

Gill Net Removal With Mexican Authorities

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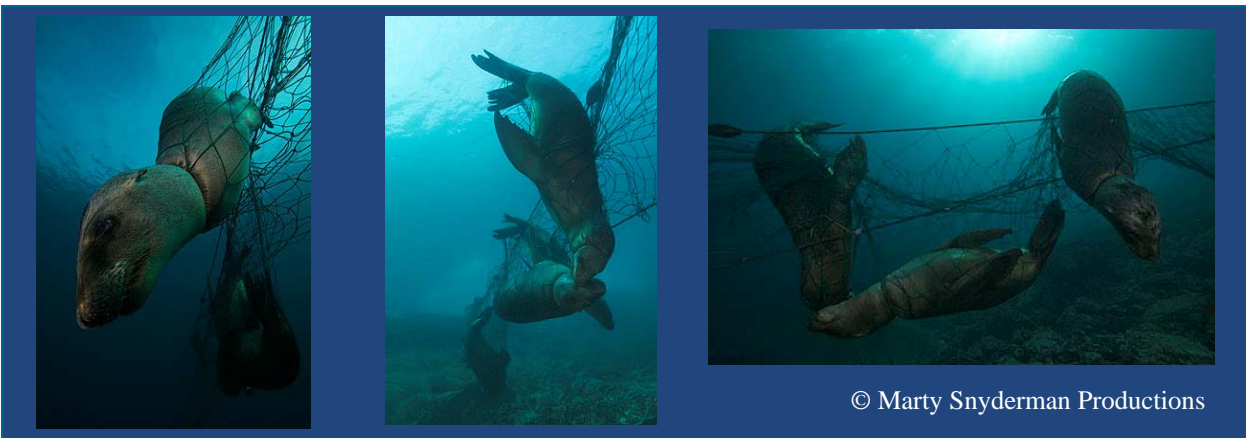
The San Diego Oceans Foundation (SDOF), designed to promote ocean stewardship by leading community-supported projects that enhance ocean habitat and encourage sustainable use of ocean resources, has combined efforts with Mexican marine authorities to remove an abandoned gill net near the Coronado Islands, according to Fred West, President of SDOF.

Gill netting is a commercial fishing practice that indiscriminately catches nearly everything in its path. Hundreds of nets are set each night both in Mexico and three miles off the California coast and deplete not only fish populations, but also those of seals, sea lions, sharks, turtles and crustaceans.

"The efforts put forth by the Mexican marine authorities to remove the net were unprecedented," said West. "Having our members report the abandonment helped lead the way for a win-win situation for Mexico and the United States. The by-catch of these abandoned nets severely erodes any efforts in effectively protecting the ocean environment. We are grateful for the swift action taken to prevent further incidental kills."

On Thursday, November 6th, SDOF members Marty Snyderman, Mark Thurlow, and Howard Hall discovered the net near the Lobster Shack. They revisited the following day and were concerned the net had been abandoned since it had not been monitored. As professional photographers and marine conservationists, each documented the net's devastating effects. A total of five sea lions, one cormorant and one shark reportedly fell victim.

Because of the large percentage of "incidental kill," or animals that are caught and then thrown back into the ocean dead because they are "undesirable," the practice of gill netting in near shore waters was banned in 1990 in the State of California. Most divers, line fishers and spear fishers agree that since the law's passage, the stocks of halibut, white seabass and several other kinds of fish have rebounded. However, because gill netting is still an active fishery in both Mexico and 3 miles off the California coast, hundreds of marine mammals and other marine species still perish every night.



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