



## FACTS ON SEA LIONS

**Sea Lions, GENERAL** - In the winged-footed family also known as pinnipeds, there are true seals and eared seals. The eared seals are what we know as sea lions and fur seals. These pinnipeds have a few characteristics that make them different from the true seals. Eared seals have external ears, large front flippers which are used to propel their bodies through the water reaching speeds between 20 and 25 miles per hour, and they possess a rotating hip bone allowing them to walk on land using all four flippers.

Sea lions have evolved from bear like ancestors and have adapted very well to their marine environment. A sea lions' body is long and streamlined allowing them to move through the dense water environment with ease. Along with their streamlined body, their flexibility allows them to be agile and maneuver through the water quickly. They can dive to depths of approximately 1000 feet and can hold their breath for 10-20 minutes depending on the species.

**Types** - Today there are 17 known species of sea lions and fur seals. The most common type of sea lion seen in zoos and aquariums is the California Sea lion. Within the species of California Sea lion there are 3 sub-species. They are *Z. c. californianus*, *Z. c. wolfebaeki*, and *Z. c. japonicus*. The species of fur seals differ from sea lions in that they have longer flippers and a thicker coat of fur. Sea Lion Splash currently has 3 California Sea Lions in our family. The Sea Lion Splash Family also boasts a South American Sea Lion and 5 Patagonian Sea Lions.

**Weight / Size** - At adulthood male sea lions will reach weights between 800-1000 pounds and lengths of approximately 9-10 feet. An adult female will reach weights between 200-250 pounds and measure 6-7 feet in length.

**Life Span** - Zoological environment 25-35 years, Wild 10-15 years

**Natural Predators** - Killer Whales, Sharks, Seals'. Predators also include: Polar Bears, Coyotes and Wolves

**Other Predators** - MAN, Plastics, Pollutants, Oil Spills, Drift Nets. Seal Conservation Society: [www.pinnipeds.org](http://www.pinnipeds.org)

**Diet** - Being carnivores they are opportunistic feeders and have a diet primarily consisting of fish including; squid, herring, mackerel, sardines, and capelin. Although they have conical



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shaped teeth, including four canine teeth, they swallow their fish whole. Their teeth are primarily used for catching prey; this therefore enables them to eat their fill when the opportunity arises.

**Breeding** - Breeding occurs throughout the year at different times, once again depending on the species and the habitat in which they live. Sexual maturity of males and females is reached between the ages of 4-6 year of age. Females will go through a cycle each year called estrus. At this time they are able to become impregnated by a dominant male who has claimed a territory and a group of females. Females have a 12 month gestation period, including a delayed implantation period of three months. This delayed implantation allows females to give birth around the same time each year when environmental conditions are desirable. Birth of pups typically occurs between May and July. Typically a female will give birth to one pup per year. Pups generally weigh between 13-15 pounds at birth. Females will nurse for a period of 4-8 months, although it has been documented and is not uncommon for weaning of pups to occur up to one year of age.

### **FUN FACTS:**

- Belong to the order of sea mammals called Pinnipedia, a Latin word meaning "fin foot" or "wing foot".
- Are amphibious animals meaning they are adapted to life both in water and on land.
- Can swim at speeds of 11 to 24 miles per hour and are able to stay submerged for 10 - 15 minutes at a time. They can dive to depths up to 1,300 feet.
- On land use their back flippers to walk, climb or even gallop, which enables them to move surprisingly fast.
- Balance a ball utilizing their whiskers and not their nose.
- Have a coat of coarse outer hairs, called Guard Hairs which appear brown when dry and help to keep the sea lion warm. When wet, the fur flattens to give a sleek dark colored coat.
- Nap during the day and at night and can sleep both in or out of the water.