

2014 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Stranding Summary

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Contents

- A. Stranding report description and acknowledgement
- B. Reports by species, month and initial condition
 - Table 1 and Figure 1: Events and animals reported by month
 - Table 2 and Figure 2: Strandings by species and initial condition
- C. Reports by location
 - Table 3 and Figure 3: Strandings by geographical location
- D. Reports involving human interaction
 - Table 4 and Figure 4: Stranding involving confirmed human interaction.
 - Table 5 and Figure 5: Human interactions by species
- E. Alaska Sealife Center
 - Table 6: Rescue and rehabilitation by species, outcome, and number of animals.

A. Stranding report description and acknowledgement

Strandings of cetaceans (whales) and pinnipeds (seals and sea lions) that occurred in Alaskan waters and were reported to the National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Region (NMFS) in 2014 are summarized here. Stranding events cover animals found dead (floating and beach-cast), and also reports of live stranded, mass stranded, abandoned, sick or injured animals. Strandings include all marine mammals under NMFS jurisdiction, excluding polar bear, sea otter and walrus which are managed under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Reports are made by expert members of the marine mammal community as well as members of the general public with varying degrees of knowledge regarding marine mammal biology and ecology. The depth of which reported stranded animals have been examined is variable, from no examination to the performance of a full necropsy and study of pathology. Known subsistence takes are not included nor are fishery observer reports 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). All of the reports included have been confirmed, which means they are accompanied by some level of verification. Reports involving human interaction, such as ship strikes, fishery interactions/entanglements and firearm injury, are also included with a high level of confirmation.

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

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 throughout the year.

B. Reports by Species, Month and Initial Presentation

Month	Events	Animals
Jan	2	2
Feb	4	4
Mar	1	1
Apr	20	20
May	31	31
Jun	65	65
Jul	74	74
Aug	37	37
Sep	26	26
Oct	15	15
Nov	3	3
Dec	2	2
Total	280	280

Table 1. Number of confirmed standings reported in the Alaska Region in 2014 by month of initial sighting, number of events, and number of animals.

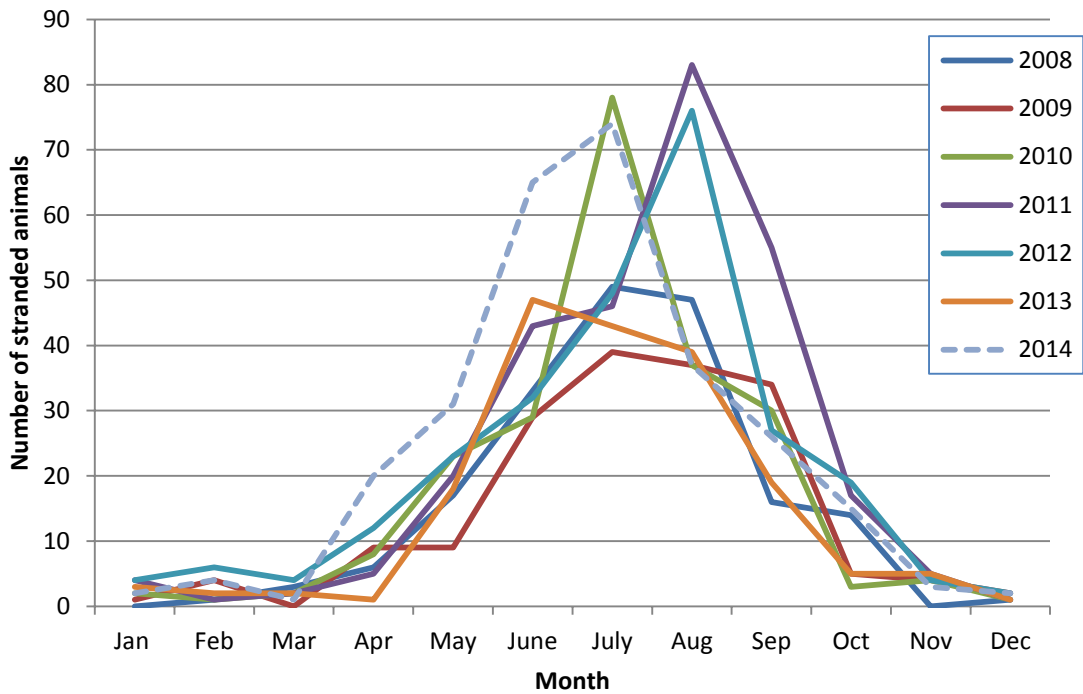


Figure 1. Number of confirmed stranded animals reported by month in the Alaska Region, 2008 – 2014.

