



New Effort Launched to Combat Wildlife Crimes in Hawaii

The Humane Society of the United States and Hawaii DLNR Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement Inaugurate Reward Tip Line As Total Rewards Grows to \$30,000 in Monk Seal Killings

HONOLULU, Hawaii (Jan. 11, 2012) — The Humane Society of the United States and The Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust announced new efforts to support the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement’s work to combat poaching and designated wildlife-related crimes by sponsoring a toll-free, confidential reward tip line, **1-855-DLNR-TIP**.

The statewide tip line will allow citizens to confidentially report information about poaching crimes to law enforcement. The HSUS will offer \$2,500 rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person(s) responsible for specific, predetermined cases. The first case under this new reward program and tip line involves three monk seals killed on Moloka‘i and a fourth monk seal found killed on Kaua‘i. Necropsies performed on three of the four seals confirmed the deaths were suspicious. The fourth case is pending additional information. Anyone with information about these cases is asked to call the confidential reward tip line.

Along with The HSUS’s \$2,500 reward offering, the Conservation Council for Hawai‘i, the Center for Biological Diversity and the Marine Conservation Institute are collectively offering \$2,500 for each incident. A generous anonymous local donor has offered to match these rewards, bringing the reward total up to \$30,000, or \$10,000 per seal.

“We are pleased to support the critical work of DOCARE by funding a reward program and tip line for information on illegal wildlife-related offenses,” said Inga Gibson, Hawai‘i state director for The HSUS. “We must be a voice for these innocent animal victims and encourage anyone with information to please call the confidential tip line.”

“Monk seals are a vital part of Hawai‘i’s marine ecosystems,” said William J. Aila, Jr., DLNR chairperson. “The intentional killing of any monk seal is not only illegal, it is inexcusable environmentally and culturally.”

“We thank The HSUS for their sponsorship of this new program to help protect Hawaii’s precious wildlife,” said Randy Awo, DOCARE chief. “Our hope is that the reward program will deter future wildlife crimes and also encourage the community to become more involved in protecting our environment and reporting wildlife offenses.”

Wildlife officials estimate that tens of millions of animals are poached annually nationwide, but less than 5 percent of poached animals come to the attention of law enforcement. Wildlife officials report that poachers often commit other crimes as well.

For more information about this current reward posting please visit humanesociety.org/hawaii

Monk Seal Facts:

- Hunted to the brink of extinction in the late 19th century, Hawaiian monk seal populations have been declining since modern surveying due to human interactions such as intentional killing, marine debris and fishing gear entanglement, disease and loss of habitat.
- Hawaiian monk seals are one of the world’s most endangered animals, with population estimates less than 1,100. Hawaiian monk seals are endemic to Hawai‘i and found nowhere else in the world.
- In June 2010, the Legislature passed Act 165, specifically to increase penalties for taking (which is defined to include harassing or killing) a monk seal. It’s a Class C felony (up to 5 years imprisonment). Someone convicted under this law could face a maximum fine of \$50,000. Monk seals are also protected under the federal Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act, which makes it a crime to kill or harm a Hawaiian monk seal.

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The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest animal protection organization — backed by 11 million Americans, or one of every 28. For more than a half-century, The HSUS has been fighting for the protection of all animals through advocacy, education and hands-on programs. Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty — On the Web at humanesociety.org.