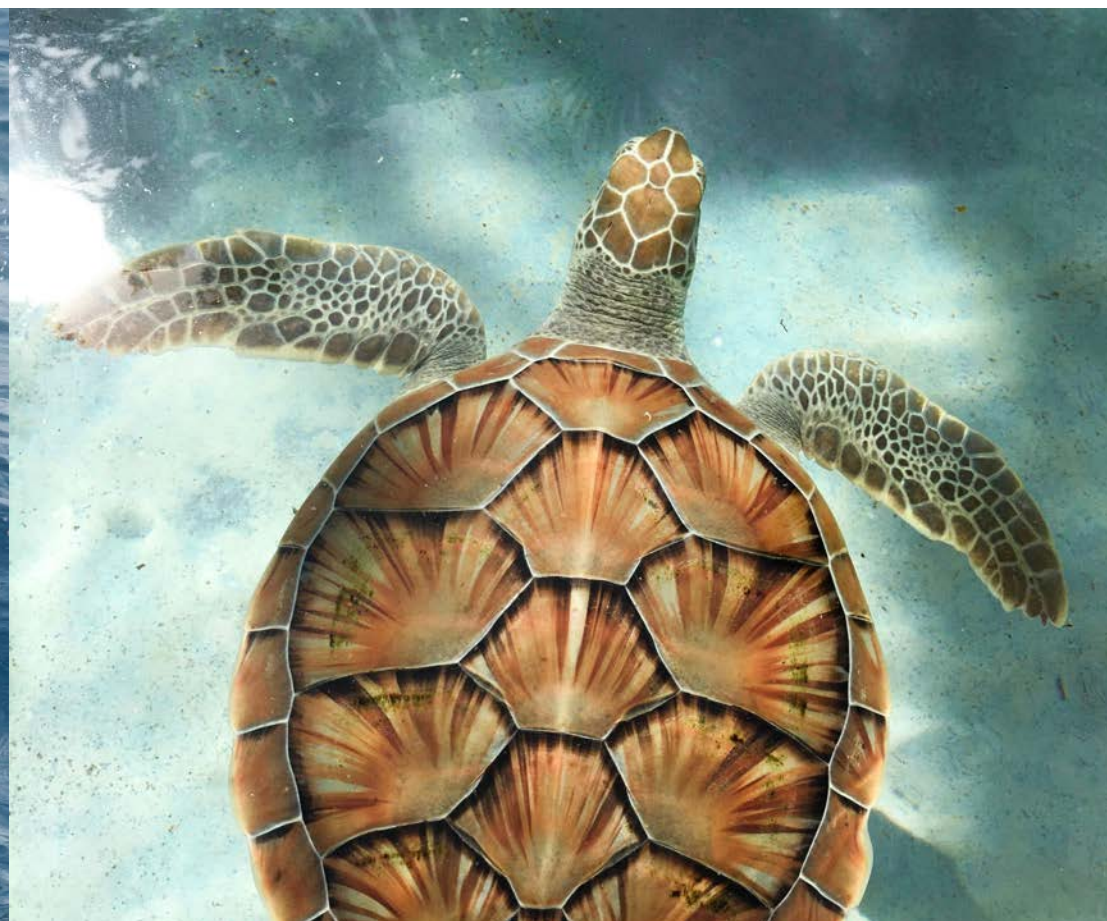


Field Guide

Marine Animals of California



Field Guide

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bottlenose dolphin

LENGTH 8-12 ft

WEIGHT 300-1,400 lb

DESCRIPTION

Bottlenose dolphins have a short abrupt beak and tall falcate dorsal fins set in the center of their backs. They are grey in color with a lighter underside than back.

STATUS

Stable - The California Coastal population is estimated at between 346 and 515 animals.

THREATS

Bottlenose dolphins are vulnerable to many stressors and threats including disease, biotoxins, pollution, habitat alteration, vessel collisions, human feeding of and activities causing harassment, interactions with commercial and recreational fishing, energy exploration and oil spills, and other types of human disturbance (such as underwater noise).

DID YOU KNOW?

