

WHAT YOU CAN DO



To save Na `Ilioholoikauaua from disappearing forever, we need to protect their home, the

NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS, from the things that can harm them. Find out how what you can do to make the NWHI a Pu`uhonua (Place of Refuge) by contacting KAHEA.

Hawaiian monk seals need safe beaches to take naps. If you see a monk seal on a beach stay away. It is illegal for people to be closer than 100 feet away from a monk seal. (100 feet is about the length of ten cars). Tell other people, to stay away from the seal and keep dogs from approaching.

If you see a monk seal please call National Marine Fisheries Service (800) 853-1964 so they can help make sure people give monk seals plenty of space.

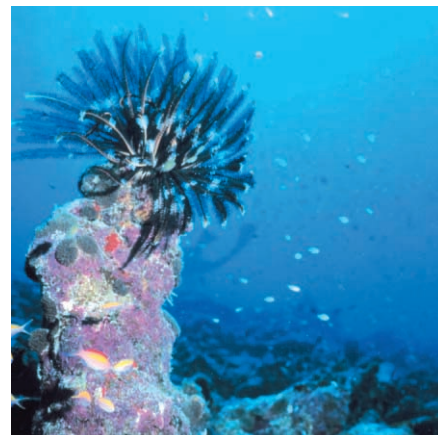
If you see an injured seal call (888) 256-9840 and someone will come help the seal.

Tell your friends about how to help protect our precious endangered Hawaiian monk seals.



KAHEA: The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance is working with lots of other groups to help protect the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Home of the endangered Hawaiian monk seal, many other endemic species, and extensive cultural resources, as a Pu`uhonua – a place of refuge – for future generations. To find out more, visit our website or call (808) 524-8220

P.O. Box 27112 - Honolulu, Hawai`i 96827 - Tel. (808) 524-8220 - www.kahea.org



Help Save

‘Ilioholoikauaua The Hawaiian Monk Seal

Na `Ilioholoikauaua (Hawaiian monk seals) need your help!

Learn more about these amazing creatures and what you can do to save them from disappearing forever.



‘Īlioŋoloikaŋaua

‘Īlioŋoloikaŋaua, Hawaiian monk seals, are unique to Hawai‘i. They live in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

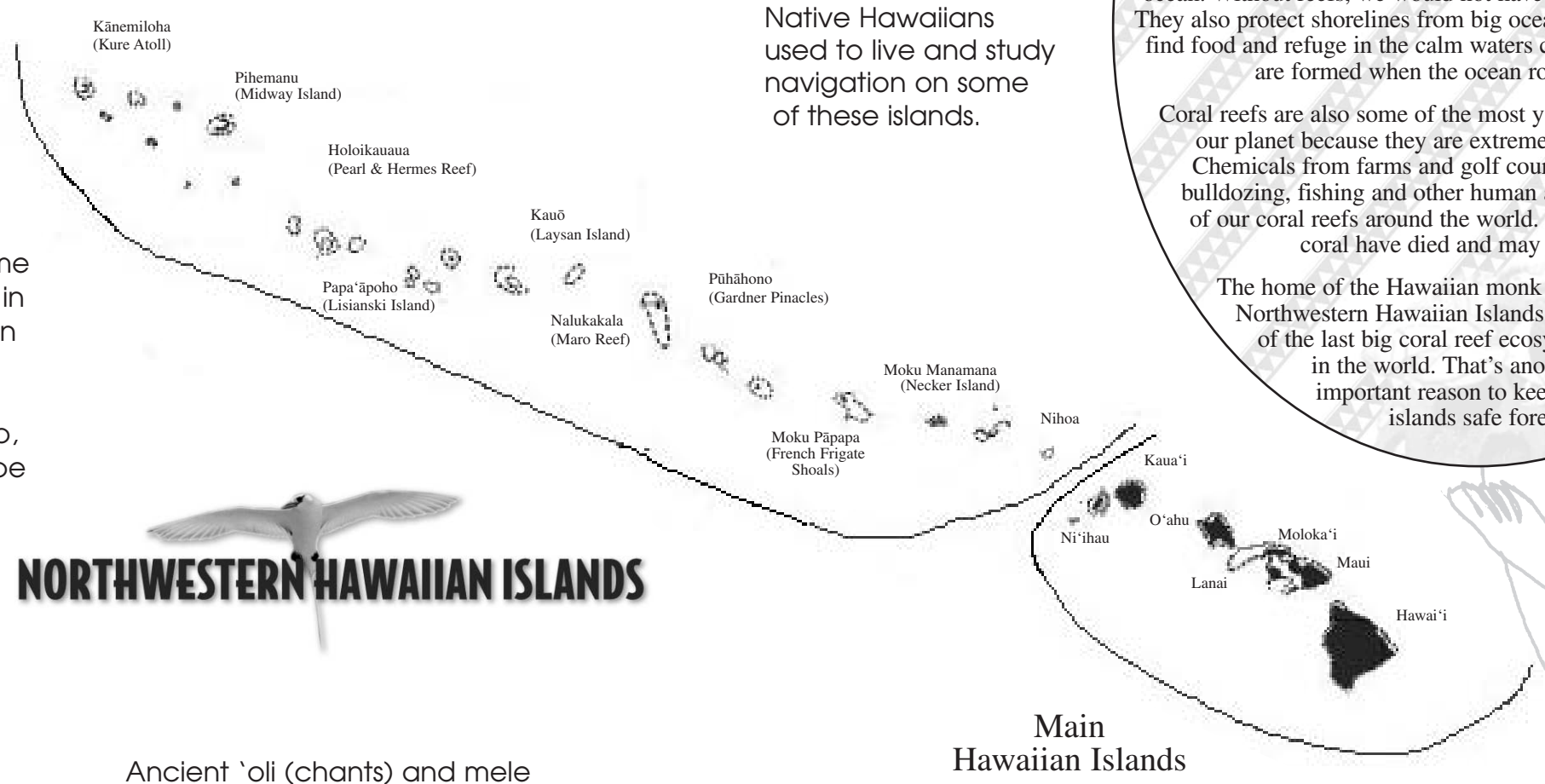
Monk seals used to live throughout all the Hawaiian Islands, but, because humans moved into their habitat, they now mostly live in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

