

What is the Central Puget Sound Marine Mammal Stranding Network?

Stranding Networks respond to dead and live strandings of marine mammals on the beach. Volunteer stranding networks were established in all coastal states and are authorized through the National Marine Fisheries Service regional offices. NMFS oversees, coordinates, and authorizes stranding activities and provides training to personnel and volunteers.

Central Puget Sound MMSN is a partnership between Orca Network, Island County/WSU Beach Watchers, wildlife veterinarians and biologists and NMFS, with trained staff and volunteers.



Photo by Sandy Dubpernell

What do we do?

- ~Respond to strandings in Island, Skagit and North Snohomish Counties
- ~Act as a liaison between government agencies and the general public
- ~Collect data for the National Marine Mammal database via photographs and written reports
- ~Collect specimens for research, testing, and educational display
- ~Provide public education and safety information to avoid adverse reactions between people and marine mammals

Marine Mammal Protection

Marine mammals are protected by the federal *Marine Mammal Protection Act*. It is a violation of this law to harass, touch, move, feed or kill ANY marine mammal. You can be fined up to \$10,000 per violation. Some marine mammals in our area also have additional protection under the *Endangered Species Act*, including Southern Resident orcas and Steller sea lions.

What to do when you find a marine mammal on the beach

- ~ **Stay at least 50 - 100 yards away**, whether in the water or on shore, to prevent disturbance or harassment.
- ~ **Keep dogs and other people away**
Marine mammals may carry diseases transmissible to humans, pets and livestock and they can BITE!
- ~ **Report the animal** if it is:
Dead or appears injured or sick,
A live cetacean on any shore,
A live pinniped on shore in a public place or on a busy beach
- ~ **If you find a seal pup on the beach:**
its mother is likely feeding near by.

Please do not:

Approach or pour water on it,
encourage it back into the ocean,
or attempt to feed or remove the pup from the beach - it is unsafe for you and the pup, and is illegal.

Please do:

Report the pup if it remains on the beach for more than 24 hours with no sign of its mother returning,
if it appears injured or starving,
or if it is being harassed by people or dogs.

For more information, go to:
www.orcanetwork.org/strandings.html
www.nmfs.noaa.gov



**Central Puget Sound
Marine Mammal
Stranding Network**
2403 North Bluff Rd.
Greenbank, WA 98253
info@orcanetwork.org



REPORT DEAD OR STRANDED MARINE MAMMALS TO:

1-866-ORCANET (672-2638)

or

360-678-3765

**Whidbey and Camano Islands
Skagit and North Snohomish Counties**
(All other areas call 206-526-4747)

info@orcanetwork.org
www.orcanetwork.org/strandings.html



Photo by Sandy Dubpernell

Commonly found Marine Mammals of Puget Sound

Pinnipeds - Seals and Sea Lions

Illustrations by Uko Gorter



Pacific Harbor Seal
Phoca vitulina

Adults mottled tan or blue-gray with dark spots

Male: 6' / 300 lbs; Female: 5' / 200 pounds

Earless (internal ears, with externally visible hole)

Short fur-covered flippers, nails at end

Drags rear flippers behind body

Vocalization: "maah" (pups only)

Harbor seals are the most abundant marine mammal in Puget Sound. Curious, but shy, they prefer quiet, unpopulated areas. Seals often haul out on protected beaches and rocks to digest food, rest in the sun, give birth, or nurse young. At any sign of danger they slip into the water where they swim with grace. On land however, seals flop along as they do not have rotating hind flippers for walking like sea lions.

California Sea Lion
Zalophus californianus

Dark brown to black

Male: 8' / 800 lbs; Female: 6' / 250 lbs.

Extended, rolled flap ears

Long leathery flippers, nails mid-flipper

Walks on all four flippers; Doglike bark

Mainly male California sea lions are seen from fall to spring in the Puget Sound region. California sea lions have a doglike snout, and at about five years males develop a "sagittal crest" or bump on their foreheads. Groups of sea lions often rest on the water "rafting", with their flippers extended above the surface.

Steller Sea Lion *Eumetopias jubatus*

Light to golden brown

Male: 9-12' / 1500 - 2000 lbs;

Female: 6-7' / 600 - 700 lbs.

Extended, rolled flap ears

Long leathery flippers with

some fur on top, nails mid-flipper

Walks on all four flippers; Deep lion-like roar

Found mostly in northern waters in our response region, listed under the Endangered Species Act.



Northern Elephant Seal

Mirounga angustirostris

Brownish-gray

Male: 10-12' / 4,000-5,000 lbs

Female: 8-9' / 900-1,000 lbs.

Internal ears (slight hole)

Short fur-covered flippers, nails at end

Drags rear flippers behind body

Vocalization: Guttural growl or belch

Elephant seals are increasing in number in this region, and are the only pinniped here that molts annually, sloughing off the outer layer of skin and fur.



Seal Pups

If you see a seal pup alone on the beach
DO NOT DISTURB - it's the law!



Photo by Sandy Dubpennell

Human encroachment can stress the pup and scare the mother away.

For your safety and the health of the pup, leave the pup alone. Do not touch!

Seal "pupping" occurs in June and July along the Strait of Juan de Fuca and San Juan Islands, and July through September in southern Puget Sound and Hood Canal. Most pups are born at haul-out sites or rookeries, but a female may give birth anywhere there is easy access to the water's edge.

Nursing pups remain with their mothers for four to six weeks and are then weaned to forage and survive on their own. A nursing pup may triple its birth weight by the time it is weaned and uses its stored fat reserves as it learns to feed on its own.

Up to 50% of pups will not survive their first year. Contributing factors to pup mortality are: premature birth; predation by wild predators or domestic dogs; infection; disease; dehydration; or starvation.

Cetaceans

Odontocetes (toothed)

Orca (or Killer Whale)

Orcinus orca

Black body with white chin, belly, and eyepatch

Average 23 - 26' / 4 - 8 tons

Tall dorsal fin, up to 6' on adult males; gray saddle patch on back behind dorsal. Travel in pods of 3 - 40; *Resident* type eats salmon; *Transients* eat marine mammals. Southern Resident orcas are endangered.



Harbor Porpoise
Phocoena phocoena

Dark gray or black with lighter sides and belly

Average 5- 6' / 120 lbs.

Small triangular dorsal fin, small blow, travels alone or in small groups of 2 - 10. Does not bow-ride.

Dall's Porpoise

Phocoenoides dalli

Black body / white belly and sides

White on dorsal fin trailing edge

Average 6 - 7' / 300 lbs.

Stocky body, small flippers and flukes, triangular dorsal fin. Fast swimmer, creates a "rooster tail" spray and likes to bow-ride. Travels alone or in groups of 2 - 20 or more.



Mysticetes (baleen)



Gray Whale
Eschrichtius robustus

Gray with white mottling / barnacles

No dorsal fin, has "knuckles" or knobs on back

Average 40 - 50' / 33 tons

Heart-shaped blow, small resident population feeds in Puget Sound each spring, stragglers year-round

Minke Whale

Balaenoptera acutorostrata

Black / dark gray, light undersides, white patch on flippers.

Small, sleek body, pointed head

Average 26-28' / 6-8 tons

Short curved dorsal fin, travels alone or in small groups.