Dolphins each have signature whistles which they use to identify one another (much like humans use names).



short-beaked common dolphin

LENGTH 6 ft

WEIGHT 170 lb

DESCRIPTION

Common dolphins are dark gray with a white belly and a light gray or yellow patch on the side of their bodies. They are very active and will frequently breach and bow ride. Short-beaked common dolphins tend to be more active than their long-beaked counterparts, breaching repeatedly.

STATUS

Stable

THREATS

Common dolphins may become bycatch in large fishing nets or become entangled in lost fishing gear. Common dolphins are also hunted for their meat and oil in places like Japan and Russia.

DID YOU KNOW?

Common dolphins may form super pods of thousands of individuals!

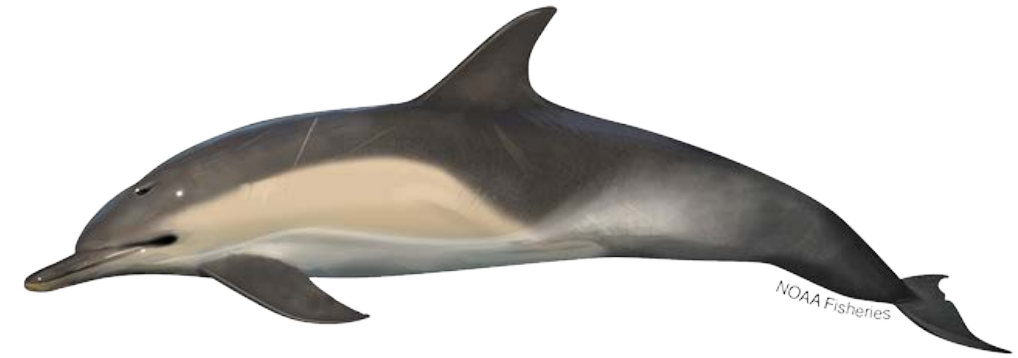


Image provided by NOAA

long-beaked common dolphin

LENGTH 6-8.5 ft

WEIGHT 160-500 lb

DESCRIPTION

Common dolphins are dark gray with a white belly and a light gray or yellow patch on the side of their bodies. They are very active and will frequently breach and bow ride. The long-beaked common dolphins have a more slender look compared to the short-beaked species. They also have more muted coloring with a different pattern around their eye.

STATUS

Stable

THREATS

Common dolphins may become bycatch in large fishing nets or become entangled in lost fishing gear. Common dolphins are also hunted for their meat and oil in places like Japan and Russia.

DID YOU KNOW?

Common dolphins may form super pods of thousands of individuals!



Pacific white-sided dolphin

LENGTH 5.5-8 ft

WEIGHT 300-400 lb

DESCRIPTION

Pacific white-sided dolphins have an ill-defined beak and a tall, falcate and bicolored dorsal fin. They are dark gray with light gray accents, the most prominent being their large patch on their sides which extends from their rostrums to their middle where their dorsal fin sits.

STATUS

Because these dolphins have a large range their population size is difficult to calculate. A 2008-2014 survey by NOAA estimated the population of Pacific White-sided Dolphins off the coast of California, Oregon, and Washington to be upwards of 21,000 individuals.

THREATS

Pacific white-sided dolphins are at risk of fishing gear entanglement and noise pollution.

DID YOU KNOW?

Some people call these dolphins “lags,” a nickname from their scientific name *Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*.



Risso's dolphin

LENGTH 8.5-13 ft

WEIGHT 660-1,100 lb

DESCRIPTION

Risso's dolphins are gray with increasing amounts of white linear scarring as they age. Older dolphins may appear entirely white as they accumulate scratches through hunting squid or even fighting one another. They have a blunt head with no beak and a tall dark dorsal fin.

STATUS

Stable

THREATS

Historically, Risso's dolphin mortality has been documented in the squid purse seine fishery off Southern California. This mortality probably represented animals killed intentionally to protect catch or gear, rather than incidental mortality, and such intentional takes are now illegal under the 1994 amendment to the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

DID YOU KNOW?

