

Marine Mammal Strandings as Reported to National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Region: 2003

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Contents

Summary

Table 1. Alaska Region Stranding Events Reported by Month

Table 2. Strandings by Species, Initial Condition

Table 3. Cetacean Mass Strandings

Table 4. Strandings: Human Interaction by Type

Table 5. Strandings: Human Interaction by Species, Outcome

Table 6. Strandings by Area, Species

Table 7. Live Strandings to Rehabilitation

Summary

Strandings of cetaceans and pinnipeds that occurred in Alaska waters in 2003 and were reported to the National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Region (NMFS) are summarized here. A total of 144 events were reported, involving {255, 246, 244} individual animals. This range represents the {high, best, and low} estimates provided on some strandings and the 168 animals that were reported without estimates. Stranding events where the animal(s) could not be examined are included in the numbers below as long as the animal was at least identified as either cetacean or pinniped. Both confirmed and unconfirmed reports are included in this summary.

Northern fur seal entanglements on the Pribilof Islands numbers are included in this summary. This is the first year numbers from monitoring efforts have been included in the stranding summary data although entanglement monitoring has been occurring for many years.

Two species considered rare in Alaskan waters were reported in 2003. A lone, social false killer whale was reported in Southeast Alaska in May and a pygmy sperm whale was found beachcast near Yakutat.

This information is current as of early April 2004 but is subject to change as further information on strandings is provided to NMFS. For the most current information, please contact NMFS Alaska Region at (907) 586-7235. Further stranding information and references are available at the NMFS Alaska Region webpage:
<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/strandings.htm>

Acknowledgements

This report would not be possible without the contributions of the people who report stranding events and the efforts of the Alaska Marine Mammal Stranding Network.

Tables

Table 1. Draft 2003 Alaska Region Stranding Events Reported By Month.

Month	Events
January	4
February	2
March	7
April	5
May	15
June	21
July	41
August	30
September	13
October	5
November	1
December	0
Total	144

Table 2. Draft 2003 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Strandings by Initial Condition, Species, Number of Animals

Species	Initial Condition			Total
	Alive	Dead	Unknown	
Beluga	107	16		123
Bowhead		1		1
Cetacean, Large, unknown		1		1
Cetacean, Small, unknown		1		1
Cetacean, unknown	1	5	2	8
Cuvier's beaked		1		1
Dall's porpoise	1	1		2
False killer whale	1			1
Fin		2		2
Gray	1	5		6
Harbor porpoise		1		1
Humpback	7	3	1	11
Minke		2		2
Orca		1		1
Pygmy sperm whale		1		1
Rorqual, unknown	1	1		2
Sperm		2		2
<i>Cetacean Total</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>166</i>
Elephant seal		1		1
Fur seal	19	15		34
Harbor seal	10	3	1	14
Mixed seals**		5		5
Ringed seal	4			4
Steller sea lion	6	17		23
<i>Pinniped Total</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>81</i>
Total	158	85	4	247*

*Best estimate plus known individuals reported

**Mixed: 1 spotted seal, 4 unknown seals

Table 3. Draft 2003 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Cetacean Mass Stranding Events. The number of animals involved in each stranding event is shown as the best estimate. Total is shown as the overall {High, Best, Low} estimates.

Species	Animals Involved
Beluga	6
Beluga	25
Beluga	26
Beluga	46
Total	{111, 103, 101}

Table 4. Draft 2003 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Strandings: Human Interaction by Occurrence, Initial Condition, Number of Animals.

Human Interaction?	Details	Species	Initial Condition			Total
			Alive	Dead	Unknown	
Suspected	Collision	Cetacean, unknown			1	1
		Humpback			1	1
	Shot	Steller sea lion		1		1
		Mixed seals*		5		5
		<i>Suspected Total</i>		6	2	8
Yes	Collision	Cetacean, unknown	1			1
		Harbor Seal			1	1
		Humpback	1	1		2
		Rorqual whale, unknown	1			1
	Entanglement	Bowhead		1		1
		Dall's porpoise	1			1
		Fur seal	11			11
		Harbor Seal	1			1
		Humpback	5	1		6
	Entanglement Scar	Ringed seal	1			1
		Steller sea lion	2			2
		Fur seal	7			7
		Harbor Seal		1		1
		<i>Yes Total</i>	31	4	1	36
Total			31	10	3	44

**Mixed: 1 spotted seal, 4 unknown seals

Table 5. Draft 2003 Alaska Marine Mammal Strandings involving human interaction by species, interaction type, details (initial condition and outcome), and number of animals involved. (Pos. = possible; Unconfirmed reports are shaded.)