The seals spend most of their time swimming and looking for food in coral reefs, lagoons, as well as in the open ocean.

They need safe beaches to nap, nurse their young, and to escape sharks that look for the young seals to eat.

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands is an archipelago or chain made up of atolls, and shoals and outcroppings. They are northwest of Kaua‘i and are home to some of the world’s oldest coral colonies.

Sea turtles, thousands of kinds of fish, the Hawaiian monk seal, and millions of seabirds call these ancient islands home.



NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

Main Hawaiian Islands

Ancient ‘oli (chants) and mele (songs) tell about how of the fire goddess Pele and her family traveled through the islands and stopped at Mokumanamana (Necker Island) on their way back to the Main Hawaiian Islands.



The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are Hawaiian lands. They are very important in Native Hawaiian history and culture.

Native Hawaiians used to live and study navigation on some of these islands.

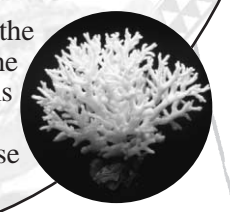
What are coral reefs?

Coral reefs live in clear tropical waters all around the world. Although they look like rocks, they are really made up of tiny clear animals called coral polyps. Millions of these animals stick together in clumps and feed on plankton (tiny animals in the ocean) found in the water around them. Corals grow hard skeletons made of calcium, like our bones. Layers of new coral grow on top of the old skeletons. Reefs are formed when the clumps, or colonies, grow together. Coral colonies take hundreds of years to form into reefs.

Coral reefs are very important. They are the cornerstone of life in the ocean. Without reefs, we would not have fishes, turtles or monk seals. They also protect shorelines from big ocean waves. Millions of animals find food and refuge in the calm waters created by coral reefs. Waves are formed when the ocean rolls over the reefs.

Coral reefs are also some of the most y endangered ecosystems on our planet because they are extremely sensitive and fragile. Chemicals from farms and golf courses, dust and mud from bulldozing, fishing and other human activity have killed many of our coral reefs around the world. In many places growing coral have died and may never return.

The home of the Hawaiian monk seal, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, is one of the last big coral reef ecosystems in the world. That’s another important reason to keep these islands safe forever.