Risso's have been known on several occasions to hybridize with bottlenose dolphins.



Image provided by NOAA

killer whale

LENGTH 23-32 ft

WEIGHT 8,000-18,000 lb

DESCRIPTION

The dorsal (top side of animals) is black, while the saddle, under the fin is a creamy white, with a white oval shaped eyepatch above and below each eye. The ventral (underside of animal) is white as well. The dorsal fin can reach up to 6 feet in length and is often characterized by indentations (scars). Their pectoral flippers can also reach a length of 6 feet. Calves, are usually 6 feet in length, and weigh about 400 pounds.

STATUS

NOAA estimates there are 50,000 killer whales globally. Approximately 2,500 killer whales live in the eastern North Pacific Ocean. The Southern Residents are listed as Endangered as there are only 76 whales left.

THREATS

Orcas face several threats including food limitations, chemical contaminants in ocean water, and disturbances from vessel traffic and sound.

DID YOU KNOW?

Killer whales are considered the most widespread cetacean as they can tolerate a wide range of temperatures and depths.



gray whale

LENGTH 42-49 ft

WEIGHT 90,000 lb

DESCRIPTION

Gray whales are a mottled gray color and are covered in many barnacles and whale lice. They lack a dorsal fin and instead have a dorsal hump followed by a series of smaller bumps leading toward the flukes. They are about the size of a school bus but weigh twice as much.

