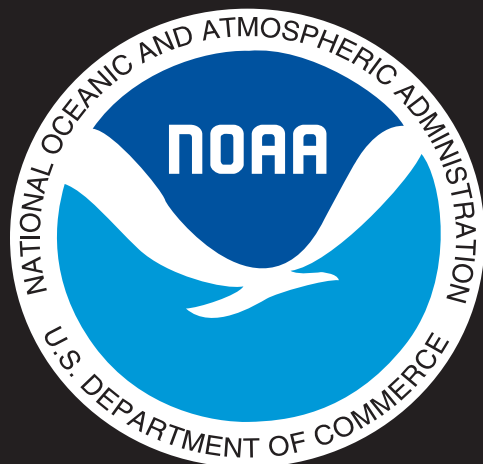


Viewing seals and sea lions can be a positive and enriching experience when conducted safely and responsibly. Viewing seals and sea lions in their natural habitat can be an educational experience as well. NMFS recommends the following viewing guidelines in order to help keep you and the seals and sea lions safe.

General Viewing Guidelines:

If you find yourself in the presence of a seal or sea lion:

1. Watch quietly from a distance, and keep noise to a minimum.
2. Limit your viewing time to 30 minutes.
3. Do not feed or attempt to feed seals and sea lions.
4. Do not follow, chase, or pursue seals and sea lions.
5. Do not approach seals and sea lions.
6. If approached by a seal or sea lion do not attempt to interact with the animal.
7. Do not attempt to touch, ride, or swim with seals or sea lions.
8. Do not surround seals and sea lions; always leave an escape route.



For more information or questions about these guidelines, please contact:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service

Southwest Regional Office
501 West Ocean Boulevard,
Suite 4200
Long Beach, CA 90802-4213
(562) 980-4017 or (562) 980-3232
<http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov>

To report incidents of harassment, please contact:

Southwest Region
NOAA Office of Law Enforcement
501 West Ocean Boulevard,
Suite 4300
Long Beach, CA 90802-4213
(562) 980-4050 or

NOAA Law Enforcement Hotline
1-(800) 853-1964

California, Seal and Sea Lion Viewing Guidelines

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible for protecting seals and sea lions under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). California offers a unique opportunity for the public, to view these wild animals in their natural habitat.

However, efforts by the general public to closely approach or otherwise interact with seals and sea lions can lead to harassment, which is illegal under the MMPA and ESA. Harassment, as defined under the MMPA, is an act of pursuit, torment or annoyance which has the potential to injure the animal or cause a disruption of its natural behavior. Harassment can carry penalties of \$100 to \$13,000.

From a biological and management standpoint, the harassment of seals and sea lions by members of the general public continues to be a concern. In addition, there are significant public safety issues to consider, as some people have been injured while attempting to interact too closely with seals and sea lions.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR VIEWING SEALS AND SEA LIONS IN CALIFORNIA WHEN:

Boating:

- Remain at least 50 yards from free swimming seals and sea lions
- Remain at least 50 yards from animals hauled out on man-made buoys
- Remain at 100 yards from animals hauled out on shore
- If a seal or sea lion approaches your vessel, specifically vessels under power
 - +Put engine in neutral or reduce speed (without endangering the vessel), and allow animal to pass.
 - +Do not engage propellers until animal is observed at the surface and clear of vessel (animal is visually observed at a distance from vessel).

Flying or Gliding:

Remain at 1000 ft. elevation near seal and sea lion haul out sites, rookeries, and surrounding waters.

Swimming, Diving, or at the Beach:

- Remain 50 yards from free swimming seals and sea lions
- Remain 50 yards from animals hauled out on man-made buoys
- Remain 100 yards away if the animals are hauled out on land (mainland or island) when approaching from water
- Remain at least 100 feet from seals and sea lions on the mainland if approaching from land
- If a pup is on the beach without its mother, leave it alone.
- Keep dogs on leashes and away from the seals and sea lions.

All Photos: NOAA

CALIFORNIA SEA LION

Zalophus californianus

Range/Habitat: Baja California to British Columbia (offshore islands). Haul out on sandy beaches, rock reefs, ledges, breakwaters, buoys, docks, etc.

Description: Adult females weigh ~250lbs; Adult males weigh ~900lbs; more robust at the shoulders/neck; dark brown - black; sagittal crest (pronounced forehead, with light brown or blond hair); females are blond-tan with a slender body. Pups born with brown-black pelage.

Reproduction: Channel Islands and islands along the northern coast of Baja California. Pupping late May - July; Adult males leave rookeries in August-September, migrate north, return late winter - spring. Pups weaned 4-8 months.

Protected under MMPA



NORTHERN FUR SEAL

Callorhinus ursinus

Range/Habitat: Restricted to North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea (includes outer islands in California). May occur year-round at San Miguel Island. Haul out on rocky and sandy beaches.

Description: Adult females weigh ~140lbs; dark brown-gray, lighter along lower chest. Adult males weigh ~600lbs; with a massive chest and stiff mane; reddish brown - black. All have large hindflippers, a stocky body, small head, and pointed snout; Pups born with black pelage.

Reproduction: Females at rookeries by late spring, pupping from late May- June; pups weaned at ~4 months; Adult males at rookeries late May-early June, leave late August - early October.

Protected under MMPA



NORTHERN ELEPHANT SEAL

Mirounga angustirostris

Range/Habitat: Baja California to Gulf of Alaska/Aleutian Islands. Breeding season: haul out on beaches, offshore islands, mainland. Travel widely into eastern and central North Pacific, and along Northwest coasts.

Description: Adult females weigh ~1,500lbs. Adult males weigh ~4,500lbs; have a fleshy nose; dark brown, chest heavily calloused/scarred. Post-molt coat is silver - dark gray, fades to tan - yellow. Pups born with a black pelage.

Reproduction: Females arrive for pupping December - March (males arrive earlier than females); pups weaned at three - five wks. Adults depart rookeries end of February to mid-March, remain at sea, return in June-July to molt. Weaned pups remain on beaches.

Protected under MMPA

STELLER SEA LION

Eumetopias jubatus

Range/Habitat: Restricted to North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea; found as far south as central California. Haul out on rocky reefs, ledges, beaches. Individuals may travel widely in non-breeding season.

Description: Adult females weigh ~800lbs. Adult males weigh ~2,500lbs; head, chest, and neck area is large with a mane of long hair. Adults light brown-blond with dark flippers. Pups born with dark brown - black pelage. Molt occurs in late summer- fall.

Reproduction: Occurs from central California to Alaska. Adult males arrive in May; pupping late May - early July; most pups are weaned by one year of age.

Listed as Threatened under ESA (Eastern stock); Protected under MMPA



PACIFIC HARBOR SEAL

Phoca vitulina richardsi

Range/Habitat: Coastal areas Baja California to Alaska. Haul out on near-shore beaches, mudflats, bays, and estuaries. Haul out year-round throughout their range.

Description: Adult females weigh ~300lbs; Adult males weigh ~380lbs. All have a robust head, broad snout. Pelage pattern varies with latitude (darker - in southern range; lighter - in northern range). Pelage: light tan-silver, scattered dark spots or black with light colored scattered rings. Pups born with lanugo coat that is shed, grayish coat underneath.

Reproduction: Pupping January - October (through entire range); occurs earlier in southern areas. Pups able to swim immediately after birth; weaned three - six weeks. Mating occurs during the molting season.

Protected under MMPA

