



Alaska SeaLife Center

News Release

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Alaska SeaLife Center's Wildlife Response Team Provides Expert Care for Stranded Cook Inlet Beluga Calf

Seward, AK (March 9, 2018) – The Alaska SeaLife Center has concluded 159 days of round-the-clock care for the Cook Inlet beluga calf, Tyonek. On Thursday, Tyonek was successfully transported to SeaWorld San Antonio in Texas.



ACTIVITIES PICTURED ARE AUTHORIZED BY MMHSRP MMPA/ESA #18786-01

Alaska SeaLife Center team members treating the stranded Cook Inlet beluga calf on October 1, 2017.

On September 30, 2017, the one-month-old calf was found stranded near Trading Bay in western Cook Inlet. With the authorization and assistance of NOAA, Tyonek was transported to the ASLC and housed in the Center's I.Sea.U. When he first arrived he was in a weakened condition and required 24/7 care from multiple animal care experts. During Tyonek's first days at the Center, he was 140 pounds and 162 cm long. He gradually progressed from suckling from a tube to drinking from a bottle. As Dr. Carrie Goertz, Director of Animal Health, described, "When it comes to helping a terribly rare Cook Inlet beluga, every day is a victory."

In November, Tyonek was transitioned to a larger outdoor pool as he became more independent. Over the next few months Tyonek steadily gained weight and grew stronger, becoming more playful with his caregivers. At his final weigh-in he was 260 pounds and 177 cm long.

Once NOAA Fisheries determined Tyonek was non-releasable and could not survive in the wild, the agency followed its formal procedure to place him at a permanent care facility in the United States. Based on a thorough review of the applications, NOAA Fisheries

selected SeaWorld San Antonio as the location best suited for Tyonek to thrive because they have both adult females and young male calves that will be important for Tyonek's social development.

Tyonek is the first Cook Inlet beluga calf to be successfully rehabilitated. “We are ecstatic that Tyonek continues to grow and gain strength when just over five months ago he was found stranded, malnourished, and dehydrated on a beach,” said Alaska SeaLife Center President and CEO, Dr. Tara Riemer. “The ASLC is thankful for the support of Georgia Aquarium, Mystic Aquarium, Shedd Aquarium and SeaWorld, who assisted the ASLC team since October. It has been a long journey for Tyonek, and we were happy to be a part of this young calf’s story.”

Here are some statistics from Tyonek’s time at the Center:

- Over the course of 159 days, employees and volunteers of ASLC and partner aquariums worked over 7000 hours to care for Tyonek.
- While at the Center, this young calf nearly doubled his weight from 140 to 260 pounds.
- Tyonek drank 195 gallons of formula, an average of 1.2 gallons per day.



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Tyonek playing in the outdoor pool at the ASLC on February 28, 2018.

The Alaska SeaLife Center, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, is the only permitted marine mammal wildlife response and rehabilitation entity in Alaska. Over 80% of the funding for the Center’s wildlife response program comes from charitable donations. The wildlife response team responds to calls across the 33,904 miles of coastline throughout Alaska. The Center is prepared for wildlife response year-round. Last year was especially eventful with response to several sea otters, various species of seal, and a walrus as well as this Cook Inlet beluga calf. We are thankful for our donors, members, and supporters who help make what we do possible.

The Alaska SeaLife Center operates a 24-hour hotline for the public to report stranded marine mammals or birds, and encourages people who have found a stranded or sick marine animal to avoid touching or approaching the animal. Call first! 1-888-774-SEAL.

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High resolution photos available from media@alaskasealife.org.

About the Alaska SeaLife Center: Opened in 1998, the Alaska SeaLife Center is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) research institution and public aquarium. We are excited to be celebrating 20 years of generating and sharing scientific knowledge to promote understanding and stewardship of Alaska’s marine ecosystems. The ASLC is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. To learn more, visit www.alaskasealife.org or find us on [Facebook](#).