



NOAA FISHERIES WEST COAST REGION

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Elephant Seal. Photo: Tony Orr, NOAA AFSC



California Sea Lion. Photo: Ben Sandford, NOAA Fisheries

Share the Shore with Marine Mammals

Sea lions and seals are protected animals. It's against federal law to disturb them or do anything that may cause them to change their behavior. Enjoy watching them in a safe, responsible way:

- **Keep your distance.** You are too close if an animal starts to stare, fidget or flee. Seals and sea lions on land are especially wary and may rush into the water or abandon their pups. Animals become stressed and may be trampled, and continued disturbance can be harmful to their overall health.
- **Seals and sea lions come ashore to rest, regulate their body heat and nurse their young.** Mothers often leave pups behind while feeding offshore. Just because a pup is alone does not mean it's abandoned.
- **Keep pets on a leash.** Pets can disturb or harm wildlife, or may cause mothers and pups to be separated. Wild animals can injure or spread disease to pets.
- **Stay away from animals that appear sick, injured or abandoned.**



Harbor Seal. Photo: Robin Lindsey

If you see an injured or dead marine
mammal, call

1-866-767-6114

Experts will ask you about the
location and condition of the animal.



California Sea Lions. Photo: Jennifer Gaitan, NOAA Ocean Service

California Sea Lions

Adult females average 220 lbs, are blond-tan with a slender body. Adult males may reach 1,000 lbs, with large shoulders and neck, a pronounced forehead, and light brown or blond hair. Pups have a brown-black coat. Range and haul-out sites: Baja California to British Columbia on offshore islands. They haul-out on sandy beaches, rock reef, ledges, breakwaters, buoys, docks, etc.

Watch for these Marine Mammals

The West Coast has many opportunities to observe seals and sea lions as they swim, rest, or tend to their young. It is important for your safety and the animals' health to never approach or interact with a marine mammal, and you could be breaking the law.

Find a safe distance to view the animals. Bring your binoculars and enjoy spotting these native seals and sea lions.



Harbor Seals. Photo: Eric Boener, NOAA AFSC

Pacific Harbor Seals

Adult females can weigh up to 300 lbs, and adult males slightly more. Their fur is light tan-silver, with dark spots, or black with light spots. Coats are darker in southern range; lighter in northern range. Pups can be born with a soft white coat that is shed to reveal grey fur. Range and haul-out sites: Coastal areas, Baja California to Alaska. They haul-out year-round on nearshore beaches, mudflats, and along bays and estuaries.



Harbor Seal. Photo: Dave Withrow, NOAA AFSC



Elephant Seals. Photo: Jim Milbury, NOAA Fisheries

Northern Elephant Seals

Adult females weigh 900 -1,800 lbs. Adult males weigh up to 5,000 lbs, and may have a heavily calloused and scarred chest. Both sexes have a fleshy nose and dark brown fur. Pups have a black coat. Range and haul-out sites: Baja California to Gulf of Alaska/Aleutian Islands, traveling widely in the Northern Pacific and along the Northwest coast. They will be on beaches, offshore islands, and mainland for breeding and molting.



Elephant Seal. Photo: Chris Yates, NOAA Fisheries

Northern Fur Seals

Adult females average 140 lbs, are brown-grey and lighter along lower chest. Adult males average 600 lbs with a massive chest and stiff mane, and brown-black fur. Adults have large hind flippers, a stocky body, small head, and a pointed snout. Pups have a black coat. Range and haul-out sites: North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea, including islands off of California. They only come to shore to breed,



Northern Fur Seals. Photo: Chris Yates, NOAA Fisheries



Steller Sea Lions. Photo: NOAA

Steller Sea Lions

Adult females average 800 lbs, and adult males average 2,500 lbs.

Their head, chest and neck area is large with a thick mane. Adults have blonde to reddish body with dark chest and flippers. Pups have a dark brown-black coat. Molting occurs in late summer-fall. Range and haul-out sites: North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea, and as far south as central California, traveling widely during non-breeding season. They haul-out on rocky reefs, ledges, and beaches.