



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
PACIFIC ISLANDS OFFICE

P.O. BOX 50167
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96850



September 15, 1990

Dr. George Balaz
National Marine Fisheries Service
2570 Dole Street
Honolulu, Hawaii

Dear George,

Greetings from Tern amidst a flurry of plane comings and goings, survey crews, anxious bosses (McDermond is here doing performance plans and annual work plans!), and other such common occurrences. I wanted to get these notes to you and Brenda as soon as possible, as I know how important this is. Craig and I were only too glad to help in assisting you all at NMFS to get as much information as we could. I hope you will feel free to call on us whenever the occasion arises.

On 13 September, we arrived at Midway atoll. The Commander gave us the four polaroids enclosed and then arranged to take us to the nets. One had already been buried, and he arranged for it to be dug up and inspected.


The first net we examined was found on the southern edge of the reef approximately southwest of the old dump. A person there, not named by the Commander, had estimated the net's total length to be over 25 feet, thus your message that a 25 foot drift net was at Midway. However, the net was actually wrapped up and not free floating. In actuality, the net was only 10-12 feet in length. Please refer to polaroid shot number one. The net was entirely made up of monofilament line, light green in color, with a stretch length of two inches. There were several oblong plastic and styrofoam floats wrapped around the net, and a metal plate where the float line attached to the net. There were no identifying markings on any of the floats or the metal plate. The net was encrusted with invertebrates and looked to have been in the water for some time. It is my opinion that this net had been discarded from a ship and was not an active drift net that had become entangled. The float line was clearly wrapped around the net in an attempt to contain it. I also took three pictures of this net and will send them to you by the 28th of September. There was no evidence of animal matter in this net other than invertebrates.

The second net was found wrapped around the cargo pier on the north side of the island. Please refer to the remaining polaroids. The net appeared to be 30 feet in length and was an actively fishing net. The origin of this net is unknown; if this net was discarded from a fishing vessel, it was not discarded in a manner that would prevent entanglement. The net was of identical mesh to that of the one found on the south side, light green in color, wholly monofilament with oblong styrofoam and

plastic floats attached. This net, when discovered, was said to contain one live turtle, a turtle's flipper, and one dead seal. Upon inspection of this net, I observed only one dead seal. One turtle was reported to have swum away, unharmed. The turtle was platter-sized and had no tags. The Commander reported that this turtle was later seen feeding around the same pier where the net had been found, so the turtle may have become entrapped at the pier. There was no evidence of a turtle flipper in the net, nor do the polaroids show evidence of this. The seal carcass in the net was badly decayed. The carcass had no head, no right front flipper, and the ventral surface was ripped open, making identification of sex impossible for me to determine. The carcass was wholly light gray, with no variation in color. The hind flippers and tail were intact, and there were no tags on the seal. The entire length of the seal was four feet, as it was in the net. It appeared to be no larger than a J2. If there are diagnostic characteristics of monk seals other than those using the head and bones, I will be happy to look at a "key" when I'm back in Honolulu. This looked to me like a monk seal, but I'm sure that the bones can be recovered and a positive id can be made by a qualified individual. I have written the Commander and asked him if he could mark the burial site for you.

Please let me know if there is anything else I can do. I am now rushing off to count shorebirds!

Sincerely,



Jennifer Lynn Megyesi
Assistant Refuge Manager, Tern Island