

Marine mammals have stranded along the Northwest coast for 40 million years. Whales, otters, seals, and sea lions were hunted to near extinction and strandings became a rare event. As some species recovered, strandings increased. Strandings can be live or dead, a single animal or a group of related individuals. Causes can be anything from a calf separated from its mother in heavy weather to death from old age. Mortal contact with vessels, oil spills, and entanglement in fishing gear are common anthropogenic (human-caused) events which can lead to a stranding.

#### RESPONDING TO A STRANDING

**SAFETY FIRST!** These are wild animals in a stressed condition. They do bite. Some may carry diseases which can be transmitted to pets and humans.

Reporting a stranding promptly is the best way to help stranded animals. It also provides biologists valuable opportunities to study the animals and their environment.

#### DO

- Keep people and dogs away.
- Observe and report the following to an official agency:
  1. Identify—Distinguish between a baleen whale and a toothed whale; seal or sea lion or otter. Estimate size, note color, and comment on the nature of vocalizations.
  2. General Condition—Is the animal dead or alive, lethargic, injured, bleeding, or entangled?
  3. Location—Be as precise as possible, making note of landmarks and beach accessibility.
  4. Colored Tags—On which flipper do they appear? What color are they? Can you safely read the tag numbers?
    - Keep live cetaceans cool and moist by covering the body with wet towels (if available). Keep water from getting down the blowhole. Avoid covering the blowhole.

#### DON'T ...

- ... move, touch, or disturb the animal.
- ... try to drive animals back into the water.
- ... pour water on a seal, sea lion, or sea otter.
- ... try to feed any wild animal.

Marine mammals are protected by federal law. It is illegal for unauthorized persons to disturb, handle, or feed them. It is also illegal to collect or possess parts of marine mammals from dead strandings.

In strandings of endangered species, or in some locations in California, rehabilitation and subsequent release of stranded animals may be considered. In cases of severe injury, animals may be humanely euthanized.

#### Northwest Marine Mammal Stranding Network

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) established the Northwest Marine Mammal Stranding Network under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. It is comprised of several government agencies and cooperating scientists operating on a volunteer basis. These volunteers respond to strandings either directly or by advising those at the scene on how to proceed. Data collected from strandings become part of a national database used to establish baseline information on marine mammal biology and toxins in the environment. Please understand that not all stranding events require or receive a formal response from the volunteers.

#### Marine Mammal Stranding Network Contacts

Alaska	1-907-360-3481
NOAA Strandings Hotline	1-800-304-4867
NOAA Office of Enforcement Hotline	VHF 16/22A
United States Coast Guard	
British Columbia	1-800-665-5939
BC Stranding Network (Canada only)	
Washington	1-800-853-1964
NOAA Office of Enforcement Hotline	1-206-526-6733
Washington Stranding Network	
Oregon	1-800-452-7888
Oregon State Police	
Northern California	1-415-289-SEAL (7325)
The Marine Mammal Center	



A mass stranding of Sperm Whales at Florence, Oregon, in 1979

**Oregon State University** Marine Mammal Institute

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*When and How to Respond  
 in the Pacific Northwest  
 and Southern Alaska*