STATUS

Eastern North Pacific population - Recovered

Western North Pacific population - Endangered

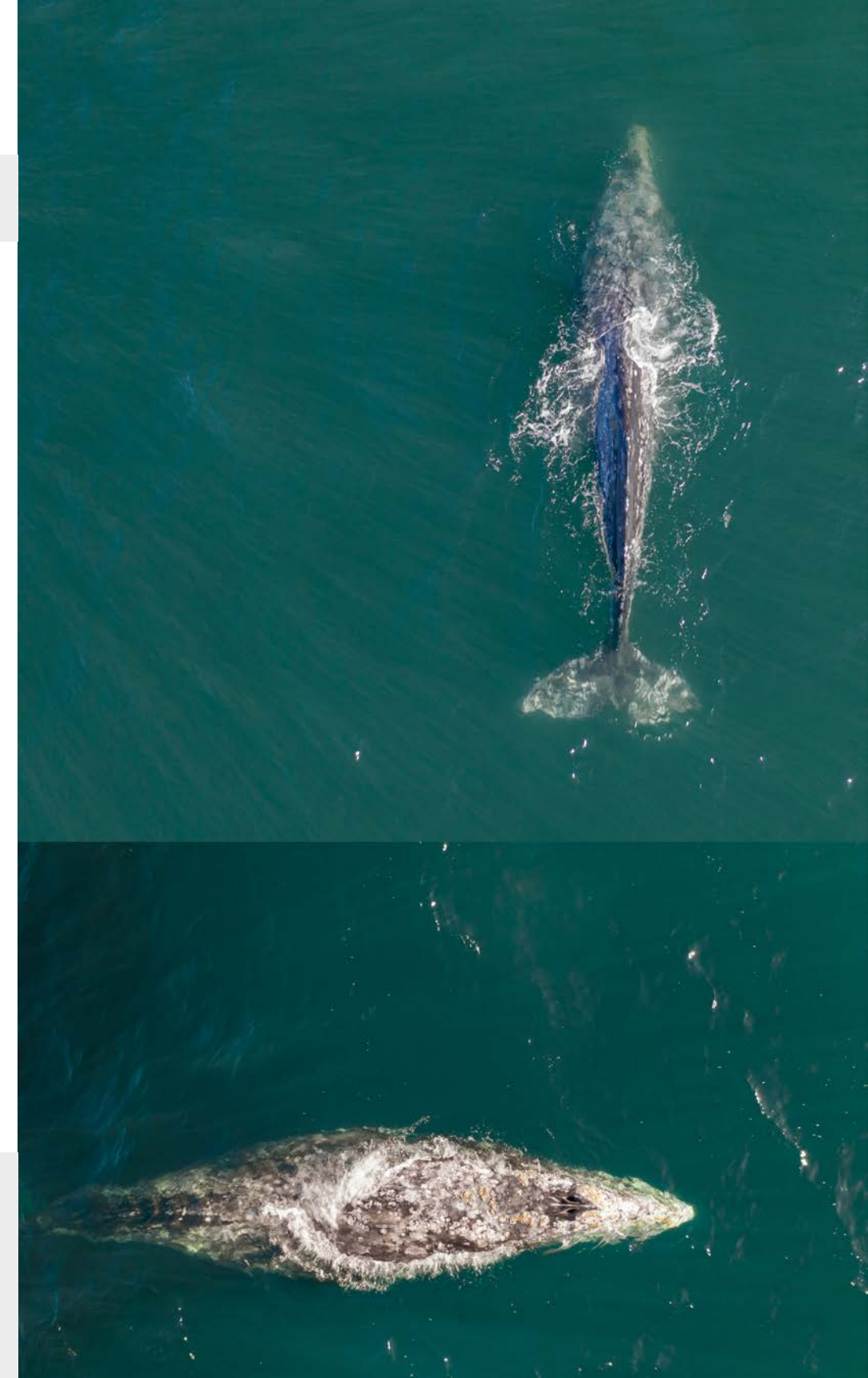
THREATS

Entanglement in fishing gear, vessel strikes, ocean noise, disturbance from whale watching activities, climate change

Gray whales are slow moving and stay near to shore which puts them at an increased risk of ship strikes. Climate change also threatens the species as they rely on adequate annual ice coverage in the Arctic to ensure the health of their feeding grounds.

DID YOU KNOW?

Gray whales feed by using their tongue to siphon mud into their mouths which then gets filtered through their baleen.



humpback whale

LENGTH 45-60 ft

WEIGHT 60,000-80,000 lb

DESCRIPTION

Humpback whales are baleen whales that have large pectoral fins (about the a third the length of their bodies). They are black on their backs and their ventral side is an individualized pattern of black and white blotches. They have small bumps on their heads called tubercles. Their dorsal fin has a small hump at its base on the side nearest to their heads.

STATUS

4 of the 14 distinct populations are Endangered. The local population in Southern California is listed as Threatened.

THREATS

Humpback whales are at risk of ship strikes, vessel-based harassment, and fishing gear entanglement.

DID YOU KNOW?

Some humpback whales feed by taking turns corralling small schools of fish into bubble nets so that the group can feed.



blue whale

LENGTH 75-110 ft

WEIGHT 300,000 lb

DESCRIPTION

Blue whales are enormous baleen whales that are a mottled blue-gray color. They have tiny dorsal fins which are set far back on their bodies.