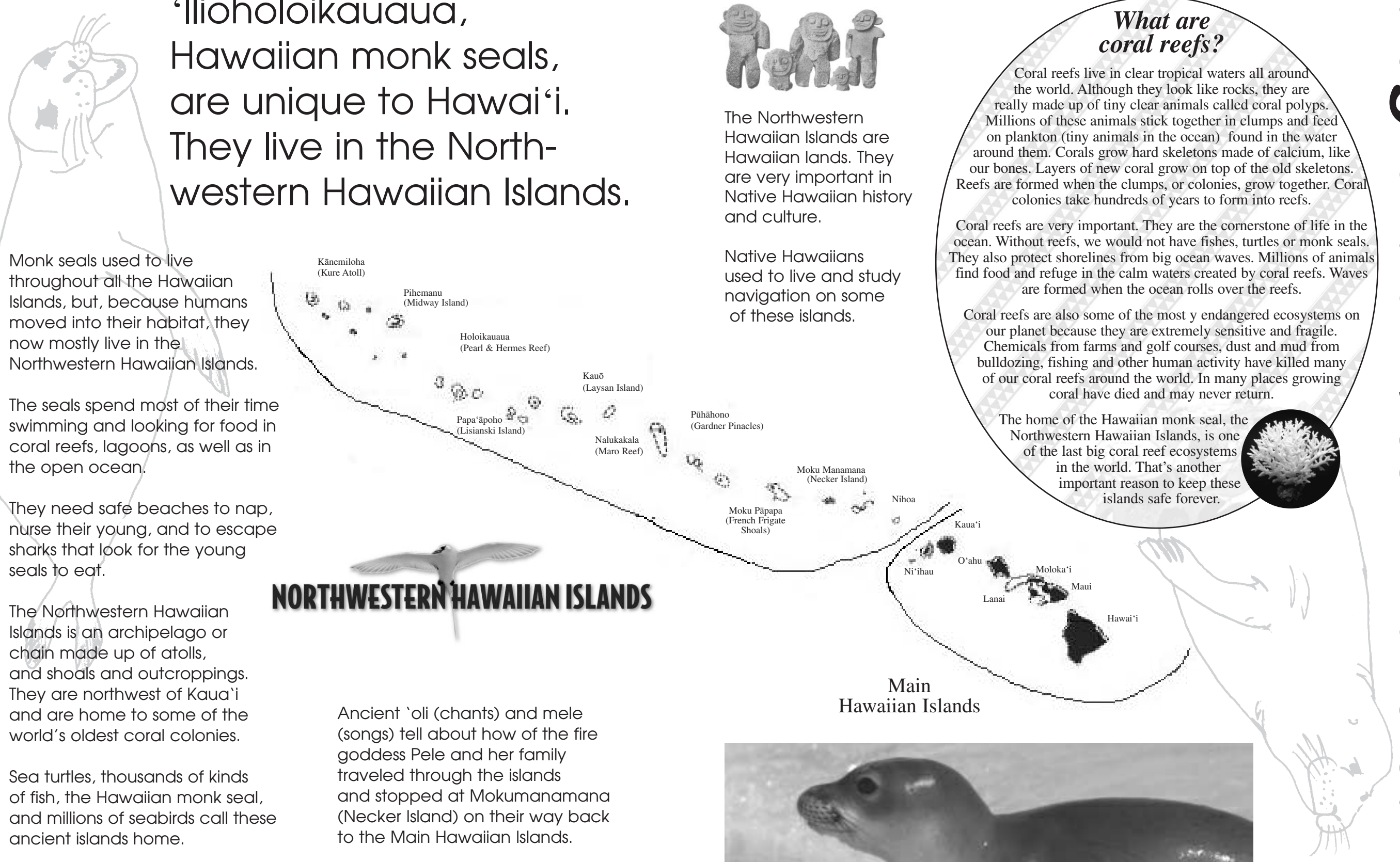


What is a Pu‘uhonua?

A Pu‘uhonua is a place of refuge. Whoever is in a Pu‘uhonua is safe from harm. We need a to make a Pu‘uhonua for the very fragile coral reefs and all the animals who live in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.



dog that lives in the surf





Hawaiian monk seal babies (pups) are born on the beach. The mother monk seal carries her baby for one year – three months longer than humans. When it's time for the mother monk seal to have her baby, she looks for a quiet and safe beach to give birth.

Hawaiian monk seals usually have their babies in the springtime, between March and May. Usually only one pup is born at a time. Pups are about three feet long and, covered in fuzzy black hair. They weigh about 35 to 40 pounds when they are born.