Species	Initial Condition			Total
	Alive	Dead	Condition Unknown	
Baird's beaked whale		1		1
Bowhead whale		1		1
Fin whale	1	1		2
Cook Inlet beluga whale		10	1	11
Beluga whale	1	4	1	6
Gray whale		13		13
Humpback whale	19	8		27
Sperm whale		1		1
Orca whale	1	5		6
Dall's porpoise	1	1		2
Harbor porpoise	1	8		9
Unidentified baleen whale		1		1
Unidentified cetacean	1	8		9
<i>Cetacean Total</i>	25	62	2	89
Bearded seal		13		13
Steller sea lion	14	33	10	57
Northern fur seal	26			26
Ringed seal		10		10
Spotted seal	2	7		9
Harbor seal	18	18	1	37
Unidentified pinniped	1	3	34	38
<i>Pinniped Total</i>	61	84	45	190
Unidentified marine mammal		1		1
<i>Marine Mammal Total</i>	86	147	47	280

Table 2. Number of confirmed standings reported in the Alaska Region in 2014 by initial condition, species, and number of animals.

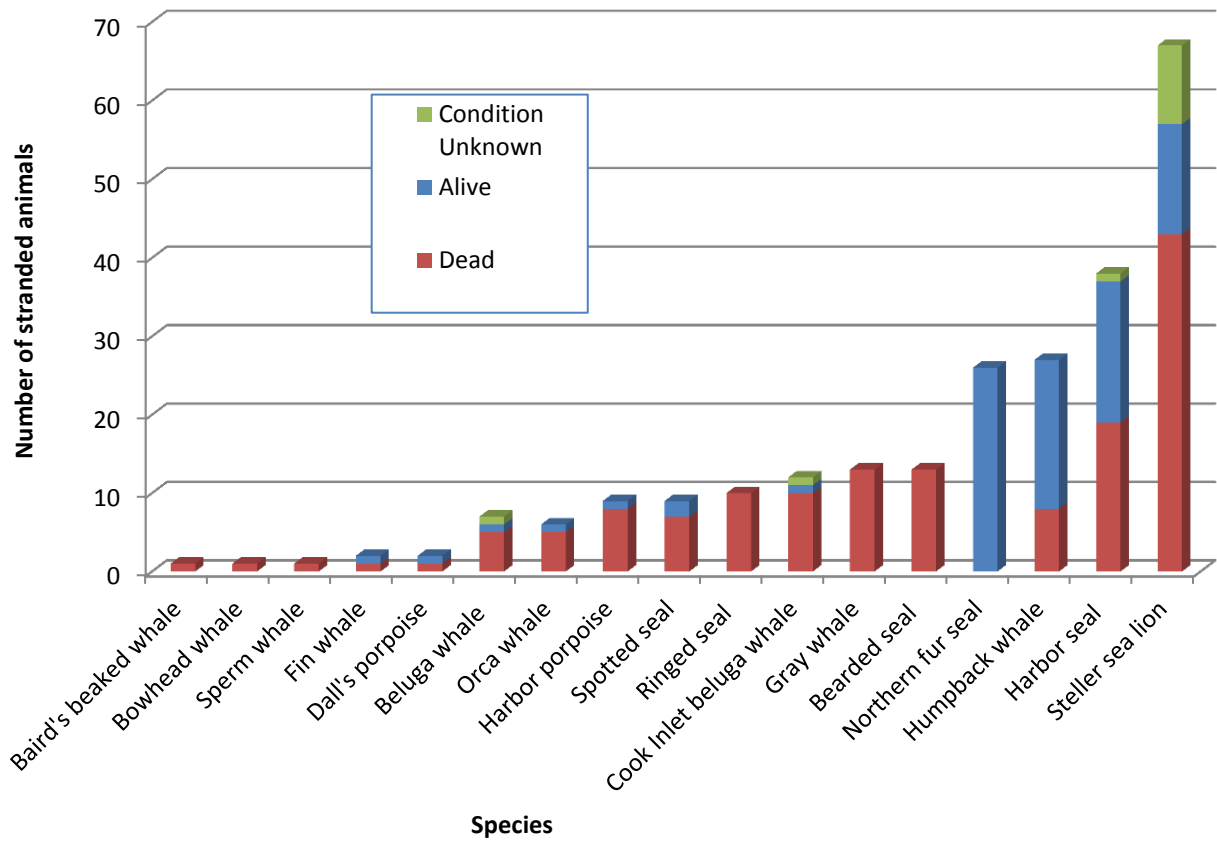


Figure 2. Number of confirmed strandings reported in the Alaska Region in 2014 by initial condition, species, and number of animals.

C. Reports by Region

Area	Species	No.
Arctic	Unknown Pinniped	34
	Bearded seal	13
	Gray whale	9
	Ringed seal	6
	Spotted seal	3
	Unknown cetacean	2
	Beluga whale	1
	Bowhead whale	1
	Unknown marine mammal	1
	Arctic Total	70
Western Alaska	Northern fur seal	26
	Steller sea lion	19
	Harbor seal	9
	Spotted seal	6
	Beluga whale	5
	Orca whale	5
	Ringed seal	4
	Unknown Pinniped	4
	Fin whale	2
	Gray whale	2
	Unknown cetacean	2
	Baird's beaked whale	1
	Sperm whale	1
		Western Total
Southcentral Alaska	Harbor seal	18
	Cook Inlet beluga whale	11
	Humpback whale	6
	Harbor porpoise	4
	Steller sea lion	4
	Unknown cetacean	2
	Gray whale	2
	Dall's porpoise	2
	Orca whale	1
	Southcentral Total	50
Kodiak	Humpback whale	4
	Harbor seal	3
	Steller sea lion	1
	Unknown baleen whale	1
	Kodiak Total	9
Southeast Alaska	Steller sea lion	33
	Humpback whale	17
	Harbor seal	7
	Harbor porpoise	5
	Unknown cetacean	3
	Southeast Total	65

Table 3. Number of confirmed strandings reported in the Alaska Region in 2014 by location.

