

## **Steller Sea Lion Released, other Año Nuevo News**

*From a message from Patricia Morris, UC Santa Cruz*

The release of “Arctic” on Tuesday, 4/21, went well. She is a burly 91 kg now. You could see she was getting very attentive as soon as we arrived at Año and she started to pick up the smells and sounds. When we opened the cage on the north end of the island, she was cautious. It took her about 30-40 minutes to make her way down to the water's edge, and she stuck her head in repeatedly looking around under water. Then she got in and checked out spots where she could get out again easily. She met her first adult female elephant seal, no problem. A mother harbor seal brought her pup over and checked her out, then a couple of juvenile California sea lions came over and invited her to play. They started swimming around in the bay, circling and porpoising. Arctic was clearly ecstatic, figuring out how much fun you can have in a really big pool. So, I hope her new friends will give her the exercise she needs to build up her swimming strength; then take her out to sea and teach her how to catch her own lunch.

Arctic has a satellite tag, so The Marine Mammal Center (TMMC) is hoping to track her. But TMMC said on Tuesday night that her satellite tag data suggested she might have swum back to the mainland. They did not get any data at all on 4/23. So, please keep an eye out for Arctic. She has a satellite tag on her head and two big black Xs across her back, as well as two orange tags (see photo). If anyone sees her, please let Pat Morris at UCSC [[pamorris@ucsc.edu](mailto:pamorris@ucsc.edu)] know as soon as possible. Do not approach her and do not let her approach you (she'll be looking for fish and she might be upset when you don't have any).



*Arctic is identifiable by her satellite antenna, black crosses on her back, and two orange tags. Contact Pat Morris at UCSC [[pamorris@ucsc.edu](mailto:pamorris@ucsc.edu)] if you spot her.*

Other Año Nuevo Island news from 4/21. No Brandt's cormorants on the island in the middle of the day, except for one juvenile wandering around looking very confused and lost (maybe sick or hungry), but there also were not a large number of dead bodies, just a couple, which is about what you would normally expect. I read tags on the mainland until dark and it looked like about 500 BRCOs came in to roost - maybe 350-400 in front of the lightkeeper's house and maybe 100-150 on the fallen light tower hill.

WEGU were in attendance, but only saw a couple of nests actually started and they were not yet being defensive.

The PIT tag crew found 43 new PIT tags from this year on the south terrace, so some of those smolts are getting picked off pretty quickly after release down the creeks.

Saw a couple of either eared or horned grebes on the bay while crossing. I don't remember seeing them there before at this time of year, but that is not my area of expertise. Saw a fresh dead western grebe on the mainland while reading tags, but it had been worked on by someone, so I didn't bring it in.

The most striking thing to me with respect to pinnipeds on 4/21 was the lack of harbor seal pups. We only saw five. I'd normally expect to see 12-20 this time of year. TMMC is getting a lot in, so it doesn't sound like they're doing well this season.