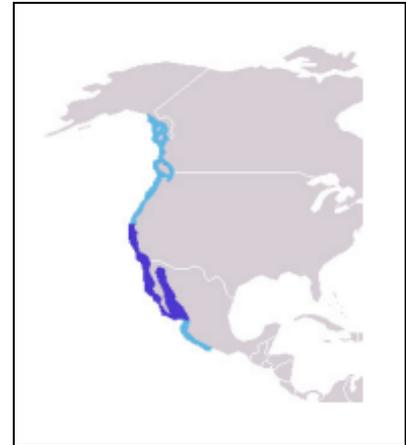




California Sea Lion

Zalophus californianus

Order	Carnivora
Family	Otariidae
Genus	<i>Zalophus</i>
Species	<i>californianus</i>



Geographic Range

Found from Vancouver Island, British Columbia to the southern tip of Baja, CA in Mexico

Habitat

Coastal waters, hauling out on rocks, beaches, docks and other floating objects

Niche

Diurnal, aquatic but terrestrial for breeding, carnivorous

Wild Diet

Wide variety of seafood, mainly squid and fish, and sometimes even clams

Life Span

Up 15-20 years in the wild, 30 in captivity

Appearance

Streamlined bodies with external ear-flaps, long fore-flippers, and short thick brown hairs. Weight is between 200 – 850 pounds, length from head to end is between 5 – 8 feet.

Adaptations

They are well developed for an aquatic lifestyle with streamlined bodies. In the water, they swim using their front flippers like oars and their hind flippers as a rudder. Their nostrils automatically close as they dive. On land, sea lions rotate their hind flippers forward and use all four flippers to move around and support their body weight.

Fun Facts

Sea lions are able to remain submerged for up to 40 minutes. They are also the fastest of any sea lion reaching speeds of up to 25 mph.

At the Zoo

Our sea lions, “Silent Knight” and “Henry,” live between the South American Tropical Rainforest and Bear Country exhibits.

Comparison

The easiest way to tell seals and sea lions apart are by their ears and their flippers. Sea lions have an external ear flap and seals do not. Sea lions also have large front flippers and rotating rear flippers, allowing them to walk on land.

Status and Conservation

Least concern – population has stabilized due to hunting regulations enforced by The Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972.

Threats

Conflicts with humans and other wildlife, pollution, entanglement in fishing nets and gear

Bibliography

Docent Training Notebook, <http://www.sfzoo.org/animals/mammals/californiasealion.htm>



Photos by Marianne Hale

