



Harbor Seal
Phoca vitulina

Taxonomy

Kingdom:	Animalia	anima = soul, spirit
Phylum:	Chordata	chord = a string, musical instrument. Chordata = having a notocord or “back-string”
Class:	mammalia	mamm = breast, pap, teats
Order:	Carnivora	carn = flesh
Suborder:	Pinnipedia	pinna (penna) = a wing, also a feather
Family:	Phocidae	“Phocids” are also known as “true seals”
Genus:	Phoca	Greek word meaning “seal”
Species:	vitulina	vitula = “calf” and inas = “like”
Subspecies:	richardsi	--east Pacific Ocean population **We have these**
Subspecies:	stejneger	--west Pacific Ocean population
Subspecies:	concolor	--west North Atlantic population **we have these*
Subspecies:	vitulina	--east North Atlantic population
Subspecies:	mellonae	--population found on isolated island
Subspecies:	kurilensis	--population found on isolated island

ASLC has seven Harbor Seals, three males and four females. See Mammal Identification sheet for details.

Range	Circumpolar distribution in Northern hemisphere; in Atlantic, Western populations concentrating from Greenland to Hudson Bay (Massachusetts) but can be found as far south as Florida, Eastern populations ranging from Norway to southern France; in Pacific, populations range from Baja, CA to Nome, AK including Aleutian, Pribilof, and Commander Island chains.
Predators	Killer whales, sharks, Steller sea lions, bears, coyotes, and eagles
Prey	Pelagic and benthic fish (capelin, herring, pollock), cephalopods (squid), crustaceans, eels, and mollusks --wild animals may consume 6-8% of their body weight in food per day
Size	Males: 4 to 6 feet in length, 100-180 Kg Females: 4 to 5 feet in length, 60-110 Kg Pups: 2.5 to 3 feet in length, 8-12 Kg
Life Span	The oldest recorded captive animals have lived to be 32 and 26 for females and males, respectively. In the wild, their life span is shorter (15-20 years) due to predation and availability of food.
Reproduction	Harbor seals reach sexual maturity at 3-7 years of age. Breeding males will defend a group of females and follow that group through different territories. Copulation usually occurs in the water. Once the animals have mated, the gestation period is about 10 months. Females will give birth to one pup per season and will nurse that pup for about 2-6 weeks. Pups begin to lose their lanugo (birth coat) in the womb and continue to shed for a few weeks after birth. Markings of an adult are present after shedding. The blubber layer of a newborn is about 1.3 cm and will grow rapidly during nursing. Pups are able to swim almost immediately after birth. Pupping season varies with different populations, but in general occurs between Feb. and Sept., with most births in June. Pups are born on rocks, sandbanks, intertidal zones, and ice. Mating occurs shortly after the female gives birth, but implantation of the egg into the uterine lining is delayed for 1.5-3 months.
Seasonal Change	An annual molt will occur between May and October (varying with population) in which the animal will lose old hair and grow a new coat. The new coat has a bluish tinge, where the older hair is browner in color. There may be seasonal travels to follow food, but most animals stay in the same area year round.
Morphology And Function	<u>Fore Flippers</u> : used mostly for steering while in the water and pulling their bodies along while on land (have nails to help move around on the rocks / ice as well as for defense). Phocids also use their front flippers to scratch. <u>Rear Flippers</u> : used for propelling through the water; animal uses a lateral motion where one flipper will close while the other sweeps through the water in a back and forth motion. These also have nails, which are not known to serve any purpose. <u>Whiskers (also called vibrissae)</u> : three types; <i>supraciliary</i> (above the eye), <i>rhinal</i> (above the nose), <i>mystachial</i> (beside the nose---most noticeable). These are the main tactile structures and are used during navigation, foraging, etc. ****Phocids lack external ear pinnae (ear flaps)---this does not affect their ability to hear. ****Phocids can not support their body weight on their front flippers like a sea lion. On land they “hop” along or “inch worm” on their bellies.
Unique Facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phocids (including harbor seals) are more abundant than Otariids (sea lions). This is mostly due to the fact that Phocids tend to live in more productive

	<p>habitats.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phocids have blubber as insulation. • Harbor seals can swim up to speeds of 2-6 meters per second, utilizing 60-78 flipper beats per minute. • Phocids have a hearing range of 10-30 kHz in the water and 3-10 kHz in the air. **People have a hearing range of 20 Hz – 20 kHz with 20 kHz being the threshold of pain** • Harbor Seals spend much of their time hovering on the water's surface because their blubber makes them buoyant.
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(Following Taken from ASLC mammal department fact sheets)

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