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The monk seal, *Monachus monachus* (Hermann, 1779), is one of the most endangered species in the world. At present, the world population is between 200 and 300 individuals. The species is in constant decline and its disappearance from the Mediterranean basin and the Atlantic coast may occur before the year 2000.

The causes of the decline of the monk seal are all linked to the activities of man:

- direct destruction by fishermen who consider it a competitor,
- loss of its habitat due to industrial and touristic development,
- over-exploitation of the fish on which it feeds.

To protect the monk seal, it is indispensable that:

- the species is protected by law,
- there are effectively managed protected areas with efficient legislation,
- the public are aware of its protection,
- injured or sick animals, as well as abandoned pups, are cared for (Rescue Center).

Rescue Organisation.

If an injured or sick monk seal or abandoned pup is found: telephone the following numbers:

- free phone: 93.33.49.49 (day) or 93.33.76.76 (night)
Marineland Antibes, 24h/24h and 365 days/year.
- Environmental Agency of the country concerned.

In accordance with the Environmental Agency of the country concerned and the DG XI (Commission of the European Community, Brussels), the Rescue Center team can intervene immediately on the spot, to examine the animal and to give an initial diagnosis. If it appears that the animal can be cared for or raised in place, the Rescue Center team will commence treatment.

If it appears that the animal must be transferred to give it more intensive care, the Rescue Center, in accordance with the authorities of the country and respecting international conventions, will arrange for, and assume the financial costs of, transport of the seal. All will be done to guarantee transport in the best possible conditions in order to limit the eventual stress to the animal.

At the Rescue Center, the animal will receive all necessary care. This will be conducted under the sanitary control and supervision of permanent veterinarians. The personnel and the veterinarians who will take care of the animals have a large experience in the care of marine mammals.

The seal, once out of danger, will be repatriated to the country of origin. The precise site of the release will be determined by the authorities of the country. The cost of repatriation will be paid for by the Rescue Center.

Information Network

The Rescue Center is very interested in collaboration with all persons who are involved with seals. The Center would like to establish a network of observers acting as much as information gatherers, e.g. on the distribution of the monk seal, as lookouts to warn of the presence of seals requiring the rapid assistance of the Rescue Center team.

An information network, with one or several centers in each country concerned, would enable a more efficient rescue service and would permit a better knowledge of the actual condition of the seals (through regular and systematic evaluation of the populations) and their exact distribution.