The mother and her pup stay together on the beach for 30 or 40 days. During that time, the baby is nursed and the mother teaches her pup how to swim and hunt. To protect her newborn pup the mother stays with it day and night. The mom doesn't leave her baby's side even to find food. Instead, the mother lives off special fat that she saved in her body for this time.

Because monk seals are mammals, the baby seals drink their mother's milk until they are old enough to find food in the ocean on their own.

Seal pups grow really fast. They have to learn where the best places to find food and how to catch different fishes, and other food like eels, and squids.

The pup grows to four times the size it was when it was born. That means it grows to about 140 pounds by the time it is ready to live on its own. As the young seal grows up, it learns to hunt and it loses the fat it stored as a baby.



What is a Habitat?

Habitat is where an animal lives. In its habitat an animal needs to be able to find food and a place to rest away from predators.

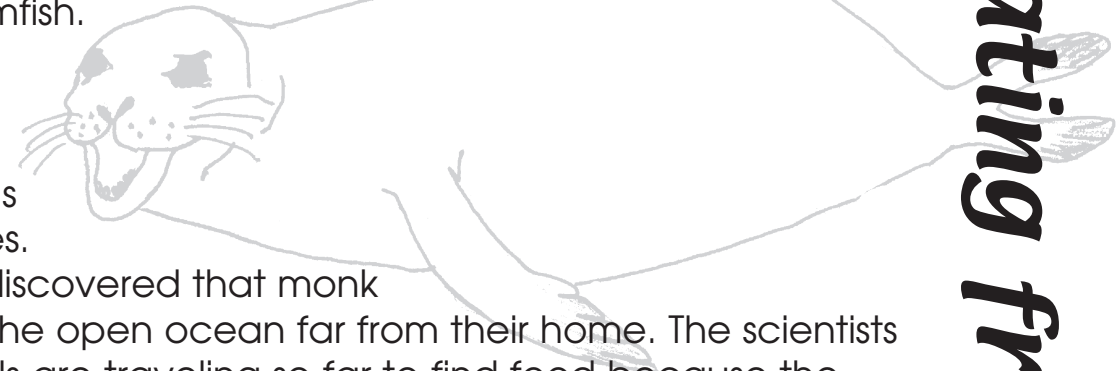
Most Hawaiian monk seals live near the beach where they were born, but sometimes they travel between islands to look for food to eat.



Monk seals are **carnivores**. That means they hunt and eat other animals. Monk seals eat reef fish, octopus, squid and eels. They also eat bottomfish.

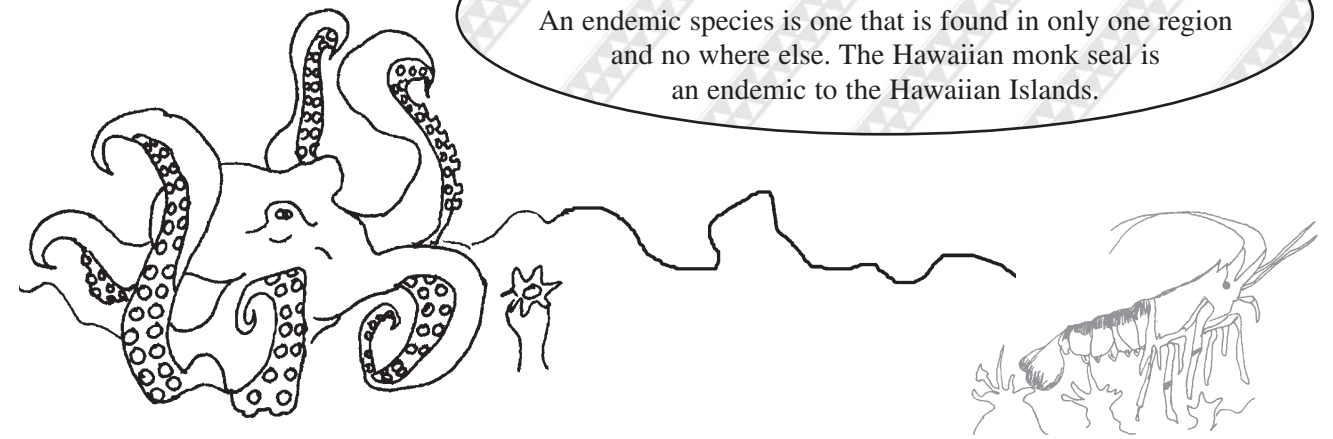
They hunt mostly at night in reefs and **lagoons** and in areas close to the beaches.

