

2011 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Stranding Summary

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Summary

Strandings of cetaceans and pinnipeds that occurred in Alaska waters and were reported to the National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Region (NMFS) in 2011 are summarized here. Polar bear, sea otter and walrus are managed under U.S. Fish and Wildlife jurisdiction and are not reported to NMFS. Currently a total of 284 events are recorded, involving 300 individual animals. These data are subject to change as more information becomes available and records are further reviewed. Both unconfirmed and confirmed reports are compiled here.

Stranding events include animals found dead (floating and beach-cast), and reports of live stranded, mass stranded, abandoned, sick or injured animals. Human interactions such as collisions, fishery interactions and entanglements are also included. Additionally, stranding events where the animal(s) could not be examined are included in the numbers below.

Known subsistence takes are not included, but suspected subsistence animals are in some cases included here (e.g., animals reported shot). Fishery observer reports are not included unless the animal was observed outside of statistical reporting protocols (and thus would not be included by the observer program as part of their watch data set).

Stranding events involving two or more individuals are generally rare in Alaska. However, in 2011 there were three separate events of two or more dead seals stranding within proximity of each other- two ringed seals in one event, three ringed seals in another and three harbor seals were also observed beach-cast near each other. There was also a report of 8 harbor porpoise carasses observed along the same stretch of beach, as well as two dead belugas stranding and a report of two humpback whales entangled in the same gear.

In 2011, an Unusual Mortality Event (UME) was declared in Alaska for ice seals and walrus. Ringed seals were the primary NMFS species involved in the event, but other identified species affected included bearded seals, spotted seals, and a ribbon seal. Affected animals were reported both dead and alive with lesions, hair loss, and lethargic behavior. Animals observed with symptoms that were subsistence harvested were not included in this summary, however, over 150 animals were involved in this UME in 2011. Cause of the described illness is currently unknown.

Further stranding information and references are available at the NMFS Alaska Region webpage:
<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/strandings.htm>

Acknowledgements

This summary is made possible by the efforts of the Alaska Marine Mammal Stranding Network, along with partner organizations, agencies, and members of the public who have reported stranding events to NMFS.

Table 1. 2011 Alaska Region Stranding Reports by Initial Sighting Month, Number of Events, and Number of Animals. (Two events with unknown stranding month not included.)

<i>Month</i>	<i>Events</i>	<i>Animals</i>
Jan	4	4
Feb	1	1
Mar	2	2
Apr	5	5
May	20	21
Jun	43	43
Jul	46	53
Aug	83	89
Sep	55	57
Oct	17	17
Nov	5	5
Dec	1	1
Total	282	298

Table 2. 2011 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Strandings by Initial Condition, Species, and Number of Animals. (One report of an dead unknown marine mammal not included).

<i>Species</i>	<i>Initial Condition</i>		
	<i>Alive</i>	<i>Dead</i>	<i>Total</i>
Beaked	0	1	1
Beluga	1	12	13
Blue	0	1	1
Bowhead	0	1	1
Gray	2	8	10
Humpback	20	13	33
Orca	3	2	5
Sperm	0	1	1
Dall's	0	1	1
Harbor	2	11	13
Unknown	1	5	6
<i>Cetacean Total</i>	29	56	85
Bearded seal	0	4	4
Elephant seal	0	1	1
Harbor seal	14	15	29
Northern fur seal	21	1	22
Ribbon seal	1	2	3
Ringed seal	43	55	98
Spotted seal	1	1	2
Steller sea lion	16	27	43
Unknown Pinniped	2	10	12
<i>Pinniped Total</i>	98	116	214
Total			299

Table 3. 2011 Alaska Region Live Strandings Handled by the Alaska Sea Life Center for Rehabilitation by Species, Outcome, and Number of Animals (does not include animals that were dead on arrival).

Species	Outcome	Animals
Ringed Seal	pending transferral	1
	<i>Spotted seal Total</i>	1
Harbor seal	died	1
	released	11
	<i>Harbor seal Total</i>	12
Total		13

Table 4. 2011 Alaska Region Stranding Events involving Human Interaction. These numbers should be treated as preliminary, as they include both confirmed and unconfirmed reports. Fishery interactions are separated from entanglements here by internal evidence of human interaction.

Human Interaction?	Details	Species	Animals
Could not be determined	pos. shot	Ringed seal	1
		Harbor seal	2
		<i>Could not be determined total</i>	3
Yes	Collision	Humpback whale	5
		Entanglement	Beluga
		Gray	2
		Humpback whale	15
		Northern Fur Seal	21
		Harbor seal	3
		Steller sea lion	6
		Unknown	1
	Fishery Interaction	Steller sea lion	9
Shot	Harbor seal	2	
	<i>Yes total</i>	65	

Table 5. 2011 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Strandings by Area, Species, Initial Condition, and Number of Animals. (Does not include one report on an unknown cetacean reported floating in the Gulf of Alaska).

Area	Species	Animal Initial Condition		Total
		Alive	Dead	
<i>Arctic</i>	Beluga	0	2	2
	Bowhead	0	1	1
	Gray whale	0	3	3
	Unknown cetacean	0	2	2
	Bearded seal	0	4	4
	Ringed seal	40	49	89
	Spotted seal	1	1	2
	Ribbon seal	1	0	1
	Unknown Pinniped	1	6	7
	Unknown marine mammal	0	1	1
	Arctic Total	43	69	112
<i>Southcentral Alaska</i>	Beaked whale	0	1	1
	Beluga	0	6	6
	Blue	0	1	1
	Gray whale	0	2	2
	Harbor porpoise	1	1	2
	Humpback	0	4	4
	Sperm	0	1	1
	Unknown cetacean	1	1	2
	Harbor seal	12	6	18
	Steller sea lion	1	4	5
	Southcentral Total	15	27	42
<i>Southeast Alaska</i>	Dalls Porpoise	0	1	1
	Gray whale	1	3	4
	Harbor porpoise	1	1	2
	Humpback	15	4	19
	Orca	0	2	2
	Harbor seal	2	6	8
	Steller sea lion	14	16	30
	Southeast Total	33	33	66
<i>Western Alaska</i>	Beluga	1	4	5
	Humpback	3	2	5
	Orca	3	0	3
	Harbor Porpoise	0	8	8
	Elephant seal	0	1	1
	Harbor seal	0	1	1
	Northern fur seal	21	1	22
	Ringed seal	3	6	9
	Ribbon seal	0	2	2
	Steller sea lion	0	4	4
	Unknown Pinniped	1	4	5
	Western Total	32	33	65
<i>Kodiak</i>	Harbor porpoise	0	1	1
	Gray whale	1	0	1
	Humpback	2	3	5
	Unknown cetacean	0	1	1
	Harbor seal	0	2	2
	Steller sea lion	1	3	4
	Kodiak Total	4	10	14
Total		127	172	299

