

## MARINE MAMMAL RESCUE SEASON UNDERWAY; PUBLIC REMINDED TO NOT APPROACH WILD ANIMALS

VANCOUVER, June 17, 2021 — Pupping season at the Vancouver Aquarium’s Marine Mammal Rescue Centre (“VAMMRC”) is underway, with the latest admissions of seal pups “Candy Corn” on June 13, and “Oatmeal” on June 17. This year, seal pup patients are being named by the individuals who call in the pup and VAMMRC volunteers and staff. If the naming process stalls, the VAMMRC asks the individuals choosing the name what they last ate, inspiring a variety of unique pup names with backstories. So far this season, the VAMMRC has admitted fourteen patients.

Patients at the VAMMRC are cared for by a specialized team of veterinary professionals and volunteers. The VAMMRC is equipped for on-site rehabilitation of seals, sea lions, sea otters, sea turtles and small cetaceans, such as harbour porpoise. The VAMMRC team also responds to off-site marine mammal emergencies, including disentangling sea lions caught in ocean debris. Each year the VAMMRC rescues, rehabilitates, and releases over 100 marine mammals.

Compared to previous years, the VAMMRC is already seeing increased instances of human interference. Rescue staff are reminding the public not to approach marine mammals and instead to call the VAMMRC if you suspect an animal is in distress.

“Harbour seal pupping season is well underway along B.C.’s coast,” said Lindsay Akhurst, manager of the VAMMRC. “This is an exciting time of year, and it can be thrilling to see marine mammals in the wild, but we also need to ensure we are not interfering with a marine mammal who may be exhibiting normal behaviour. We have noticed an alarming trend of patients being admitted to the VAMMRC due to human disturbance this year so far. We understand why someone might be inclined to approach seal pups – they look adorable and can appear abandoned when seen without mom but not all pups on the beach need rescuing. Harbour seal moms will leave pups on the beach to rest while they go forage. The best thing you can do for any marine mammal you suspect needs help is to keep people and pets back and to call the VAMMRC.”

The VAMMRC is the only facility of its kind in Canada and one of the largest rescue facilities in the world. The VAMMRC’s mission is rescue, rehabilitation, and release. The main goal is to get patients back to the wild. After being forced to temporarily close due to the COVID-19 pandemic last year, the VAMMRC has returned to normal operations, and under the Vancouver Aquarium’s new ownership, has the stable, long-term funding needed to continue its rescue program.

If you see a stranded marine mammal, do not approach it, and keep pets away. Please call the VAMMRC at 604.258.SEAL(7325) or Fisheries and Oceans Canada incident reporting hotline at 1-800-465-4336.



*Rescued seal pup "Hedwig"*

**Vancouver Aquarium Marine Mammal Rescue Centre**

The Vancouver Aquarium Marine Mammal Rescue Centre is a hospital for sick, injured or orphaned marine mammals. The Rescue Centre rescues stranded marine mammals and rehabilitates them for release back into their natural habitat. [www.mmrpatients.org](http://www.mmrpatients.org)

**Vancouver Aquarium**

Since opening in 1956, the Vancouver Aquarium has connected more than 40 million people from around the world to our oceans and inspired them to take action to address key threats. Located in Stanley Park, the Vancouver Aquarium is home to thousands of incredible species. The Vancouver Aquarium is a fully accredited member of Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums, Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA), and the American Humane Society. [vanaqua.org](http://vanaqua.org)

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