

SPRING 2006

# News Splash

VOLUME 10 • NUMBER 1

THE NATIONAL MARINE LIFE CENTER, INC. NEWSLETTER • [www.nmlc.org](http://www.nmlc.org)



PHOTO BY MRS. T. PHOTOGRAPHY

## Message From The President

Kathryn A. Zagzebski

Hello and happy spring! Two thousand five was a year of change and growth for the National Marine Life Center. We enjoyed many accomplishments, including: adding professional stranding experts to our board of directors; improving our relationship with our stranding network partners; adding a part-time education/outreach coordinator and increasing our educational program offerings; remodeling our Marine Animal Discovery Center with upgraded exhibits; adding a part-time veterinarian who specializes in wildlife; upgrading and opening our Sea Turtle and Seal Clinic; completing the permits necessary for our new hospital; building community support through our volunteer programs and through public events; designing a new logo; and admitting our first Kemp's ridley sea turtles.

The admission of seven Kemp's ridley sea turtle patients has been a particular success, as well as a personal joy. It has been amazing to observe – and participate in – their recovery. We've watched them grow from underweight animals scraped up from their stranding to beautiful, fat, healthy, and feisty animals. ("Kelly" tried to bite me today as I restrained him so

Dr. Michele could take a blood sample – an excellent sign of recovery!) It's fun to watch the turtles preen and swim and sleep and eat. I've been amazed to see each has a different personality (or should I say "turtle-ality"! ). Truly we are privileged to be part of an organization and network helping to save these critically endangered animals.

In January, I was honored to volunteer with the hard-working staff and volunteers of the Cape Cod Stranding Network ([www.capecodstranding.net](http://www.capecodstranding.net)) as they responded to dozens of mass stranded dolphins. It was truly inspiring to see these dedicated individuals at work – saving and releasing the animals they could, ending the suffering of those animals unable to be released, and learning from the animals that died. Inevitably, the question arose as to when the National Marine Life Center will open for cetaceans and how many we will be able to take. We are making great strides towards building our new hospital. We will begin building our life support infrastructure to bring necessary salt water from the Cape Cod Canal this summer, and we anticipate beginning construction on the new hospital (including dolphin pools) late next year. It is important to understand, however, that we will still not be able to save all the animals that strand. So why bother, you might ask?

You may have heard the following story (author unknown).

*As I walked along the seashore, this young boy greeted me. He was tossing stranded starfish back to the deep blue sea. I said "Tell me why you bother,*

*why you waste your time this way. There's a million stranded starfish. Does it matter, anyway?" And he said, "It matters to this one. It deserves a chance to grow. It matters to this one. I can't save them all I know. But it matters to this one. I'll return it to the sea. It matters to this one, and it matters to me."*

Saving stranded animals does matter. On an individual level, it matters to each animal saved. On a population level, when you look at the case of the turtles currently in the hospital and realize there are only 900 nesting females alive on the planet, you realize the rehabilitation of even one animal actually does make a difference in the continued existence of the species. On a bigger scale, each animal that strands – whether alive or dead – gives scientists an opportunity to learn more about marine animal physiology, behavior, and health. Ultimately, studies of marine animal health teach us more about ocean health, including potential threats to the ocean that can also affect

*continued on page 5*

## Inside This Issue

Endangered Kemp's Ridelys.....	2
Polar Bear Weekend.....	4
Holiday Splash.....	5
Community Support.....	6
New Logo.....	6
Spring Splash.....	7
Norpel's Generosity.....	7
Free Lecture.....	8



## Board of Trustees

### Chairman

Richard P. Largay, Esq.

### Vice Chair, Science and Medicine

Joseph R. Geraci, VMD, PhD

### Treasurer

Joseph P. Carlson

### Acting Clerk

Jean M. DeLuca, Esq.

### Members

Robert L. Brennan, Esq.

Robert J. Ciolek

Douglas J. Fletcher

George M. Griffith

Jeffrey P. Luce

Connie Merigo

Kathleen M. Touhey

Patricia W. Towle

### President & Executive Director

Kathryn A. Zagzebski

### Founding Chair, 1995 - 1999

Elizabeth S. Hornor

### Immediate Past Chair, 1999 - 2005

Townsend Hornor

## Staff

Kathryn A. Zagzebski,

*President and Executive Director*

Joanne J. Nicholson,

*Executive Asst. and Outreach Coordinator*

Danielle R. O'Neil,

*Animal Care Supervisor*

Michele A. Sims, D.V.M.,

*Associate Veterinarian*

Brian H. Moore, *Animal Care Technician*

C. Rogers Williams, V.M.D.,

*Research Veterinarian*

Deb Baker, *Development Officer*

Wendy Cullinan, *Development Coordinator*

## MISSION STATEMENT

*Dedicated to rehabilitating and releasing stranded whales, dolphins, seals and sea turtles, and to advancing scientific knowledge and education in marine wildlife health and conservation.*