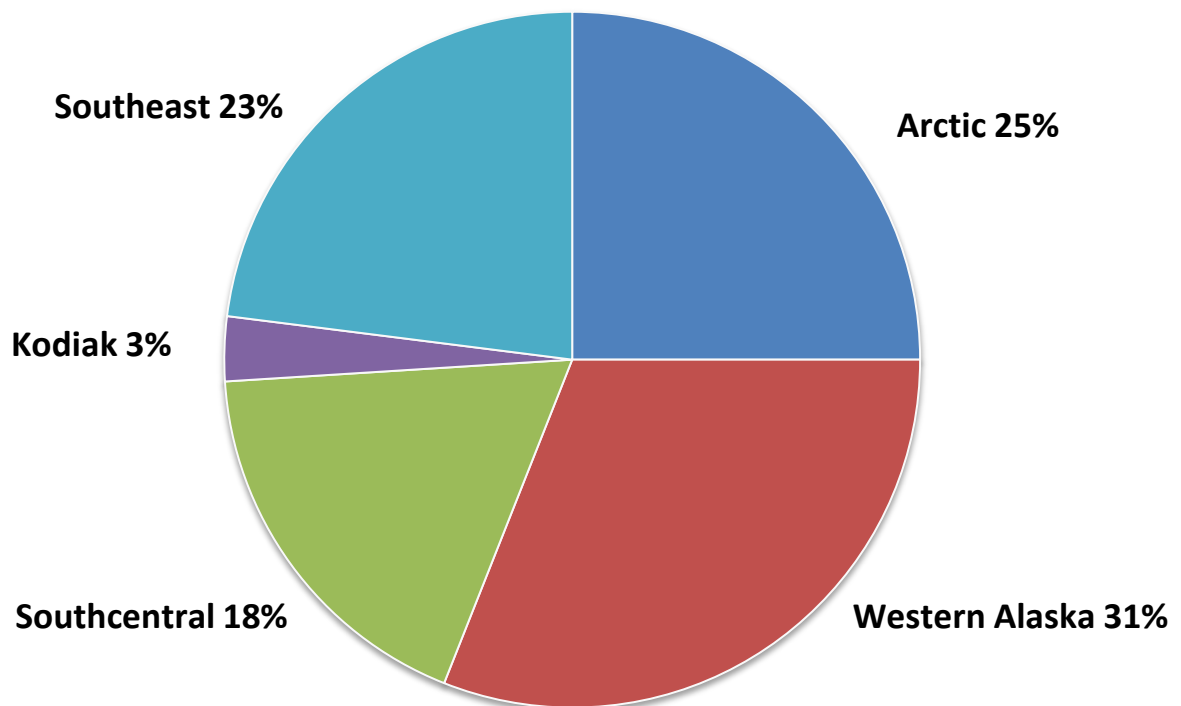


Figure 3. Distribution of 2014 Alaska Region stranding reports.

D. Reports involving human interaction

There is a wide variety in species susceptibility to human interaction, probably due to features of life history and location. Northern fur seals and Steller sea lions, for example, are much more likely to suffer from neck entanglements than are other pinniped species.

The most common human interactions in stranding reports are entanglements. These include fishery interactions in which marine mammals become entangled in fishery gear, or alternately ingest fishing gear, and also interactions with marine debris. Other human interactions include ship strikes, where vessels collide with animals either foraging or traversing, and gunshot injuries, where harmful interaction is intentional.

Species	Confirmed human interaction	Other	% of total reports involving human interaction
Northern fur seal	26	0	100%
Fin whale	1	1	50%
Humpback whale	18	9	67%
Steller sea lion	13	57	19%
Beluga whale	1	5	17%
Harbor porpoise	1	8	11%
Unidentified cetacean	1	8	11%
Harbor seal	4	33	11%

Table 4. 2014 Alaska Region stranding events involving confirmed human interaction.

