

2012 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Stranding Summary

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March 28, 2013

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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 2012 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 256 events are recorded, involving 291 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 2012 there were three separate events of three or more live beluga whales stranding within proximity of each other—these events included groups of 12, 23, and 3 animals.

In 2011, an Unusual Mortality Event (UME) was declared in Alaska for ice seals and walrus. The investigation continued into 2012, although there were substantially fewer reports. Most report in 2012 involved subsistence harvested animals, which are not captured in this data. Cause of the described illness is currently unknown but you can follow the investigation at <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/protectedresources/seals/ice/diseased/default.htm>.

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. 2012 Alaska Region Stranding Reports by Initial Sighting Month, Number of Events, and Number of Animals.

<i>Month</i>	<i>Events</i>	<i>Animals</i>
Jan	4	4
Feb	6	6
Mar	4	4
Apr	12	12
May	23	34
Jun	32	32
Jul	48	48
Aug	76	100
Sep	26	26
Oct	19	19
Nov	4	4
Dec	2	2
Total	256	291

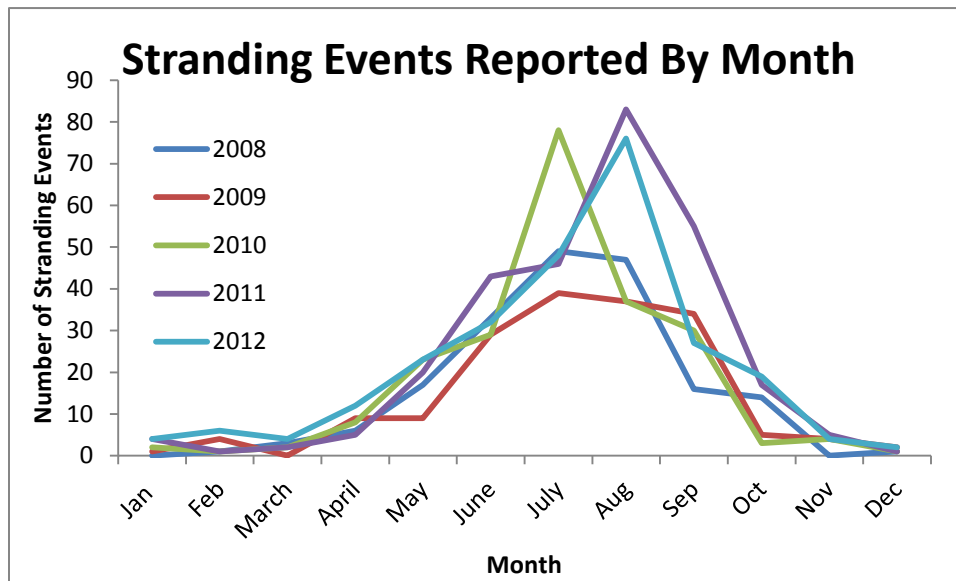


Figure 1. 2012 Alaska Region Stranding Reports by Initial Sighting Month, Number of Events, and Number of Animals.

Table 2. 2012 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Strandings by Initial Condition, Species, and Number of Animals. (Three reports of dead unknown marine mammals are not included here. One report of a Steller sea lion is not included because it could not be determined whether the animal was alive or dead).

Species	Initial Condition		
	Alive	Dead	Total
Cuviers Beaked	0	1	1
Beluga	39	10	49
Bowhead	0	1	1
Fin	1	0	1
Gray	4	21	25
Humpback	16	13	29
Minke	0	1	1
Orca	0	4	4
Sperm	0	2	2
Harbor porpoise	1	5	6
Unknown	2	31	33
<i>Cetacean Total</i>	63	89	152
Bearded seal	0	9	9
Harbor seal	15	16	31
Northern fur seal	18	1	19
Ribbon seal	1	0	1
Ringed seal	4	6	10
Spotted seal	0	5	5
Steller sea lion	13	35	48
Unknown Pinniped	0	12	12
<i>Pinniped Total</i>	51	84	135
Total			287

