

MARINE MAMMAL RESCUE



READING

Grades: 4-6

Objectives: Students will read and interpret informational text, practice their note-taking strategy while becoming familiar with basic information about seals and sea lions.

Sources: Britannica Kids and CILC Maker Space

SEALS AND SEA LIONS



SEALS

Seals are mammals that live mostly in cold seas. They are related to the walrus. There are more than 30 species, or kinds, of seal.

They can be divided into two groups: earless, or true, seals and eared seals.

Earless seals actually do have ears, but they do not stick out. Eared seals have visible ears. Sea lions are eared seals with a thick, hairy neck that looks like a lion's mane.

Seals are found throughout the world. They are especially plentiful in seas near the North and South poles. Some species like the open ocean. Others prefer to live along the coast. All seals spend some time on islands, beaches, or sheets of ice. They come ashore to breed.

A seal's body is round in the middle and narrower at the ends. The skin is usually brown, gray, or black. The smallest seals are about 4 feet (1.2 meters) long and weigh about 200 pounds (90 kilograms). The largest seals can be 21 feet (6.5 meters) long and weigh more than 8,000 pounds (3,600 kilograms). They are called elephant seals. Instead of legs, seals have two pairs of flippers. Flippers help seals to swim. Eared seals can turn their rear flippers forward under the body. This allows them to scoot around while on land. Earless seals cannot turn their rear flippers forward. They move on land by wriggling on their bellies or pulling themselves forward with their front flippers.

Seals eat mostly fish. Some also eat squid and shellfish. The leopard seal of the Antarctic feeds on penguins and other seals.



SEA LIONS

Sea lions are mammals that live mostly in Pacific waters. They are a type of seal. The sea lion got its name because most males have manes, just like the male lions that live on land. Male sea lions also roar to defend the females in their groups. There are five species, or kinds, of sea lion: the California, northern, southern, Australian, and New Zealand. The California sea lion is known

for its intelligence and memory. It is the trained seal that is popular in zoo and marine shows.

Most species of sea lions live in the Pacific Ocean, from the **Bering Sea** to southern **South America**. Some are found in **Tierra del Fuego** and on the **Falkland Islands** in the southern Atlantic Ocean, and others live around Australia and New Zealand. When not in the open water, sea lions are often found on isolated rocky islands, in quiet bays, and on coastal beaches.

Sea lions range in color from golden brown to dark brown but often look darker when wet. They have a blunt snout, a small tail, excellent eyesight, and a coat of short, coarse hair. They also have small external (outside) ears. With fur seals, they make up the group of eared seals. Sea lions can reach 11.5 feet (3.5 meters) in length and weigh up to 2,200 pounds (1,000 kilograms). Males are much larger than females.

Sea lions eat fish, mollusks, and crustaceans. Some even eat penguins. The sea lion is a bit like a **walrus**—both animals can turn their hind flippers forward under the body when on land to move about on all four limbs. When threatened, the sea lion will slash at an enemy with its canine teeth, hurl its body at the intruder, or dive and swim away. Sea lions mate and bear young on land. Breeding groups consist of one male and 3–20 females. Males may go without food for the entire breeding season while they stake their claim on a given breeding ground. After about a year, a female gives birth to a single pup with a smooth, silky coat. Babies swim when they are about two weeks old.

Name _____

Taking Notes

Directions: Use this organizer to take notes on the essay.

list of key words

words I need to define

summary of main points

interesting facts

questions I have