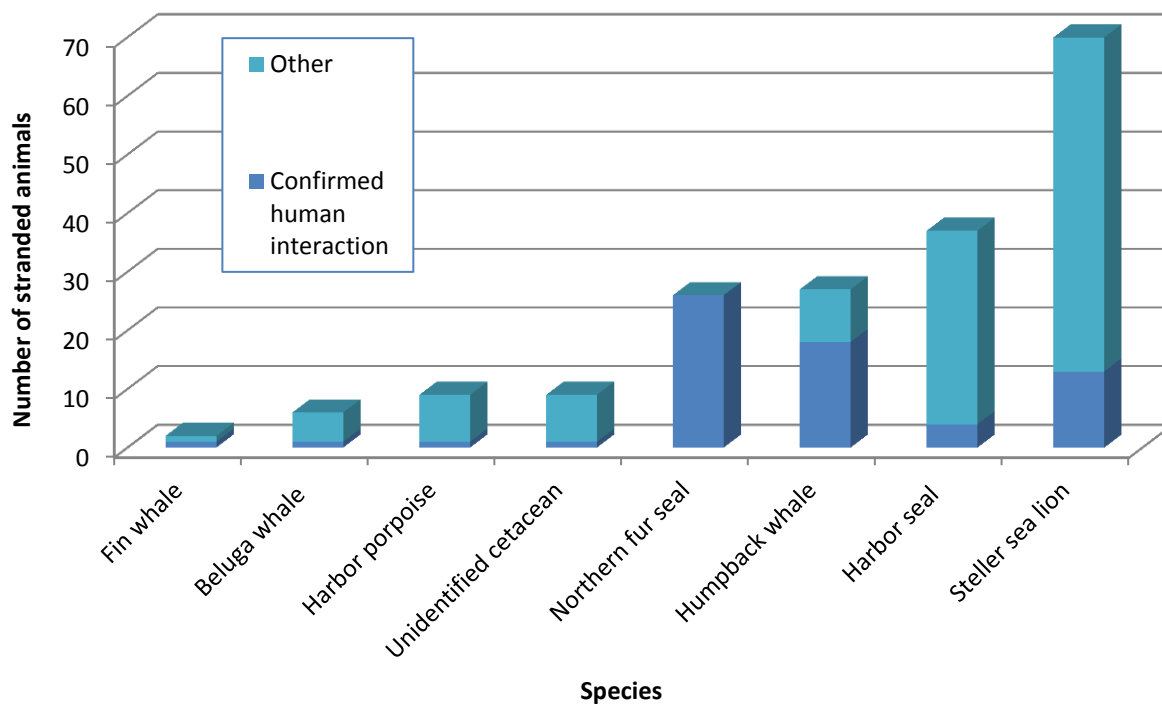


Figure 4. 2014 Alaska Region stranding events involving confirmed human interaction.

Species	Reports with Confirmed Human Interaction			Total
	Entanglement	Ship strike	Gunshot	
Northern fur seal	26			26
Humpback whale	12	6		18
Steller sea lion	13			13
Harbor seal	3		1	4
Beluga whale	1			1
Harbor porpoise	1			1
Unidentified cetacean	1			1
Fin whale		1		1

