FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Non-Releasable Harbor Seal Finds Forever Home

Rescued harbor seal deemed non-releasable heads to New York Aquarium.

LAGUNA BEACH, CA Monday, November 30, 2020 - On the evening of February 11, 2020 Pacific Marine Mammal Center (PMMC) received a call about a very small seal in distress near Abalone Beach in the City of Laguna Beach. As the team investigated, they discovered it was a newborn harbor seal with her umbilical cord still attached. It was evident the young pup had been abandoned or separated by her mother and a rescue was needed.

An after-hours team was called into PMMC to examine the seal. She was only 14.6 pounds and found with her lanugo coat that is usually shed in utero. This eluding to the fact that she was born premature, which could be a reason why she was abandoned. PMMC named her Sidney after the young girl who found her.

Estimated to be only hours old, Sidney would need 24/7 around-the-clock care for the first month of her rehabilitation. Her demanding care required that she be fed every few hours, as harbor seals normally nurse as well as learn from mom the first four weeks of life. Neonates like Sidney require specific nutrients and supplements that are measured down to a certain number of grams. The formula was carefully measured for each feed, and she was weighed the same time every day as she continually gained weight.

PMMC's main mission is to rescue and release marine mammals back into the wild. However certain circumstances may require a different course of action for what is best for the animal. Due to her inability to forage on her own and other skills she would have had to learn from mom, PMMC recommended that Sidney be retained and placed in a permanent home rather than be released back into the wild.

PMMC is governed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)-National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), which concurred with PMMC's request to place Sidney. PMMC worked with NOAA to find the best fit for Sidney and her permanent home.

Sidney became a very special member of the PMMC family and developed quite the loving and somewhat diva personality. "We go by Sidney time here. It's her world. We are just living in it," says Wendy Leeds Animal Care Coordinator. "We are so excited she has found her forever home at the New York Aquarium (in Brooklyn, NY). I know her time with us at PMMC seemed brief, but we can all be thankful for the time we did have with her and in knowing that everyone helped in giving her a second chance at life. The animal care team feels very confident that Sidney will be loved and spoiled with her new family."

The New York Aquarium is the oldest continually operating aquarium in the United States, having opened in Castle Garden in Battery Park, Manhattan in 1896. Since 1957, it has been located on the Riegelmann Boardwalk in Coney Island, Brooklyn. The aquarium is operated by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) as part of its integrated system of four zoos and one aquarium, most notably the Bronx Zoo. It is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

On Saturday, November 21st, Sidney made her journey cross country and has since arrived safely at her forever home. Two members of the aquarium team arrived a few days early to get acquainted with Sidney to make sure her transition was as stress-free as possible.
“The Wildlife Conservation Society’s New York Aquarium is excited to bring Sidney to her permanent home in Brooklyn, NY." says Director of Animal Programs William Hana. "She will be joining our 5 harbor seals, including a new female baby seal, Murphy. She was born at the aquarium on May 19th, 2020. We are happy to be part of her journey and look forward to share her story with our visitors. She will be a great ambassador for her species and inspire our visitors to help protect wild places and value nature.”

In true Sidney fashion, a film crew followed Sidney's journey to NY and it will be featured on the upcoming 5th season of The Zoo on Animal Planet.

Sidney after rescue in February with lanugo coat.  
Sidney underwater this fall.

About (Pacific Marine Mammal Center)

The Pacific Marine Mammal Center rescues, rehabilitates and releases marine mammals and inspires ocean stewardship through research, education and collaboration. PMMC is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization. Our Tax-ID number is: 95-3680896

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