

Viewing Tips

Sea lions, seals and sea otters are protected animals. It's against federal law to disturb them or cause them to change their behavior.

Enjoy watching them in a responsible way:

- ◆ **Keep your distance!** You're too close if an animal starts to stare, fidget or flee. Slowly back away and stay at least 150 feet or 46 meters away. Seals on land are especially wary and may rush into the water or abandon their pups, threatening their survival.
- ◆ **Watch quietly.** Rest is important, especially for moms and pups, and you'll see more of their natural behaviors.
- ◆ **Stay away from animals that appear sick, injured or abandoned.** Some animals beach themselves on purpose to rest. Mothers often leave pups behind while feeding offshore. *Even a lone pup is probably not abandoned!*
- ◆ **Don't feed wildlife.** Human food can attract them and make them sick, a potentially dangerous situation for all.
- ◆ **Keep pets on a leash.** Pets can disturb or harm wildlife, or may cause mothers and pups to get separated. Wild animals can injure or spread disease to pets.



Marine Mammal Viewing Tips



Greg Cope

Report sick or injured animals:

The Marine Mammal Center

San Francisco Bay area: (415) 289-7325

Monterey or Santa Cruz: (831) 633-6298

San Luis Obispo County: (805) 771-8300

Report animal disturbance:

NOAA Office for Law Enforcement

Sanctuary Enforcement: (831) 647-4203

Hotline (24 hours/day): (800) 853-1964

California State Parks

Enforcement: (831) 649-2810

California Department of Fish and Game

CALTIP Hotline: (888) 334-2258

For more information:

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Monterey: (831) 647-4201

San Simeon: (805) 927-2145

<http://montereybay.noaa.gov>

California Coastal National Monument

(831) 915-4621

<http://ccnm@blm.gov>

California State Parks

Santa Cruz: (831) 429-2850

Monterey: (831) 649-2836

San Luis Obispo: (805) 927-2020



Seals, Sea Lions and Sea Otters



The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is one of the best places in the world to see seals, sea lions and sea otters. You can see them close to shore almost any time of year!



Mike Baird



Mike Baird

Southern sea otter

California sea lion



Robert Schwemmer



Mike Baird

Northern elephant seal

Harbor seal

Seal, Sea Lion or Sea Otter?

Four species are commonly seen within the sanctuary. Here are some tips to help you tell them apart.

Seals

have small flippers, wriggle on their bellies on land and lack visible ear flaps.



Two species inhabit the sanctuary, the elephant seal (top) and harbor seal.

Sea Lions

are brown, bark loudly, "walk" on land using their large flippers and have visible ear flaps.



Sea Otters

are smaller than seals and sea lions, have stubby front paws, and rest by floating on their backs.



Harbor Seals



Quiet and shy, harbor seals can be seen year-round resting on rocks just offshore. These small, plump seals have spotted gray to black coats.

Often curious, harbor seals will watch people walking along the shore or follow divers or kayakers in the water. Fast nocturnal predators, they hunt for a variety of fish, octopus and squid. In spring they congregate on protected beaches and give birth to a single pup.

Northern Elephant Seals

Although they spend most of the year feeding far offshore, elephant seals can be seen on beaches and islands when breeding, pupping or resting. They are most easily seen at Año Nuevo State Reserve and Piedras Blancas.



Diving an average depth of 1,800 feet (600 meters), they feed on fishes and squid. In winter huge males with large elephant-like noses and long canine teeth engage in bloody

battles to establish territories and harems of females. Females give birth soon after they arrive on beaches and nurse their pups for about a month. Pups learn how to swim and dive on their own. Once hunted nearly to extinction for their blubber, they've staged a remarkable comeback.

Southern Sea Otters



Usually found in or near kelp forests, sea otters dine on invertebrates such as snails, crabs, octopuses, urchins, and abalone, often using small rocks to

crack open hard-shelled prey. Lacking blubber, they burn calories quickly and eat up to 25 percent of their body weight a day.

Sea otters rest by wrapping themselves in kelp to keep from drifting away. To keep their thick fur waterproof, they spend hours grooming. Females give birth to one pup, usually between January and March. Pups stay with their mothers for about six months. Sea otters were hunted to near-extinction for their fur in the 1700s and 1800s. Their population has grown slowly over the years and is still threatened by oil spills, pollution and disease.

California Sea Lions



Playful and loud, California sea lions pack together on rocks, jetties, docks or under wharves. Their piercing bark can be heard from quite a distance.

In the water they may rest in "rafts" of many animals, with heads and flippers poking out to absorb heat. Agile swimmers, they can "porpoise," or leap high out of water. They hunt offshore for fishes and squid. California sea lions breed south of here, mainly on offshore islands from Santa Barbara to Mexico. The population of sea lions has increased greatly since 1972, when hunting of marine mammals was banned in the United States.