

Glossary
COSEE-West
Workshop: March 29, 2008

“Natural History and Evolution of Pinnipeds (Sea Lions, Seals & Walruses)”

A adaptation: a physical or behavioral modification of an organism that makes it more fit for survival under certain environmental conditions.

alpha: a male that has secured dominance over other males through size and strength for mating rights; it is the highest social rank among males.

apex predators: carnivorous animals at the top of the food chain such as white sharks or orcas.

B blubber: the thick layer of fat between skin and muscle layers of marine mammals which is a way of storing energy and keeps elephant seals warm in cold water.

bull: adult male; term often used for cattle, elk, moose, elephants, seals, sea lions, walruses, etc.

C canines (teeth): also called fangs, cuspids, dogteeth, eye teeth; these are the relatively long, pointed teeth (often the longest) of a mammal’s mouth. These are the long tusks of walruses.

carnivore: an animal whose diet consists of primarily or exclusively meat.

catastrophic molt: is the shedding of all hair or fur and outer layer of skin at one time.

cow: adult female; term often used for cattle, elk, moose, elephants, seals, sea lions, walruses, etc.

D delayed implantation: when a fertilized egg floats in the uterus before it implants to develop into a fetus; in an elephant seal, implantation can be delayed up to 3 months.

E endangered: at risk of becoming extinct.

epidermis: the outermost layer of skin.

extant: in existence; alive.

extinction: the end of the existence of a taxonomically related group of organisms.

F fasting: the willing abstention from eating, drinking, or both for a period of time.

G gestation: time between fertilization and the birth of an offspring.

H harem: a group of females associated with one male for protection and reproduction.

haul-out: *verb.* to come out of the water onto shore, rocks, buoys, etc. *noun.* the place where a pinniped comes to shore for rest, mating, molting or give birth.

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M Marine Mammal Protection Act: enacted on October 21, 1972, it prohibits the taking of any marine mammal from U.S. waters and by U.S. citizens on the high seas, and prohibits importation of marine mammals and marine mammal products. More information is here: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/laws/mmpa/>

migration: the seasonal travel of a group of organisms under their own power to follow or find food, find opportunities to reproduce, or other resources.

O Odobenidae: is the Family grouping of the walruses (only one extant species, but includes extinct relatives).

Otariidae: is the Family grouping of the eared seals (sea lions and fur seals).

P pelage: hair, fur, or wool that covers an animal.

Phocidae: is the Family grouping of the true or earless seals.

Pinniped (scientific term: Pinnipedia): meaning “wing-foot,” is a group of mammals that includes seals (Family: Phocidae), sea lions (Family: Otariidae), and walruses (Family: Odobenidae).

polygyny: one male with multiple female partners (i.e. a harem).

population: organisms of the same species that occur in a particular place at a given time; a population may contain several discrete breeding groups or stocks

proboscis: a long, flexible snout (nose).

pup: a newborn pinniped.

R rookery: a nest or breeding place for gregarious mammals or birds.

S sexual dimorphism: difference in physical appearance between males and females of the same species.

subadult: a stage in an organism’s life where it has developed many, but not all adult characteristics and is not sexually mature.

T tagging: the attachment of equipment to a large animals (for example, penguins, seals, etc.) that allows scientists to find out things such as where those animals have been (latitude and longitude, depth in water, etc.) and the conditions there (such as temperature, salinity, etc.).

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territorial: usually a male who protects or defends a certain geographic area from other animals, often of the same species.

thermoregulation: when an animal keeps its body temperature within a certain range. One way some pinnipeds do this is by sticking their fins out of the water and letting the sun warm them.

TOPP: acronym for Tagging of Pacific Predators, is a group of scientists and others who are interested in sustainable oceans and was started in 2000 as one of 17 projects that are part of the Census of Marine Life. TOPP has placed satellite tags on 22 species of large predators in the Pacific Ocean, including as white sharks, squid, albatross, leatherback turtles, and sooty shearwaters. <http://www.topp.org/>

V vibrissae: also called whiskers, are specialized hairs usually employed for tactile sensation; they are usually stiffer and thicker than other types of hair.

vocalization: an auditory communication.

W weaned: a young mammal that no longer receives nourishment through nursing.

weaner: an elephant seal under one year of age, that no longer relies on mother's milk.

Y yearling: a young elephant seal that is between one and two years of age.