



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet Harbor Seal (*Phoca vitulina*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Tourism and Business Development College of Business,
Oregon State University Extension - Oregon Sea Grant at

<http://tourism.oregonstate.edu/>

Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional Program

<https://www.GORPguide.org>

For more information about the GORP training program see:

<https://www.gorpguide.org/become-a-gorp-certified-guide>

Pacific harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina richardii*)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/pacific-harbor-seal-phoca-vitulina-richardii/

By
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Harbor seals are the most widely distributed pinniped. On the Oregon Coast, you will most likely encounter the Eastern Pacific harbor seal, a subspecies found between Alaska and Baja California, Mexico.

These seals have spotted coats in a variety of shades from white or silver-gray to black or dark brown. They favor near-shore coastal waters and use rocks, reefs, beaches, and drifting glacial ice as haul out and pupping sites.



Pacific harbor seals

Pacific harbor seals spend about half their time on land and half in the water. They can even sleep with their bodies nearly submerged in water, exposing only the tip of their nose to the air – a posture called “bottling.”

Ocean threats

Despite being skilled swimmers, harbor seals face a number of threats in the ocean. There is currently no commercial hunting of harbor seals, but some native subsistence hunting of seals still occurs.

Because they compete for many of the same species of fish, harbor seals are sometimes killed by commercial fishermen. Seals can also become entangled and drown in fishing nets and gear.

In addition, the species is preyed upon by killer whales, sharks, and Steller’s sea lions. El Niño events can decrease the animal’s food availability, which includes a variety of fish, shellfish, and crustaceans.