**NATIONAL  
MARINE  
L I F E  
CENTER**

*Caring for Stranded Marine Animals*

120 Main Street • P.O. Box 269

Buzzards Bay, MA 02532

(508)743-9888

## First Endangered Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles in Rehabilitation at NMLC

Gliding gracefully through the waters of the National Marine Life Center pools are seven exciting new patients. Three endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtles arrived at the NMLC on Tuesday, December 6, 2005. Four additional Kemp's ridley turtles arrived on Friday, January 19, 2006. The turtles, which stranded on the Cape and were rescued by Massachusetts Audubon Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, were in critical care at the New England Aquarium. Now that they are out of the Aquarium's turtle "ICU," the animals continue their rehabilitation at the NMLC's Sea Turtle Clinic.

"These are the first Kemp's ridley sea turtles we've cared for in our Clinic," said Kathy Zagzebski, NMLC President and Executive Director. "Saving these critically-endangered animals is essential to ocean conservation. We're thrilled to be working along side institutions such as the New England Aquarium and Mass Audubon in the fight to save stranded sea turtles on Cape Cod."

The sea turtles are juveniles, estimated to be two to three years old. Juvenile Kemps often visit Cape Cod Bay and Nantucket Sound during summer months to feed in the rich eel grass habitats. "Lemony Snicket" stranded on October 30<sup>th</sup> at Corporation Beach, Dennis. "Valentine" also stranded on October 30<sup>th</sup> at Chapen Beach, Dennis. "Smarty" stranded on November 12<sup>th</sup> at First Encounter Beach, Eastham. "Jack" stranded on November 11<sup>th</sup> at Lieutenant Island, Wellfleet. "Kelly" stranded on October 28<sup>th</sup> at Crosby Beach, Brewster. "Claw" stranded on November 24<sup>th</sup> at Cole Road, Barnstable. "Flash" stranded on November 21<sup>st</sup> at Fisherman's Landing, Brewster. All seven animals were suffering from cold-stunning, a form of hypothermia. Due to their cold-



*Dr. Sims and Danielle take blood from "Smarty".*

stun condition, the animals were also suffering from pneumonia, frostbite, carapace damage, and cracking and bleeding skin.

At NMLC, all seven turtles have been prescribed antibiotics as well as topical wound treatment as needed. As of May 4<sup>th</sup>, Smarty remains on antibiotics. The patients are offered a diet of herring and squid. Supplements of Vitamin B Complex are placed in the food. Dr. Michele Sims, Associate Veterinarian, and Danielle O'Neil, Animal Care Supervisor, perform weekly physical exams and monthly blood draws to



*Measuring "Kelly"*

monitor and assess wound healing, weight, and blood chemistry. All of the turtles are making great progress. They are eating well and gaining weight. Their wounds are healing, and their hematology parameters have normalized. “As long as the animals continue to improve, we anticipate releasing them in late May or early June,” said Dr. Sims. Because the waters around Cape Cod remain cold until late summer, the turtles may be released off the coast of Virginia or another southern state.

Kemp’s ridley sea turtles are listed as endangered on the U.S. Endangered Species List. Scientists estimate that only about 900 nesting females exist world-wide, and every individual is critical to the survival of the species. Ninety percent of the cold-stunned sea turtles rescued off the Cape are Kemp’s ridley. Cold-stunning is a condition that affects these cold-blooded reptiles when the water becomes too cold for the animals to maintain their internal body temperature. Kemp’s ridleys are the smallest species of sea turtle. Adults grow to be 23 to 29 inches (58 to 74 cm) long and weigh between 70 and 95 pounds (32 to 43 kg). Although scientists don’t know for sure, they estimate that Kemp’s reach sexual maturity at approximately 11 or 12 years of age. An adult female Kemp’s ridley turtle can lay two to three nests



“Valentine” had minor scrapes upon arrival.

#### Weight Gain (in kg) of NMLC Patients (1 kg = 2.2 lb)

	<b>Stranding Wt</b>	<b>Admit NMLC</b>	<b>1/31/06</b>	<b>4/19/06</b>
Lemony	2.3	2.6	3.3	5.8
Valentine	1.6	1.8	2.9	4.0
Smarty	2.3	2.5	4.3	6.6
Jack	3.7	3.8	3.8	6.4
Flash	1.9	2.2	2.2	4.4
Claw	1.9	2.0	2.0	3.7
Kelly	2.2	2.9	2.9	4.8

per year and average 110 eggs per nest. Sadly, only one hatchling in 1000 survives to adulthood. Their life span is estimated at 30 to 50 years.



