

How can feeding affect marine mammals and sea turtles?

- Feeding encourages marine mammals and sea turtles to approach boats and fishing piers for handouts and can result in gear entanglement and injury from boat collisions.
- Marine mammals and sea turtles fed by humans may lose their natural predator instincts and could become ill from spoiled chum or bait.
- Feeding could result in ingestion of foreign objects and debris.
- Feeding marine mammals is harmful and illegal under the MMPA as a form of harassment.* Feeding sea turtles is harmful and may be considered a take under the ESA.

How does fishing line affect marine mammals and sea turtles?

- Marine mammals and sea turtles may become entangled in fishing line.
- Sea turtles may try to eat the baited hook which may result in serious injury.
- Marine mammals and sea turtles are both attracted to the bait in traps and can get caught in the traps or the lines attached to the traps.
- Getting line caught around a flipper of a marine mammal or sea turtle can result in a loss of the flipper or death from infection and/or weakened health state.

Where can YOU dispose of monofilament line?

- Many fishing communities have monofilament recycling bins at bait and tackle shops, marinas, boat ramps, bridges, fishing piers, and beach access roads.
- If you want to recycle your own, send your monofilament line to:

Berkley Recycling Collection Center
1900 18th Street

Spirit Lake, IA 51360-1099

or for more information call:

1-800-BERKLEY

* Note: NOAA Fisheries regulations at 50 CFR 216.3 strictly prohibit feeding or attempting to feed marine mammals.

To report a stranded or injured marine mammal or sea turtle, please contact your closest stranding network.

MAINE

College of the Atlantic (Rockland, north)
207-288-5644
Marine Animal Lifeline (Rockland, south)
207-773-7377

MAINE - NEW HAMPSHIRE - MASSACHUSETTS

New England Aquarium
617-973-5247

MASSACHUSETTS

Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary (sea turtles only)
508-349-2615 x102

CAPE COD

Cape Cod Stranding Network (marine mammals only)
508-743-9548

RHODE ISLAND - CONNECTICUT

Mystic Aquarium
860-572-5955 x107

NEW YORK

Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation
631-369-9829

NEW JERSEY

Marine Mammal Stranding Center
609-266-0538

DELAWARE

Marine Education, Research and Rehabilitation Institute
302-228-5029

MARYLAND

National Aquarium in Baltimore
410-576-1098

VIRGINIA

Virginia Marine Science Museum
757-437-6159
Virginia Institute of Marine Science (sea turtles only)
866-493-1085

Report all violations of the MMPA and ESA to the NOAA Fisheries Enforcement
Toll Free Hotline: 1-800-853-1964

The Northeast Region includes the waters from Maine to Virginia.

NOAA Fisheries
Northeast Region
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298
978-281-9328
website: www.nero.nmfs.gov



NOAA Fisheries

Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Protection:

Guidelines for Recreational Fishermen



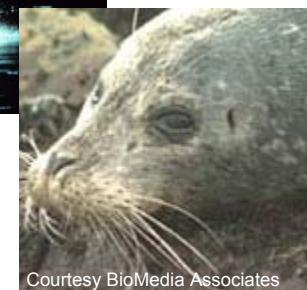
Courtesy NOAA



Courtesy P. Bennett and U. Keuper-Bennett



Courtesy NOAA



Courtesy BioMedia Associates

NOAA Fisheries
Northeast Region
Protected Resources Division

The **Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)** prohibits the **take** of any marine mammal in U.S. waters. **Take** is defined as “to harass, hunt, capture, kill, or feed, or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, kill, or feed any marine mammal”. Violation of the MMPA may result in civil penalties of up to \$10,000 or criminal penalties of up to \$20,000 plus IMPRISONMENT and/or SEIZURE OF VESSEL and other personal property.

Why should YOU protect marine mammals and sea turtles?

Marine mammals are an important part of the marine ecosystem. Some species are classified as either endangered, threatened or depleted. Of particular concern in the Northeast Region are the right, humpback, fin, and minke whales, and harbor porpoises and bottlenose dolphins.

