

National Marine Sanctuaries  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



NATIONAL MARINE  
SANCTUARIES



# Wildlife Disturbance in MBNMS – Current Status

By: Scott Kathey

# So what's the big deal?

All we wanna do is get them to look at us so we can take a picture. We're not hurtin anything.



# Death by a Thousand Cuts

A lot of little deals in succession become  
a Big Deal

1



2



3



1 Disturbance every 15 minutes  
= No Rest and wasted calories



= Fatigue, Stress, Sickness, Disease,  
Death  
(over time)



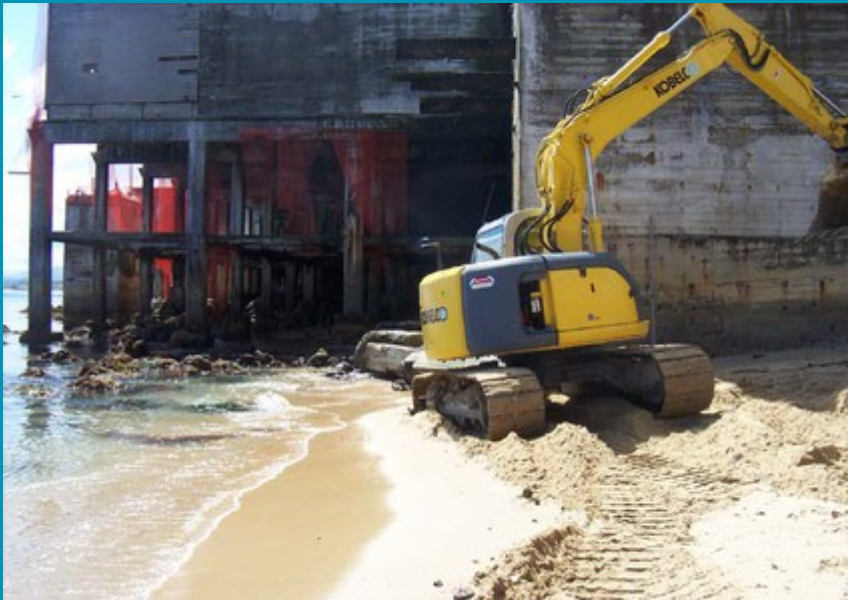
# Types of Disturbance

## ❖ Visual



# Types of Disturbance

## ❖ Audible





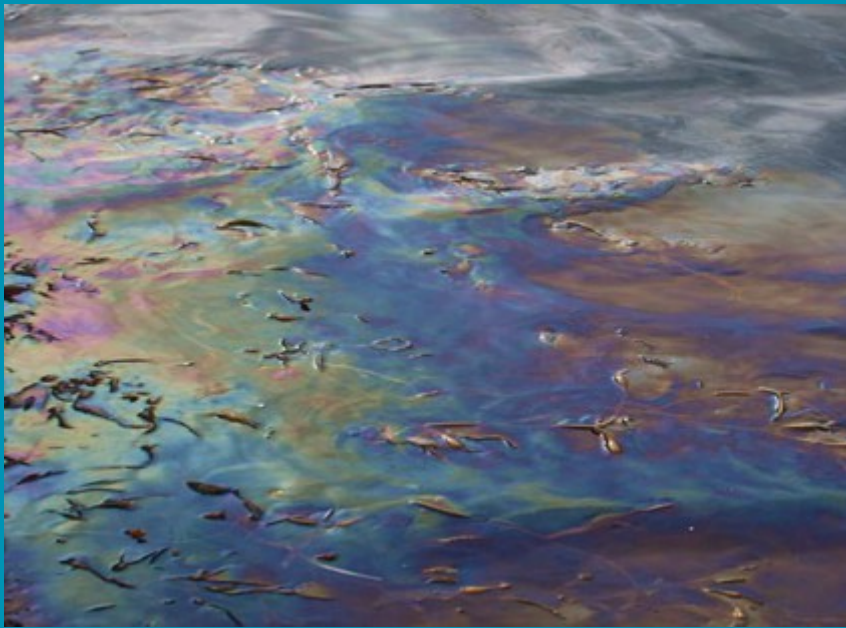
# Types of Disturbance

## ❖ Physical



# Types of Disturbance

## ❖ Environmental



# Increased Reports of Disturbance Since 2011



# Some Reasons for Increased Interactions

- ❖ Shifting environmental conditions drawing forage fish & predators closer to shore
- ❖ Proliferation of short-range cell phone camera use
- ❖ Increased use of hobby UAS technology
- ❖ Increased wildlife programming by media
- ❖ Successful marketing of MBNMS as eco-tourism destination for wildlife viewing
- ❖ Social media portrayals of close encounters

UAS

# Background

- ❖ 1990s - MBNMS determined that radio-controlled (RC) model aircraft qualified as “motorized aircraft” under sanctuary overflight regulations
- . . . and that MBNMS overflight regs also pertained to motorized hang gliders, ultralights, and dirigibles.

# Background

Type of RC  
model aircraft  
operated



in Elkhorn  
Slough in 1990s

# Background

- ❖ MBNMS regulatory prohibition since 1993:  
Flying “motorized aircraft” below 1000 ft  
within overflight prohibition zones.





# Background

❖ “Motorized aircraft”  
is any craft capable of  
attaining flight and propelled  
by a motor.



# Background

- ❖ New breed of RC model aircraft



# Background

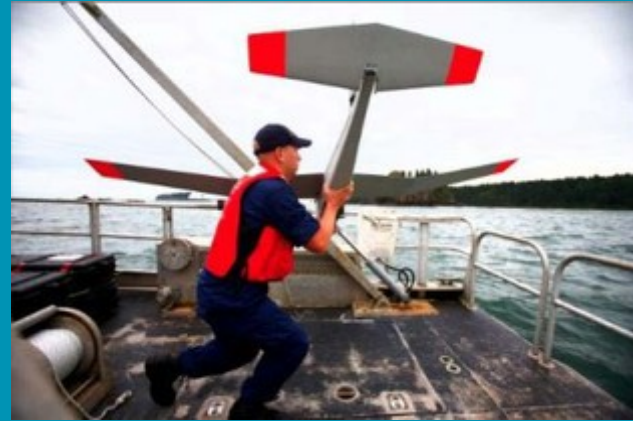
Professional Use



Private Use

# Background

## ❖ Research use within sanctuaries



# Issues

## ❖ Wildlife disturbance within MBNMS



# MBNMS Actions to Prevent/Reduce Wildlife Disturbance

- Regulatory zoning (aircraft & MPWC) & permitting
- Team Ocean on-water interpretation & outreach
- Bay Net shoreline interpretation & outreach
- Interpretive and regulatory enforcement
- Visitor center interpretation & messaging
- School marine science curricula
- Shoreline signage
- Wildlife viewing guidelines (webpages, brochures, field guides)
- Posters
- Superintendent's statements – media bulletins
- TV, radio and newspaper interviews - responsible wildlife viewing
- Thank You Ocean campaign
- Support to Friends of the Elephant Seal interpretive program
- Encouragement & support to eco-tour operators to develop and implement responsible wildlife viewing guidelines & orientations for customers
- Collaborative enforcement with other federal & state agencies for patrols, response, & investigations



I'm on the job Nell!







Questions?

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