“Flash” surfacing in the Clinic’s pool.



Examining “Claw”.

## Polar Bear Weekend Was a Polar Success

By: Laura McMahon and Kathy Zagzebski

The weekend of January 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, area residents jumped in to help stranded marine animals. This year's Polar Bear Ball and Swim raised over \$12,000 to help the National Marine Life Center further our mission to rehabilitate stranded marine animals for release and to promote science education.

Decked in faux fur and baubles, over 120 friends and supporters from Plymouth to Provincetown attended Friday night's Polar Bear Ball, eager to enjoy the festivities and show their support for the National Marine Life Center. Guests jumped in generously to bid on over 75 auction items and



From left to right – Robert Brennan, Richard Largay, Kathryn Zagzebski, Polar Bear, Rober Ciolek, Joe Carlson, and Katie Touhey.



Michael and Jackie Kennedy

raise thousands of dollars in donations. For having the best faux fur outfits, Ms. Lorna Colford and Mr. Steve Dalton were crowned the Queen and King of the dance. Following the coronation, guests danced the night away to the lively rhythm and blues of the Dave Richardson Band.

The Polar Bear Swim took place on Saturday, when participants jumped in and took a bone-chilling plunge in the frigid waters off Point Independence Beach. With TV coverage from Fox 25 news, swimmers raised awareness and donations. Twelve year-old Marena Duren was the top youth fundraiser,

raising over \$120 in pledges. "I did it!" Marena said afterwards, shivering and with a big smile on her face. "I'm glad to do my part to help marine animals," she added.

Point Independence Inn and Spa owners Michael and Jackie Kennedy



Lorna Colford and Steve Dalton



Marena Duran and Kathy Zagzebski run out of the water after plunging for Polar Bear.

were the honorary co-chairs of the event. They began the swim over ten years ago as a family event, and in the past three years expanded the event to benefit the National Marine Life Center and promote the village of Onset. Many thanks to all who helped make the weekend a success.

## One of Many Supporters for The Holiday Splash



December's Holiday Splash was fun for all who attended. Olivia Nelson (center) a sixth grade student from Sandwich, Massachusetts shows off the whale pendant she won. The pendant was donated by Mark Chick (right) owner of A J Marks Jeweler in East Wareham. Salesperson Ruth Roughtzedt (left) helped choose the perfect necklace! NMLC thanks AJ Marks for their on-going support.

## It was a big splash at the "Holiday Splash" open house!

By: Laura McMahon

On Saturday, December 17th, over 300 people attended the National Marine Life Center's first annual "Holiday Splash" open house. Visitors were treated to a visit from Santa, refreshments, writing Letters to Santa, and lots of arts and crafts. Participants enjoyed basket drawings for items generously donated by many local merchants and friends of NMLC. "We thank our



Volunteer Kathy Frucci teaches Merrick and Foster Rubenstine how to fold origami whales, while mom Belinda looks on.



Santa Deb Baker spreads holiday cheer.

donors for helping make the day a success!" said Joanne Nicholson, the Center's executive assistant and outreach coordinator, who participated in the event. In addition to the holiday festivities, visitors explored the Marine Animal Discovery Center and enjoyed observing the NMLC's current sea turtle patients via closed circuit TV.

continued from page 1

## Message From The President, Continued



Kathy volunteering with CCSN on transport of mass-stranded common dolphins for release 1/14/06. Photo by Cape Cod Stranding Network.

people. On a human level, people feel a connection to marine animals. The patients coming through our hospital help us teach children and adults about marine animals, why they strand, and what we can do to help. Through a greater understanding of marine animals and strandings, people are motivated to save the animals, save the oceans, and save the earth. African Ecologist Baba Dioum said, "In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught." Responding to stranded animals helps teach us to understand, to love, and to conserve.



Danielle holding Valentine, Michele holding Lemony, and Kathy holding Smarty place the turtles into the NMLC pool 12-06-05.

## Community Support

By: Joanne Nicholson

The National Marine Life Center is privileged to enjoy the support of many great community organizations.

On October 22, 2005 a group of Sea Cadets from the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Gosnold Division came to NMLC for a work detail. The Cadets cleaned the warehouse and animal clinic, helping us prepare for turtles. They washed windows, pulled weeds, boarded up cracked windows, and cleared out old furniture from the back area of our warehouse. Led by LCDR James McLoughlin and accompanied by several parents, the Cadets left the NMLC clean and neat and ready for patients! Thank you, Cadets, for your hard work!