STATUS

Endangered

Eastern North Pacific Population - approx. 1,496

THREATS

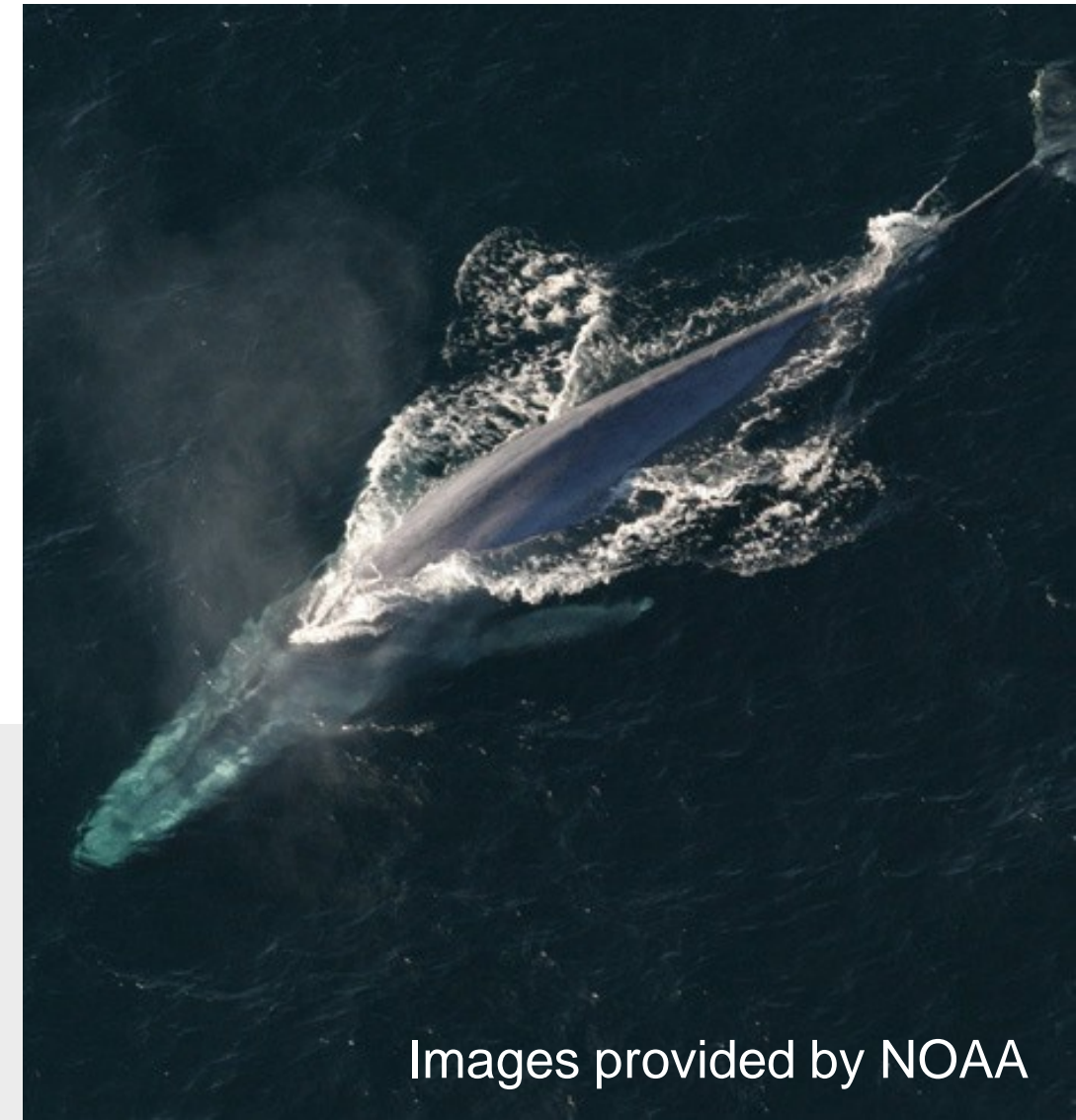
Blue whales are at risk of ship strikes and entanglement in fishing gear. Noise pollution may also threaten this species.

Commercial whaling between 1905 and 1971 reduced the eastern North Pacific population by about 95%. An estimated 3,411 whales were taken during this time.

DID YOU KNOW?

The blue whale is the biggest animal to have ever lived!

Blue whales are also the loudest animals on Earth emitting low frequency calls that may be heard from hundreds of miles away.



Images provided by NOAA

fin whale

LENGTH 75-80 ft

WEIGHT 80,000-160,000 lb

DESCRIPTION

Fin whales are baleen whales and are almost as large as blue whales. Their dorsal fin however, is much taller than that of a Blue Whale and has a falcate shape meaning that the tip curves down toward the back of the body. The fin whale's jaw is black on the left side and white on the right. The whale's body is gray with a white underside. The top of their head also has a lighter "V" pattern.

STATUS

Endangered

THREATS

Fin whales are at risk of ship strikes and fishing gear entanglement. They also may be threatened by noise pollution and lack of prey due to overfishing.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fin whales can live up to 80-90 years.



Images provided by NOAA

California sea lion

LENGTH 6 (females) - 7.5 (males) ft WEIGHT 240 (females) - 700 (males) lb

DESCRIPTION

California sea lions are eared seals so they have external ears (pinnae) and hinged hind flippers which they can walk atop when onshore. Adult males have a sagittal crest on top of their heads and have very thick necks.

