

An underwater photograph of several California sea lions swimming in clear, sunlit blue water. The sea lions are in various positions, some swimming towards the camera, others away. The water is bright blue with some light refraction patterns. The overall scene is serene and captures the natural behavior of these marine mammals.

CALIFORNIA SEA LIONS

ATLANTIS

PARADISE ISLAND BAHAMAS

Did You Know?

Sea lions are carnivores and belong to the group Pinnipedia. The name comes from the Latin for wing-footed and refers to the animal's flippers. Other members of the pinniped group include seals and walruses. When most people think of a sea lion, they most often imagine a California sea lion since it is commonly seen around the world in performances at zoos and aquariums.

Some people use the term seal for sea lion, but a seal is a different type of pinniped. Seals have no ear flaps, are torpedo shaped, have small flippers, and undulate on land to move. Although sea lions are also torpedo shaped, they can rotate their large hind flippers underneath their body so that they can walk upright on land. When you look closely you will also see that sea lions possess prominent ear flaps.

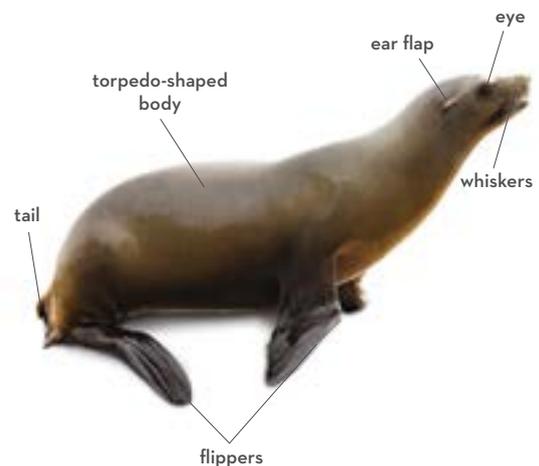


Sea Lions Are Mammals

Sea lions are mammals just like humans and have the same basic mammal traits that include:

- Warm-blooded: Sea lions maintain a constant body temperature.
- Possess hair: Sea lions also have blubber, a layer of fat under the skin, to keep them warm.
- Nurse their young: Sea lions have fat-rich milk, which enables their young to gain weight quickly.
- Breathe air: Sea lion's nostrils remain closed and they voluntarily open them to breathe.
- Give live birth: Sea lions have not become as completely aquatic as whales and give birth on shore.

ANATOMY OF A SEA LIONS



Sea Lion Facts

Adapted For Water

Sea lions have many adaptations that help them survive in the ocean. Their bodies have been streamlined like a torpedo and their limbs have been dramatically modified. The winglike pectoral flippers contain the sea lion's arm bones as well as the finger bones, which have been elongated. These flippers provide the force that propels the animal through the water. The hind flippers are used for steering.



Teeth Are For Tearing

Sea lions don't chew their food. Instead, they grab their meal and then either swallow it whole or rip and tear it into pieces before they eat it. They will dine on fish such as herring and sardines as well as anchovies and squid



Shallow Diver

California sea lions usually don't dive deep, since most of their food is found in shallow waters. They can, however, dive to depths of almost 900 feet. When diving deep, California sea lions slow their heart rates to allow them to remain underwater for nearly 10 minutes before surfacing to breathe. This ability gives them an edge in the pursuit of their prey.

Sizable Suitors

Male sea lions dwarf females in both size and weight. Males average 6.5 to 8 ft. in length and 440 to 880 lb. in weight while females average 5 to 6.5 ft. and 110 to 240 lb. Males use their large size to establish and maintain their territories in a rookery. They patrol their territories, both on land and water, often barking incessantly to let their rivals know they're present. Males mate with numerous females and the mothers raise their young on their own.

female sea lion



male sea lion



A Social Life

California sea lions live in groups called rookeries along the west coast of North America from British Columbia, Canada, to Baja California, Mexico. Sea lions spend part of each day socializing, especially the young, which are called pups. They will gather in groups and explore the rookery as they play and eventually enter tide pools. These activities help them build survival skills such as avoiding predators and catching food. Pups in California have been observed playing Frisbee® with fish and chasing and snapping at gulls. At birth, the young nurse frequently, though within three weeks nursing occurs usually for only 30 minutes a day. Pups continue nursing until their sibling is born.



You can help

Predators And Perils

Healthy California sea lions have very few threats from predators. Killer whales and large sharks will prey on weaker individuals. The sea lions at Atlantis aren't endangered, but there are seals and sea lions that are, such as the Steller sea lion and the Hawaiian monk seal. Sea lions and seals have many challenges that they face on a daily basis:

- Entangling themselves in fishing nets and lines and other litter
- Ingesting trash
- Swimming in water polluted by oil spills and agricultural and mining runoff
- Overfishing in their feeding areas
- Changing climate

SEAL OR SEA LION?



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ear holes• Move on land by wiggling on their bellies and using their hind flippers to move forward.• Have nails on their front flippers.• Swim by steering with their front flippers and propelling themselves forward with their hind flippers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ear flaps• Move on land by using all four flippers• Have nails on their hind flippers.• Swim by using their front flippers to propel them through the water |
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Dolphin Cay

Dolphin Cay is proud to provide the first dedicated rescue and rehabilitation facility in The Bahamas, offering assistance and care for sick or injured marine animals. It is one of the largest and most sophisticated facilities in the world with over 100 professional marine mammal specialists providing the highest level of care for our animals. A portion of the proceeds from dolphin interactions is donated to the Atlantis Blue Project™.



Help Us Shape A Brighter Future

Atlantis Blue Project is dedicated to saving rare and endangered marine species and their extraordinary habitats in The Bahamas and surrounding Caribbean seas. Ongoing preservation efforts include funding scientific research and community outreach as well as conservation and education programs. Due to the support of Atlantis Blue Project™, more than a million acres of marine habitat were preserved in the West Side National Park on Andros Island in The Bahamas.





ATLANTIS
PARADISE ISLAND BAHAMAS

ALLIANCE
of Marine Mammal Parks & Aquariums

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