

Positive signs for endangered monk seal population

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Hawaii's monk seal population is improving slowly, though researchers warn it'll take many more good years to reverse a decline that's been ongoing since the 1950s.

The lead monk seal researcher with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported during a State of the Seal address Friday that more seal pups were born across the archipelago, and the survival rates are among the highest in decades.

A population estimate of 1,100 increased to 1,272.

Charles Littnan said the NOAA is including monk seal survival in its national "Species in the Spotlight" initiative.

Officials are also intervening with life-saving measures, like disentanglements and de-hooking, as well as minimizing human contact, preventing disease and developing programs for vaccinations.

Littnan said interventions have benefited about 30 percent of the monk seal population.

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