STATUS

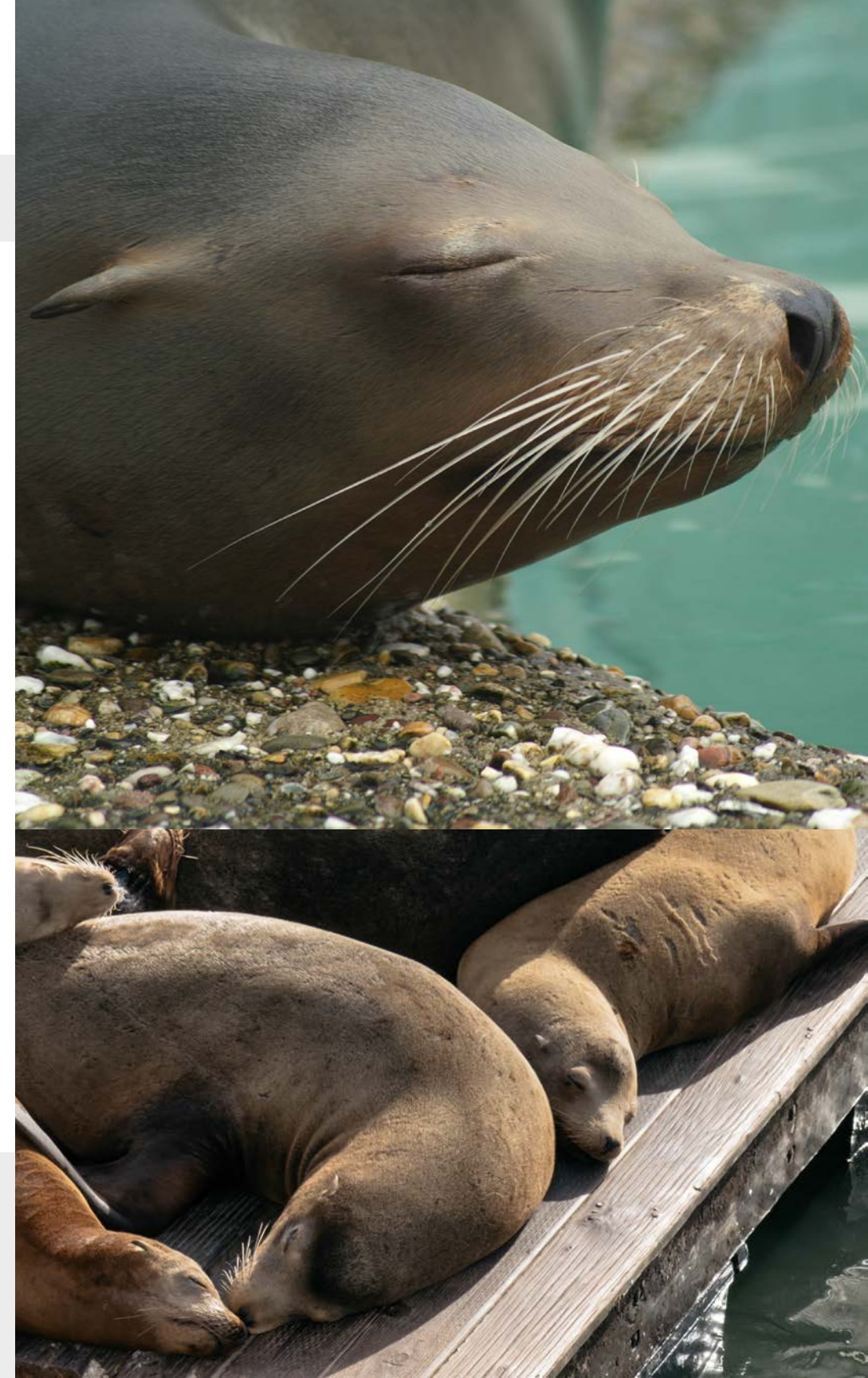
Stable

THREATS

Sea lions may become entangled in fishing gear and are also at risk of sickness from harmful algal blooms and harassment by humans.