Sea turtles have existed for over 180 million years and also play an important role in the ecosystem. All species of sea turtles are either endangered or threatened. Kemp's ridley, loggerhead, green, leatherback, and hawksbill sea turtles are all found in the Northeast Region.

The **Endangered Species Act (ESA)** and its regulations prohibit the **take** of endangered or threatened sea turtles or marine mammals in U.S. waters and on the high seas. **Take** is defined as “to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect.” **Harm** is further defined as an act which actually kills or injures fish or wildlife. This act could be the destruction or modification of a habitat that significantly impairs breeding, spawning, rearing, migrating, feeding or sheltering, and ultimately results in the death of fish or wildlife. Violation of the ESA may result in civil penalties of up to \$25,000 or criminal penalties of up to \$50,000 plus IMPRISONMENT and/or SEIZURE OF VESSEL and other personal property.

Minimum approach guidelines for viewing marine mammals and sea turtles:

Right whale*: 500 yards
Dolphins, porpoises, and seals: 50 yards
Sea turtles: 50 yards
Whales: For the “Northeast Region Whale-watching Guidelines”, call 978-281-9328.

* NOAA Fisheries regulations at 50 CFR 224.103 (c) prohibit all approaches to right whales within 500 yards.

What should YOU do if you hook or entangle a sea turtle?

- Gently bring turtle close to you, use dip net or firmly hold front flippers and shell to safely lift out of water.
- DO NOT pull line to lift turtle out of the water - this will result in further injury.
- AVOID turtle's mouth and flipper claws.
- If onshore or close to land, do not release turtle. Contact your local stranding network agency for assistance and veterinary care.
- If offshore and unable to access appropriate veterinary care, cut line close to hook and remove any line that has become entangled around turtle.
- If distance from you to turtle is too great or turtle is too large*, cut line as short as possible to release turtle.
- DO NOT remove hook unless turtle is lightly hooked and it can be taken out without further injury. If uncertain, DO NOT remove hook.
- Disengage the engine and release turtle on side away from engine.

Turtles with serious cuts, ingested or deeply embedded hooks need veterinary care. Keep turtle in the shade and immediately call your local stranding network agency.

* For leatherback turtles entangled in pot gear (line and buoy), please contact your local stranding network agency for assistance or call USCG VHF Channel 16. If the leatherback is anchored in gear, DO NOT cut the anchoring line and release turtle with entangling gear on it. This could result in further injury or death of the turtle.



Kemp's ridley turtle
(Photo: Steve Morreale)



Green turtle
(Photo: P. Bennett/U. Keuper-Bennett)

How can YOU protect marine mammals and sea turtles?

- Dispose of trash properly
 - * Throwing plastic into the ocean is illegal
- DO NOT chum when marine mammals or sea turtles are near
- Watch your bait at all times
- DO NOT leave fishing gear unattended
- DO NOT cast your line near sea turtles
- Avoid throwing fish overboard with marine mammals nearby
- Recycle your monofilament line
- DO NOT have floating buoy line at the surface
- DO NOT wet store your pot gear
- Maintain knot-free buoy lines
- Keep your distance
- DO NOT entrap, encircle or chase marine mammals or sea turtles
- When in the presence of a marine mammal, place engine in idle and allow animal to pass
- When in the presence of sea turtles, slow down and steer away from their direction of travel
- Wear polarized sunglasses to better see marine mammals and sea turtles in the water
- Report entangled marine mammals and sea turtles to the closest stranding network (see back). Report entanglements of large whales to Center for Coastal Studies at 1-800-900-3622 or USCG VHF Channel 16.
- Approach areas of surface fish activity cautiously - marine mammals might be present
- Abide by the commercial fishing regulations that protect marine mammals. Call 978-281-9328 to see if your gear type has corresponding commercial fishing regulations.

REMINDER: Charter vessels are considered a commercial fishing operation under the MMPA, and therefore their owners/operators are required to report to NOAA Fisheries all incidental injuries and mortalities of marine mammals caused during the course of fishing activities. Call NOAA Fisheries at 978-281-9328 for reporting forms or further information.