Species	Details	Initial Condition and Outcome	Animals
Bowhead	Entanglement	Dead (Cause of death not determined)	1
		<i>Bowhead Total</i>	1
Cetacean, unknown	Collision	Alive, Fate unknown	1
	Pos. Collision	Cannot be determined	1
		<i>Cetacean, unknown Total</i>	2
Dall's porpoise	Entanglement	Dead	1
		<i>Dall's porpoise Total</i>	1
Humpback	Collision	Alive, Fate unknown	1
		Dead	1
	Entanglement	Alive, Disentangled, Fate unknown	1
		Alive, Not released, Fate unknown	1
		Alive, Not released, Fate unknown	1
		Alive, Self-released, Apparently healthy	1
		Alive, Self-released, Fate unknown	1
		Dead (Cause of death not determined)	1
	Pos. Collision	Cannot be determined	1
		<i>Humpback Total</i>	9
Rorqual whale, unk.	Collision	Alive, Fate unknown	1
			<i>Rorqual whale, unknown Total</i>
		<i>Cetacean Total</i>	15
Fur seal	Entanglement	Alive, Disentangled, Apparently healthy	2
		Alive, Disentangled, Injured	5
		Alive, Not released, Fate unknown	2
		Alive, Self-released, Apparently healthy	1
		Alive, Released, Injured	1
	Entanglement Scar	Alive, Left at site	7
			<i>Fur seal Total</i>
Harbor seal	Collision	Dead (Cause of death not determined)	1
	Entanglement	Alive, Collected, Rehabilitated	1
	Fishery Interaction	Dead	1
		<i>Harbor seal Total</i>	3
Mixed seals*	Pos. shot	Dead, Left at site	5
			<i>Mixed seals Total</i>
Ringed seal	Entanglement	Alive, Collected, Died	1
		<i>Ringed seal Total</i>	1
Steller sea lion	Entanglement	Alive, Left at site, Fate unknown	2
	Pos. shot	Dead (Cause of death not determined)	1
		<i>Steller sea lion Total</i>	3
		<i>Pinniped Total</i>	29
Total			44

*Mixed: 1 spotted seal, 4 unknown seals

Table 6. Draft 2003 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Strandings by Area, Species, Number of Animals.

Area	Species	Animals
Arctic	Beluga	1
	Fur seal	1
	Gray	2
	Ringed seal	2
	<i>Arctic Total</i>	6
Kodiak	Cuvier's beaked	1
	Elephant seal	1
	Fin	1
	Harbor seal	2
	Steller sea lion	2
<i>Kodiak Total</i>	7	
Southcentral	Beluga	121
	Cetacean, Large, unknown	1
	Cetacean, unknown	1
	Dall's porpoise	1
	Gray	3
	Harbor seal	5
	Minke	1
	Orca	1
	Steller sea lion	4
<i>Southcentral Total</i>	138	
Southeast	Cetacean, unknown	7
	Dall's porpoise	1
	False killer whale	1
	Gray	1
	Harbor porpoise	1
	Harbor seal	5
	Humpback	11
	Minke	1
	Pygmy sperm whale	1
	Rorqual whale, unknown	1
	Sperm	1
	Steller sea lion	10
	<i>Southeast Total</i>	41
Western Alaska	Beluga	1
	Bowhead	1
	Cetacean, Small, unknown	1
	Fin	1
	Fur seal	33
	Harbor seal	2
	Mixed seals**	5
	Ringed seal	2
	Rorqual whale, unknown	1
	Sperm	1
Steller sea lion	7	
<i>Western Alaska Total</i>	55	
Total		247*

*Best estimate plus known individuals reported

**Mixed: 1 spotted seal, 4 unknown seals

Table 7. Draft 2003 Alaska Region Live Strandings Handled by the Alaska Sea Life Center for Rehabilitation by Species, Outcome, Number of Animals.

Species	Outcome	Animals
Harbor seal	Died	2
	Released	6
	<i>Harbor Total</i>	8
Ringed seal	At Rehab	1
	Died	1
	Released	1
	<i>Ringed Total</i>	3
Total		11