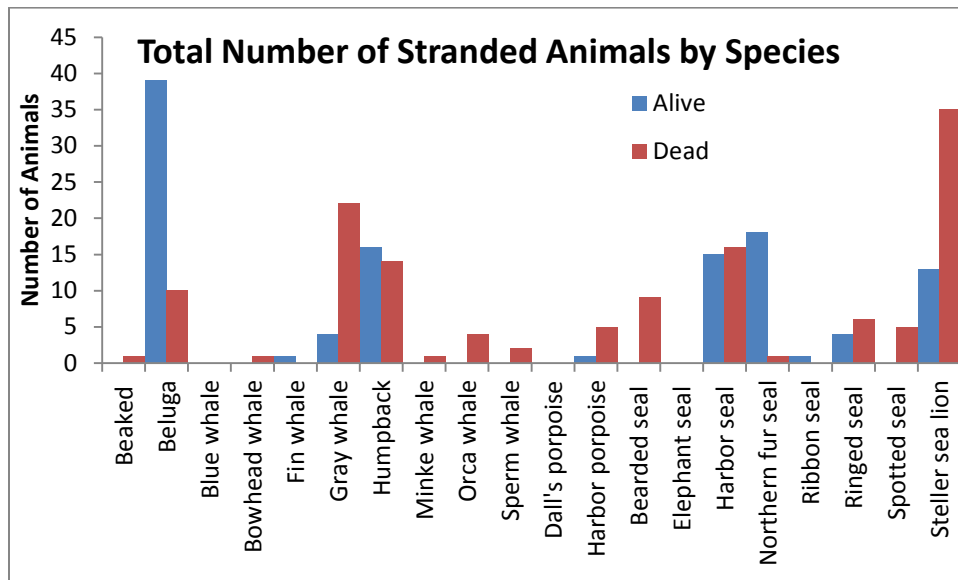


Figure 2. 2012 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Strandings by Initial Condition, Species, and Number of Animals.

Table 3. 2012 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
Ribbon Seal	Euthanized	1
	<i>Ribbon seal Total</i>	1
Harbor seal	Released	11
	Euthanized	1
	<i>Harbor seal Total</i>	12
Beluga	Died	1
	<i>Beluga Total</i>	1
Total		14

Table 4. 2012 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
Confirmed	Collision	Humpback whale	7
		Gray whale	1
		Unknown whale	2
		Harbor seal	1
	Entanglement	Beluga	1
		Gray	3
		Humpback whale	9
		Fin whale	1
		Sperm whale	1
		Harbor porpoise	1
		Northern Fur Seal	18
		Steller sea lion	7
	Fishery Interaction	Steller sea lion	5
	Shot	Harbor seal	1
	Confirmed Total	58	
Could not be determined	Collision	Humpback whale	1
	Shot	Harbor seal	3
		Steller sea lion	1
		Ringed seal	2
	Unconfirmed Total	7	
	Total	65	

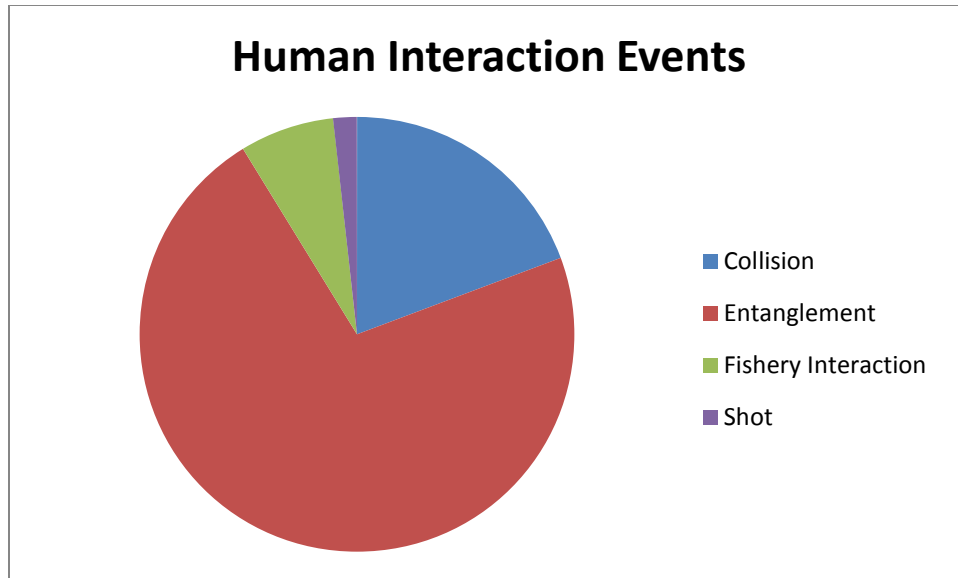


Figure 3. 2012 Alaska Region Stranding Events involving Human Interaction. This figure only displays reports that were confirmed human interaction events. Fishery interactions are separated from entanglements here by internal evidence of human interaction.