Recently, scientists discovered that monk seals look for fish in the open ocean far from their home. The scientists believe that the seals are traveling so far to find food because the nutritious lobsters they eat are gone.



What is an endemic species?

An endemic species is one that is found in only one region and no where else. The Hawaiian monk seal is an endemic to the Hawaiian Islands.



Not having enough food to eat is the main reason monk seals must struggle to survive. The pups are starving. Lobsters are an important food for monk seals. They are easy for pups to catch because they are slow and live in shallower water and monk seals used to eat them everyday. Unfortunately, commercial fishermen took so many lobsters from the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands that now lobsters are very hard to find. The fishermen kept taking the lobsters even though scientists were telling them that the monk seals needed lobsters too. Without lobsters, monk seals, especially the pups, are having a very hard time.

Eventually, the lobster population became so small that commercial fishing boats were no longer allowed to take lobster from the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The nutritious lobsters that young seals have relied on for years have not yet recovered.

Now many young seals die of starvation or are weak and slow swimmers. This makes them easy for sharks to catch. Recently, scientists have noticed that young seals are learning to hunt in groups of three or four and go after fish farther from shore. By hunting for food in small groups, they can help each other avoid being eaten by sharks.



A lonely life



Hawaiian monk seals are very sensitive to changes in their environment and unfortunately, there are only between 1,300 and 1,400 Hawaiian monk seals left. Most of the seals live in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, one of the world's last coral reef ecosystems. Human activities have endangered many of the unique species that live there. Since the 1950s the monk seal population has gone down 60% because of over-harvesting of lobster, one of the seals' main food sources.

Hawaiian monk seals spend most of their lives alone. Sometimes groups of monk seals are all together on a beach enjoying the warm sand.



What's in a name?

The seal's English name comes partly from the fact that they live mostly alone, kind of like Buddhist and Catholic monks. Monk seals also look like they have are wearing a monk's robe.



How big?

Healthy female monk seals grow to be up to 7 and a half feet long. They weigh about 600 pounds.



7 1/2 feet



4 1/2 feet

Adult males are smaller and weigh about 400 pounds and are 7 feet long.

Without proper nutrition mothers and pups can become weak and are not able to swim fast enough to escape from sharks. They also get sick easier.

Old fishing nets, plastic and other trash from humans washes up on the shores where monk seals live. Sometimes monk seals eat plastic thinking that it's a fish or the seals get caught in the nets and die.

Why Are Seals in Trouble?

In the 1800s and early 1900s many Hawaiian monk seals were killed by commercial hunters. Their skin was sold for coats and purses and oil was made from their fat. Because Hawaiian monk seals have evolved over millions of years to be perfectly suited to their environment changes can make it difficult for them to adapt. Large fishing boats have taken the seal's regular food sources and many Hawaiian monk seals starve. Also, fishing boats lose or throw away fishing lines, nets, and other equipment that can trap or injure seals and other wildlife that lives in the reef.



In 1909, President Teddy Roosevelt was the first person to try to help the Hawaiian monk seals when he established the Hawaii National Wildlife Refuge in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The Refuge stopped all the hunting of monk seals.

In 1976 the Hawaiian monk seal was listed by the Federal government as an endangered species, This makes it against the law to harm or injure the seals on land or in the water. In 2000 an Executive Order created the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Ecosystem Reserve and made the survival of the monk seals and other wildlife one of its main goals.

Hawaiian monk seals need our help if they are going to be around when you grow up.

What is extinction?

When the environment changes, plant and animal species respond over time in different ways – they can adapt to the new changes or they can move to a new area. If they are not able to do either they may become extinct. This means that they are gone forever.

Because the plants and animals of Hawai'i adjusted over millions of years to live in special island ecosystems, they are extremely sensitive to changes in their home or habitat. They have learned how to depend on each other and share their space with each other. Today, the Hawaiian Islands have more animals and plants that are endangered or at risk of being lost, than any other state in the U.S. More than 1,000 species (plants and animals) have gone extinct in Hawai'i.

An Endangered Species: at risk of being lost forever