DID YOU KNOW?

Most sea lions are born in June and are weaned 6 months later in December.



Guadalupe fur seal

LENGTH 5 (females) - 7ft (males)

WEIGHT 110 (females) - 400 lbs (males)

DESCRIPTION

Guadalupe fur seals are uniformly brown with small oblong ear flaps (pinnae). Males are larger and have very thick necks and chests. The seals may be observed in their unique teakettle pose while floating in open water.

STATUS

Threatened

THREATS

Entanglement in fishing gear, pollution, and military operations threaten the species.

DID YOU KNOW?

Guadalupe fur seals were once thought to be extinct until the sighting of a single male at San Nicolas Island in 1949 and then a small colony at Guadalupe Island in 1954.



Image provided by NOAA

harbor seal

LENGTH 5-6 ft

WEIGHT 180-285 lb

DESCRIPTION

Harbor seals are spotted and can be shades of gray or tan. They are true seals so they do not have external ears and must bounce on their bellies when on land.

STATUS

Stable

THREATS

Harbor seals may be harassed or illegally fed by beachgoers. They are also at risk of fishing gear entanglement, pollution, shipstrike, and disease.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many harbor seals can be seen at Children's Pool in La Jolla. The cove provides seals with a sunny place to haul out and a safe place to pup.



green turtle

LENGTH 3-4 ft

WEIGHT 300-350 lb

DESCRIPTION

Green turtles develop a greenish hue in their fat and cartilage due to their diet of seagrass and algae. Their shells are heart shaped and may appear to be a range of colors from brown to olive to black. The underside of their shells is a pale yellow color.

STATUS

All populations are listed as threatened or endangered. The East Pacific population is listed as threatened.

THREATS

Green turtles are caught as bycatch or may become entangled in fishing gear and both adults and eggs are at risk of take or collection by humans. Degradation of their foraging and nesting habitats and disease are also concerns. The turtles may also ingest marine debris or collide with vessels.

DID YOU KNOW?

A female turtle can lay multiple nests during her stay in the nesting area. She can lay about 100 eggs in a nest every two weeks.



olive ridley turtle

LENGTH 2-2.5 ft

WEIGHT 100 lb

DESCRIPTION

Olive ridley turtles have an olive colored heart-shaped shell and are one of the smallest sea turtles. Females always nest in synchrony in groups of hundreds of thousands.

STATUS

All populations are listed as threatened except for Mexico's nesting population which is listed as endangered.

THREATS

Risks to olive ridley turtles include harvest, entanglement, ingestion of marine debris, disease, pollution, and habitat degradation.

DID YOU KNOW?

An estimated 10 million turtles once populated the ocean before they were aggressively targeted for their meat, leather, and eggs.



loggerhead turtle

LENGTH 3 ft

WEIGHT up to 250 lb

DESCRIPTION

Loggerhead turtles have relatively large heads with powerful jaws for crunching down on bivalves and other hard bodied prey.

STATUS

9 populations are listed as threatened or endangered.

THREATS

Harvest, bycatch and entanglement, pollution, habitat degradation, ingestion of marine debris, and disease all are threats to loggerhead turtles.

DID YOU KNOW?

Hatchlings from the beaches of Japan and Australia will cross the Pacific Ocean to feed off the coasts of Mexico, Peru, and Chile!



leatherback turtle

LENGTH 4.5-5.5 ft

WEIGHT up to 2,200 lb

DESCRIPTION

These large turtles have thickened skin in place of a hard shell and scales.

STATUS

Endangered

THREATS

Leatherback turtles are threatened by fishing gear entanglement, bycatch, and collection of eggs. They are also at risk of vessel collision and living among and consuming water pollutants and marine debris. The degradation of suitable beaches for nesting is also a concern.

DID YOU KNOW?

Reaching up to 10 feet, the leatherback is the largest turtle in the world!

Leatherback turtles have lived since the time of the dinosaurs!





Visit us at www.savingoceanwildlife.org
to learn more about how you can help protect our oceans!

Questions? Please contact us at info@savingoceanwildlife.org