our most recent rescues, join our mailing list or Friend us on Facebook!

An updated photo of Henry taken in November.



Medical Director's Message

Dr. Dennis Wood, DVM

As 2010 draws to a close, we breathe a sigh of relief after 2 consecutive years with 116 patients. Those of you new to the NMMC, might not realize that these numbers are 2-3 times the normal yearly census of marine mammal intakes for rehabilitation at the NMMC.

There are multiple reasons for the increase in stranded animals over the past two years. Our marine mammal patients live in a complex ecosystem, so it is easy to oversimplify the cause and effect of what we are experiencing. There were record birth rates of California sea lions in the Channel Island rookeries in southern California the spring of 2008. There was a documented scarcity of feed species,

possibly linked to an El Nino year. This led to record numbers of starving, malnourished yearlings along the entire California coast from June-August of 2009.

Our second record year of strandings has again been primarily California sea lions. The cause of the strandings is however, different. Lab testing and necropsy results confirm that many are infected with leptospirosis. Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease affecting a variety of animal species, including dogs and humans. It is transmitted through contact with contaminated urine, water and soil.

A surge of leptospirosis cases are seen along the west coast every 4-5 years.

Sea lions affected with leptospirosis are typically emaciated and lethargic. The bacteria cause kidney failure and sometimes hepatitis. Patients frequently are found drinking from freshwater streams and unwilling to use their hind flippers. The disease is often fatal if not identified early and treated with appropriate antibiotics and fluid therapy.

Even with intensive care at the NMMC, 50% of cases with leptospirosis will succumb to their illness. Those that survive and are finally released back to their ocean home do so thanks to the thousands of volunteer hours selflessly given by our wonderful and dedicated volunteers, interns and board of directors. We don't say it enough, but we truly appreciate all you do!

The Center Needs Your Help!

The Northcoast Marine Mammal Center has been saving the lives of seals and sea lions since its inception in 1984. We've come a long way, and are proud to serve the communities of Humboldt and Del Norte counties not only by acting as stewards for our marine mammals, but also by providing educational outreach to local school and community groups.

We are almost entirely run by volunteers, with the exception of a part-time office manager. All animal assessments, rescues, and animal care duties are performed by volunteers. In addition, our gift shop is staffed entirely by volunteers. While volunteers provide all of the work that we conduct here at the Center, we are asking for help during the coming year in helping us with operating costs.

In years past, the NMMC has been awarded a grant from NOAA to cover some of our operational expenses; however, the Center was not awarded any operational funds

for the coming year. Instead, NOAA granted the Center funds to perform much needed maintenance and renovations to our facility. While this is great news for us, we are now faced with raising the funds to cover our operational expenses for the next year.



Most people may not think that it would cost much money to operate a rescue facility. However, everyday expenses that we incur at our facility add up quickly. Just this year alone, we spent **\$8,277** on utility bills—we have a lot of pools to fill and heating pads to power! We purchased **\$15,188** worth of herring and **\$2,817** in vitamin supplements and medications for our patients. It also cost us **\$965** for hospital supplies for cleaning and animal care

and **\$2,283** for fuel for rescues. How can you help? There are several ways that the NMMC would appreciate your support in the coming year:

- **Attend our Fundraiser on February 12th.**
- **Donate any gently used or new towels to the Center.**
- **Help purchase fish for our patients by participating in our Meals for Seals program.**
- **Donate household items such as bleach and laundry detergent.**
- **Make a tax-deductible donation to the NMMC.**

Together, we can help marine mammals that are sick, injured, or orphaned along the Northern California coastline. The NMMC is dedicated to our cause, and greatly appreciates the support of our many friends and members.

Sincerely,

Monica Hiner



Crescent City, CA

The Northcoast Marine Mammal Center is a 501(c)(3) Non-profit Organization dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of orphaned, sick, or injured marine mammals.

To report an injured or stranded marine mammal, please call our Stranding Hotline at (707) 951-4722.

424 Howe Drive
Crescent City, CA 95531

Phone: 707-465-6265

Fax: 707-465-6265

E-mail: rescue@northcoastmmc.org

Visit our website at

<http://www.northcoastmmc.org>

The Great Gatsby, A Success Story!

Thanks to all of our dedicated volunteers who not only conduct all animal rescues, but also care for the animals in rehabilitation. Without their hard work and dedication we would not be able to provide the level of care we do.

On June 16th, "Gatsby" was rescued from Powerline Beach in Samoa (Humboldt County). Upon initial assessment, our rescue volunteers

did not believe him to be alive. They quickly realized he was and we immediately rescued him and transported him to the Center. "Gatsby" was severely emaciated, weighing only 147lbs and nearly every bone in his body was visible.

Most of us did not hold out much hope that he would pull through, because he was so weak that he could not even lift his head.

Much to our surprise, "Gatsby" began gaining weight and slowly began to gain his strength back. After over two months of rehabilitation and gaining 153lbs (and eating 1,193lbs of herring!) he was released on August 28th. He had such a mellow disposition for such a large animal, and will hold a special place in many of our volunteers hearts for a long time to come!