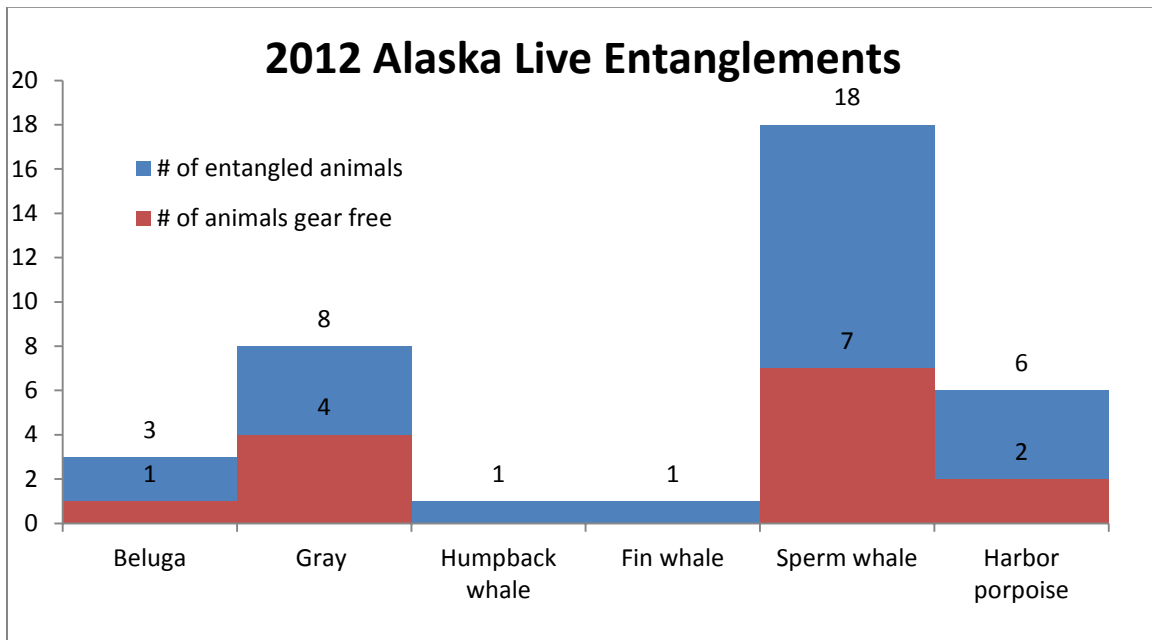


Figure 4. 2012 Alaska Region Stranding Events involving live entangled animals. Although it is not always possible, attempts are made to determine the final status of each entangled animal. Animals that were confirmed gear free are included here.

Table 5. 2012 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Strandings by Area, Species, Initial Condition, and Number of Animals. (Does not include one report of an unknown cetacean reported floating in the Gulf of Alaska, one report of a sperm whale floating in the Gulf of Alaska and one report of a Steller sea lion in Southeast Alaska).

