

Ozzie's release back to the wild draws a crowd of fans

August 13, 2020



The Robertson family couldn't have picked a better time to take their regular vacation in Crescent City.

As big fans of Northcoast Marine Mammal Center for their work rescuing harbor seal pups and sea lions, the Robertsons — parents Kathy and Paul with their teenaged sons Tommy and Dan — got to witness a release in person Aug. 7.

Kathy said the family tries to come to Crescent City from American Falls, Idaho, every three years since their honeymoon and stopping by the Northcoast Marine Mammal Center or at least donating online for their fundraisers.

This year, however, the center was closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. But they were excited to be invited to the release.

Among the trio of seal pups released on the beach behind Ocean Front Lodge was Ozzie Octopus.

Ozzie was rescued May 21, emaciated and dehydrated at the Mad River Beach, at just 10 days old, weighing 15 pounds and measuring 2.4 feet long.

“He was literally a bag of bones,” said Karen Helms, executive director of the Crescent City center.

At release, he weighed a healthy 47 pounds and was 3.1 feet long.

Joining Ozzie in his recovery were Notorious Blub and Shark Wahlberg. Notorious Blub was rescued on June 4 at three weeks old, 16 pounds and 2.4 feet, suffering from puncture wounds and abrasions. Upon release, he beefed back up to 47 pounds and 2.8 feet. Shark Wahlberg was rescued May 23 at about four weeks, 21 pounds and 2.2 feet, with wounds in both rear flippers and an infection in his right flipper. At the release, he bulked up to 41 pounds, 3 feet.

“All animals are examined by our veterinarian Dr. Dennis Wood and we do a full blood panel to make sure they are healthy before release,” Helms said.

She added it is usual to rehab and release seal pups together to aid in their recovery and reintegration back into the wild.

Each seal is given a progressing meal of fish bites to eventually full fish, re-learning to eat and chasing down their own meal in the facility’s pool.

Once given a clean bill of health, volunteers carry the pups down to the water’s edge in dog crates. Once doors are opened, and the crates tilted, the pups need little encouragement to enter the water.

Helms said the volunteers hang around for little while to ensure the pups do not return right away to land and human activity.

Speaking for the family, Kathy Robertson was thrilled to witness the event.

“It was amazing. They’re so great. I love what these guys do. They’re so cute, the seal pups,” Kathy said.

She added they eventually plan to retire in Crescent City, and plan to volunteer at the mammal center.

“They have nothing like this in Idaho. I think what they do is selfless, and good,” Kathy said. “They have wounded little animals, nurse them back to health and get them where they’re supposed to be.”

As a nonprofit, Helms added the Northcoast Marine Mammal Centers operates on donations, and like most nonprofits during the pandemic, donations are down across the board. Donations can be made on the center’s webpage at <https://northcoastmmc.org>.

