

Justin Brown and Linden Stear
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Here are a few observations expanding on Cheryl Antonucci's trip report for Hawaiian monk seals.

The Hawaiian monk seal is a frequent but irregular visitor to Poipu Beach. It hadn't been seen for a month when we were there, according to the lifeguards and locals with whom we spoke. Although Poipu Beach seems to be its favorite haulout, it is spotted with some decent degree of frequency at any number of Kauai beaches (Shipwreck, Lawa'i, Kapa'a, Anahola, to name a few). We saw one at Salt Pond Beach and just missed another at Lawa'i Beach (the signs that are placed around a seal telling people to stay back were still up). I recommend starting early and going from beach to beach to beach in order to find the seal; the beaches, as well as the island itself, aren't very big. The most reliable spot for a sighting, however, is Ni'ihau Island, which is a two-hour boat ride from the Poipu area. There are several companies that take tourists to the waters around the island for snorkeling and scuba diving. They don't dock on the island because it is privately owned, but the seals typically come to investigate the boats. The owner of the company that took us out told me that he's done over 100 dives around Ni'ihau and can't even remember a time when he didn't encounter a seal in the water. Within 30 seconds of getting in the water to snorkel, I was in the company of an inquisitive monk seal. Just to the north of Ni'ihau Island (less than one mile) is a tiny island called Lehua, which is a state wildlife sanctuary, and the seals are usually found resting on the rocks along its coast. Lehua is a great place to see spinner dolphins, too.