On January 20, 2006 a group of Cub Scouts, Webelos Den 1 Pack 1620, came to paint the CCSN seal pen as part of their community service project for their citizen belt loop and Webelos badge. A fresh coat of marine-grade paint once per year is necessary to maintain the seal pen in clean and safe condition for incoming patients. The

Scouts were amazing, and had the seal pen painted in about an hour and half. The pen is now ready for CCSN and future NMLC patients! Many thanks for your hard work!



Sea Cadets at work.



Cub Scout painting.



Sea Cadets at work.



Painting completed!

Thanks to natural history illustrator Uko Gorter, the National Marine Life Center has a wonderful new logo! Depicting an Atlantic white-sided dolphin, *Lagenorhynchus acutus*, a loggerhead turtle, *Caretta caretta*, and a harbor seal, *Phoca vitulina*, the logo symbolizes the three groups of marine animals (cetaceans, sea turtles, and seals) that the NMLC works to rehabilitate. "This logo gives us a professional new look and shows what we're all about," stated Kathy Zagzebski, NMLC President and

~ New Logo ~



Executive Director. "We're excited to begin using the logo in our publications and gift shop products."

Specializing in marine mammal illustration, Uko Gorter has traveled extensively to observe whales and dolphins in their own environment. He is President of the Puget Sound Chapter of the American Cetacean Society, and a member of the Society for Marine Mammalogy. Uko lives with his wife in Kirkland, Washington. Additional illustrations may be viewed on his website at [www.ukogorter.com](http://www.ukogorter.com)



## Join us for our Spring Splash Open House!

Enjoy Arts and Crafts,  
Stories, Games,  
Activities and  
Educational Displays  
about Marine Animals  
and Strandings

**Sunday**  
**May 21, 2006**

**12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

NMLC's Marine Animal  
Discovery Center  
~  
120 Main Street  
Buzzards Bay  
Massachusetts

For information call **508.743.9888** or visit us online at [www.nmlc.org](http://www.nmlc.org)

### Norpel's Generosity Helps Feed Our Turtles

*By Danielle O'Neil, Animal Care Supervisor*

Norpel, (the Northern Pelagic Group, LLC), a pelagic fish processing plant located in New Bedford, Massachusetts, has once again donated seven cases of herring to help feed our sea turtle patients. Back in 2004, when our first patient Eco was scheduled to arrive from New England Aquarium, I didn't know where to locate fish to feed to her. I wound up ordering a huge supply of herring from a company in Florida, and it cost a fortune! Fortunately, through a local bait and tackle store owner here on the Cape, I learned that there was a fish processing plant nearby. I contacted them on a whim to see if they would

be interested in donating fish. Within hours, I received an e-mail from Ms. Colleen Hermannsson, the office manager at Norpel, saying that they would be delighted to donate not just herring but also mackerel, as much as I could carry away! This wonderful relationship has continued on to the present. After scheduling a date in December to transfer patients from the New England Aquarium to the National Marine Life Center, I once again contacted Colleen. Even though we had not spoken since August, 2004, she e-mailed me back immediately saying once again that Norpel would be delighted to do-

nate as much herring as we need. I have since done three "fish runs" and picked up hundreds of pounds of herring for our seven Kemp's ridley sea turtle patients. Norpel's donations of herring have saved the National Marine Life Center hundreds of dollars, and kept our turtles well-fed with a high quality, human grade diet that has helped speed their recovery. On behalf of the staff, volunteers, and especially the patients of NMLC, thank you to Colleen, Billie Schofield, the general manager, and all of Norpel for their generous support!

# ~ FREE LECTURE ~

## Stranding & Rehabilitation of Marine Animals on Cape Cod

*Learn more about strandings, reasons for stranding,  
what happens to stranded animals, and what **YOU** can do to help!*

*This lecture is a joint presentation of the Cape Cod Stranding Network  
and the National Marine Life Center.*

*It is offered **FREE** to the public as part of Cape Cod Maritime Days.*

### Wednesday, May 17, 2006

### 7:00 pm

*at the National Marine Life Center/*

*Cape Cod Stranding Network*

*120 Main Street*

*Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts*

For more information, call:

NMLC 508.743.9888

or CCSN 508.743.9805



*Caring for Stranded Marine Animals*

[www.nmlc.org](http://www.nmlc.org)



[www.nmlc.org](http://www.nmlc.org)

*Examining "Valentine".*



120 Main Street  
P.O. Box 269, 120 Main Street  
Buzzards Bay, MA 02532-0269



*Caring for Stranded Marine Animals*

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Buzzards Bay,  
MA  
Permit #32