

9-7-89

HONOLULU ADVERTISER

A3

Good Samaritans help seal get off the hook on Kauai

By Jan TenBruggencate

Advertiser Kauai Bureau

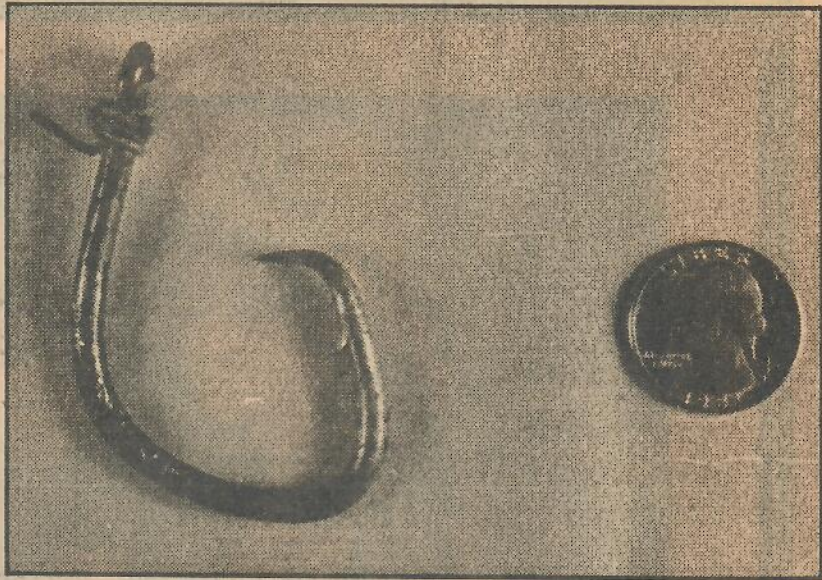
LIHUE — A federal official aided by fishermen and volunteers Sunday removed a large ulua hook from the mouth of a young female Hawaiian monk seal.

The seal swam near shore after the operation without apparent fear of the humans, said William Gilmartin, leader of the Marine Mammals and Endangered Species Program at the Honolulu Laboratory of the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Gilmartin said campers, fishermen and others helped restrain the seal during the 10-minute operation on a Kauai beach. The hook measured 2.75 inches by 1.75 inches. Gilmartin used a large pair of pliers to get it out.

Lihue veterinarian David Haas said he had heard stories that a shore fisherman had accidentally hooked a seal, and hauled it close enough to cut the wire leader.

Hawaiian monk seals eat reef fish close to shore, and the seal



The ulua hook removed from the Hawaiian monk seal.

may have mistaken the fisherman's bait for safe food.

In mid-August, Kalaheo resident Carrie Palama reported seeing the seal with a hook in its mouth. Gilmartin and Oahu veterinarian Robert Morris failed to locate the seal on an Aug. 18 trip to Kauai.

Gilmartin said he found the seal basking on a Labor Day

weekend trip.

The operation Sunday confirmed the seal is the female pup born on a south Kauai beach Aug. 7 last year. It carried flipper tags attached by scientists shortly after it was weaned.

The birth was the first in the main Hawaiian Islands in 10 years.