



Marine Mammals of California

Multiple ocean environments come together along the California coast, providing a suitable habitat for a wide variety of marine life. This area sports one of the most diverse assemblages of marine mammals in the world. Some species are resident (harbor seal, minke whale, sea otter, and California sea lion), several are transient (gray whale and killer whale), while others use the area as a seasonal destination (humpback whale, elephant seal, and northern fur seal).

Ocean users play important roles in marine mammal conservation. You can make a meaningful contribution in protecting marine mammals by following the information provided in this guide.

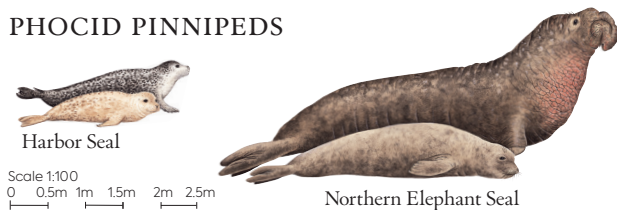
Pinnipeds — Seals & Sea Lions

Pinnipeds divide their lives between foraging at sea and coming ashore to rest, mate, give birth, suckle their young, or molt. Pinnipeds are classified into two families. Otariids (sea lions and fur seals) have external ear flaps and can rotate their hind flippers under their pelvis to walk on all fours on land. Phocids (seals) have no external ear flaps and drag their hind limbs, moving like an inch worm on land.

