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Monk Seal Twins Nursing on Oahu

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The Hawaiian monk seal population is at its lowest point ever and their numbers are dwindling. But now a rare set of seal twin pups are bringing some hope to conservationists.

The twin Hawaiian monk seal pups were born on Midway Atoll. But now they are calling Honolulu home.

Dr. Robert Braun, from Pacific Island Fisheries, is helping to care for the pups.

"They're acclimated, playing with fish and getting along quite well," he said.

Facing long odds of survival in the wild, the twins were flown to Honolulu over the weekend.

"Because of their lack of mass, the probability of their survival is really low," said Dr. Bud Antonelis of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service.

NOAA Fisheries is caring for the monk seals and hoping to increase their weight in order to increase their chances of survival.

Twin monk seals are extremely rare. Only three other sets have ever been recorded, and these two are the only ones to make it to weaning. But they are not in the clear. They are only half the weight they should be and are barely eating.

"We don't want to push these animals too hard too fast," Braun said. "They are in okay condition right now. They aren't starving and they're not in trouble so we want to work slowly towards that goal and not hurry towards it."

Braun is hoping to double the weight of the twins in the next few months. Then later, if all goes well, they will be released back on Midway. That would be a first for twin seal pups.

"If we can pull them through this, it will make me and all the people very happy," Braun said.

Once the female twins are released, the hope is they will have pups of their own to help increase the monk seal population.



Twin Hawaiian monk seal pups are being cared for at Kewalo Basin.

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