Area	Species	Animal Initial Condition		Total
		Alive	Dead	
Arctic	Beluga	0	4	4
	Bowhead	0	1	1
	Gray whale	0	14	14
	Unknown cetacean	0	12	12
	Bearded seal	0	6	6
	Ringed seal	2	6	8
	Spotted seal	0	3	3
	Unknown Pinniped	0	12	12
	Unknown marine mammal	0	2	2
	Arctic Total	2	60	62
Southcentral Alaska	Beaked whale	0	1	1
	Beluga	38	3	41
	Gray whale	3	0	3
	Harbor porpoise	0	1	1
	Humpback	3	2	5
	Orca	0	1	1
	Unknown cetacean	1	1	2
	Harbor seal	6	6	12
	Steller sea lion	3	3	6
Unknown marine mammal	0	1	1	
	Southcentral Total	54	19	73
Southeast Alaska	Minke	0	1	1
	Sperm	0	1	1
	Harbor porpoise	0	2	2
	Humpback	11	3	14
	Orca	0	2	2
	Unknown cetacean	0	5	5
	Harbor seal	4	10	14
	Steller sea lion	10	25	35
Ribbon seal	1	0	1	
	Southeast Total	26	49	75
Western Alaska	Beluga	1	2	3
	Gray whale	1	7	8
	Humpback	1	1	2
	Orca	0	1	1
	Harbor Porpoise	1	2	3
	Unknown cetacean	0	12	12
	Bearded seal	0	3	3
	Harbor seal	5	0	5
	Northern fur seal	18	1	19
	Ringed seal	2	0	2
	Spotted seal	0	2	2
Steller sea lion	0	3	3	
	Western Total	29	34	63
Kodiak	Beluga	0	1	1
	Fin whale	1	0	1
	Humpback	1	7	8
	Unknown cetacean	0	1	1
	Steller sea lion	0	4	4
	Kodiak Total	2	13	15
Total		113	175	288

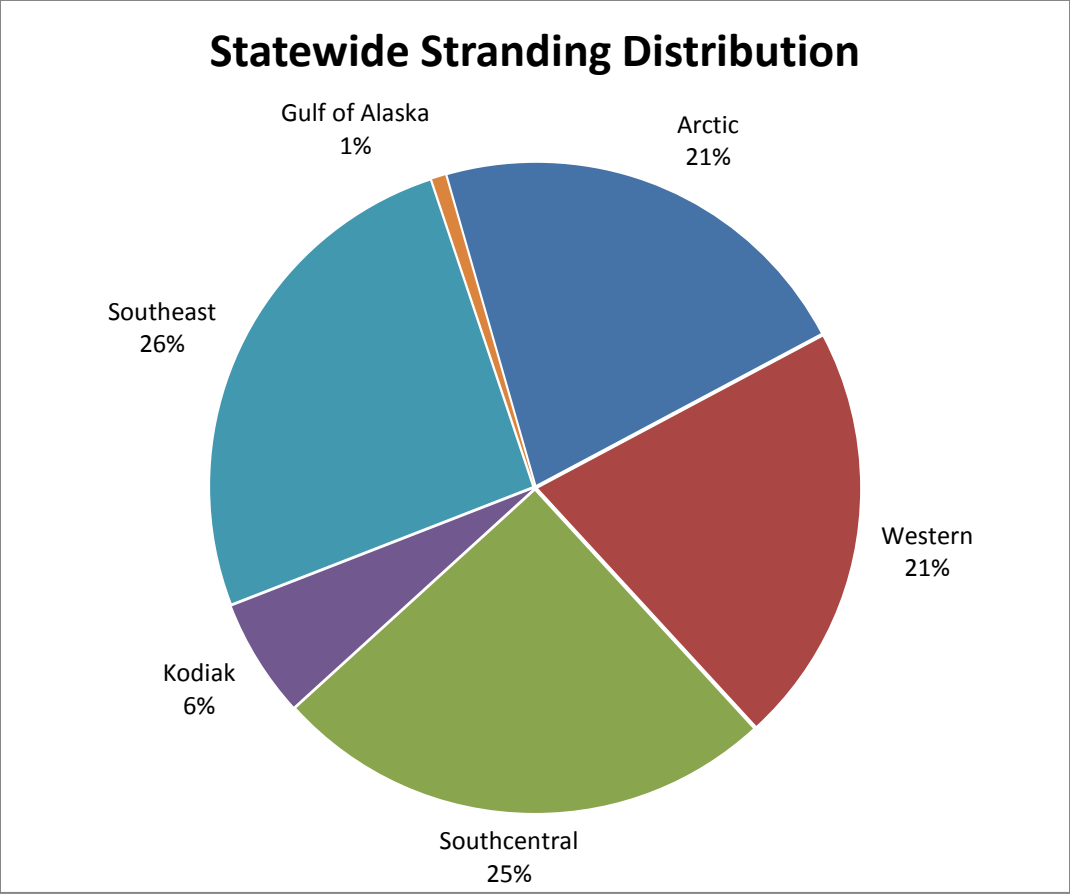


Figure 5. Distribution of statewide stranding reports.