OTARIID PINNIPEDS



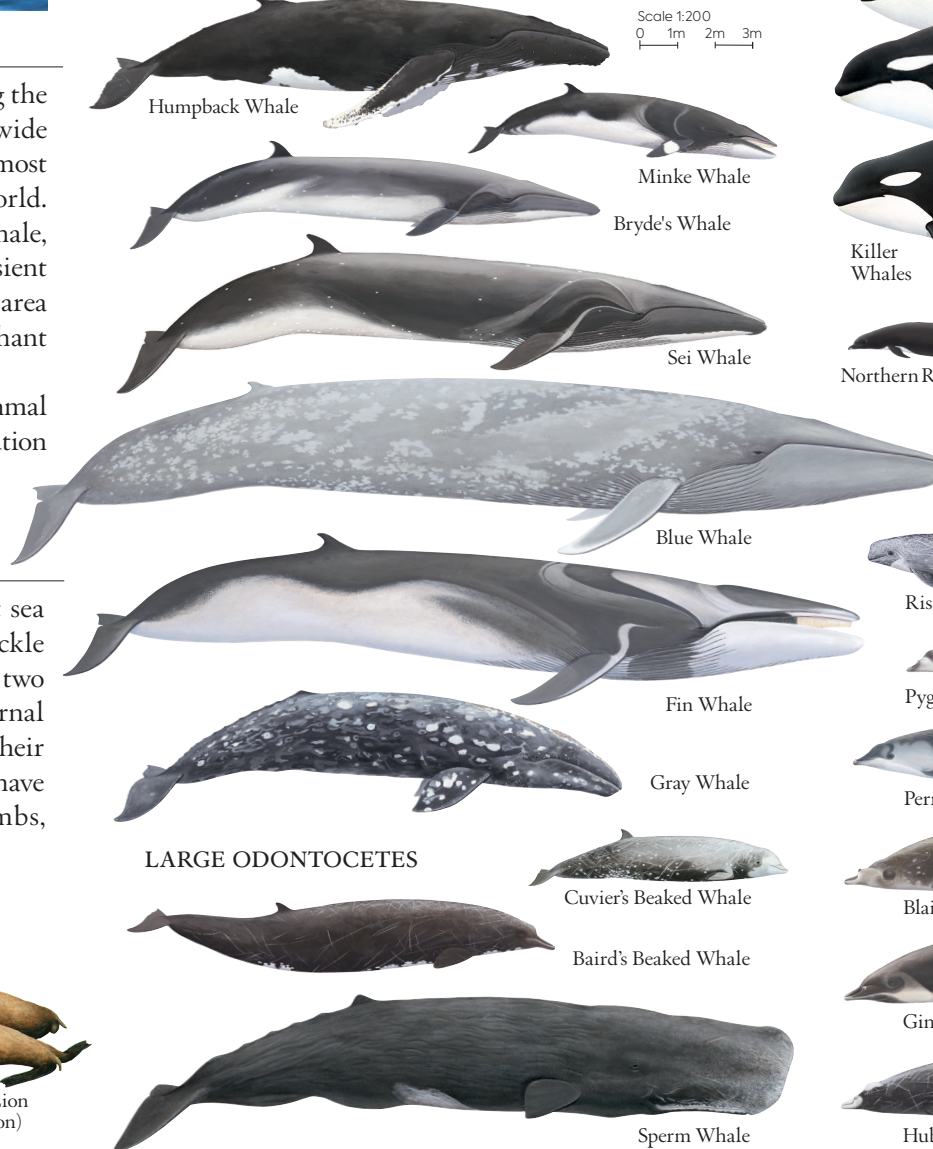
PHOCID PINNIPEDS



Baleen Whales & Larger Toothed Whales

Whales and dolphins are in the order Cetacea in two living groups—Mysticeti (baleen whales, paired blowholes) and Odontoceti (toothed whales, one blowhole).

MYSTICETES



Sea Otter

Otters are members of the weasel family that have adapted to life almost entirely in the water. Sea otters are endangered and seldom come ashore.



Dolphins, Porpoises, & Small Toothed Whales



Ocean Users' Guidelines

- Remain at least 100 yards/meters away from whales and where marine mammals come ashore.
- Remain at least 50 yards/meters away from pinnipeds at sea and other marine animals (dolphins, porpoises, sea otters, and sea turtles).
- If you see an entangled animal, call the 24-hour toll-free hotline 877-SOS-WHALE (877-767-9425).
- Do not feed, touch, ride, or swim with marine mammals or sea turtles. Avoid approaching marine mammals or sea turtles when swimming or diving.
- Avoid following behind or directly approaching in front of the animal(s). Attempt to parallel an animal's course, do not travel at speeds faster than the animal(s), and maintain a constant speed.
- Should dolphins or porpoises choose to ride the bow wave of your vessel, reduce speed gradually as necessary, and avoid sudden course changes.
- If approached by a marine mammal or sea turtle, put the engine in neutral and allow the animal to pass. Do not engage propellers until the animal(s) are observed at the surface and are clear of the vessel.
- Marine mammals and sea turtles should not be trapped between vessels or between vessels and the shore.
- Communicate with other vessel operators in the area to minimize disturbance to marine mammals. Wait your turn from a distance and then approach cautiously after other vessels have left.
- When marine wildlife is known to be in an area, post a look out, reduce speed, and be cautious. Marine animals may surface unpredictably at any time or location.

Guidelines Specific to Sea Otters

- Sea otter mothers and pups need more resting time than many other animals in order to stay healthy. Please respect an otter's needs and keep your distance. If you approach a sea otter on a kayak, surfboard, or boat, and the animal dives as a result of your approach, you have caused a disturbance.

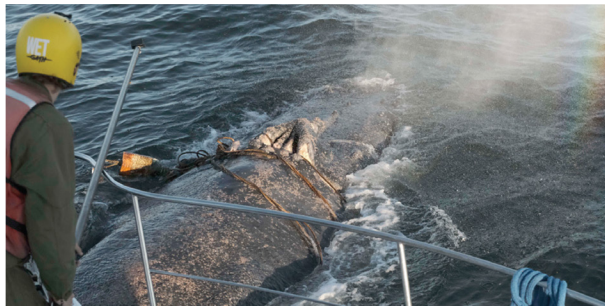
**Report entangled whales to the 24-hour hotline:
877-SOS-WHALE (877-767-9425)
or Hail the U.S. Coast Guard on VHF CH-16**

Report incidents of marine mammal harassment to NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement at 800-853-1964. Report injured, dead, or stranded marine mammals to the West Coast Marine Mammal Stranding Hotline at 866-767-6114.

Immediate reporting of an injured, entangled, stranded, or ship-struck marine mammal to a hotline is the best way to help a distressed animal. If possible, please stay with the animal while maintaining a safe 100 yards/meters distance. Authorized personnel will guide you as what to do next.

Provide information below to help authorized responders:

- Your name and phone number (for more information)
- Date and time of sighting
- Species (if known, otherwise a general description)
- Location (be as specific as possible, include latitude and longitude if available), weather conditions/sea state
- Nature of distress (entanglement, visible injury, etc.)
- Other details: size, is the animal swimming (speed and direction heading, diving, breathing), description of entanglement, any photos or video taken, etc.
- Can you stay with the animal; if so, for how long?



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MarineLifeStudies.org

WhaleEntanglementTeam.org

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A Waterproof Ocean Users' Guide