Table 5. Forms of human interactions by species in 2014 Alaska Region stranding reports.

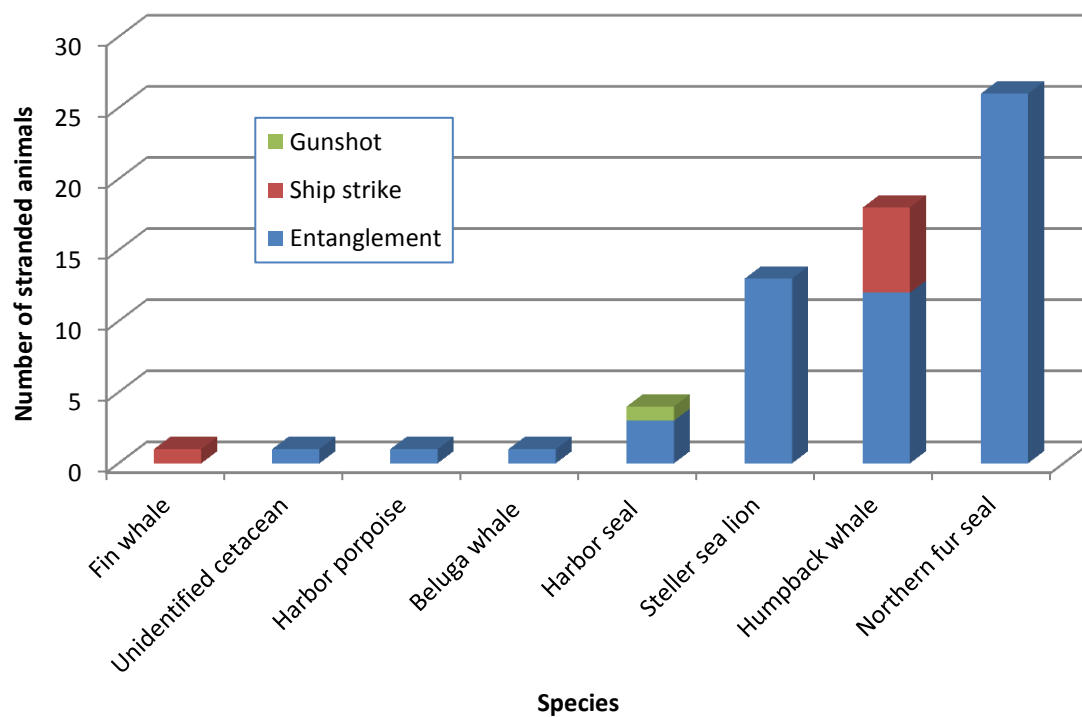


Figure 5. Forms of human interactions by species in 2014 Alaska Region stranding reports.

E. Alaska Sealife Center

The Alaska Sealife Center is the only facility that is qualified to rescue, retain, rehabilitate and release marine mammals in Alaska.

Species	Outcome	Animals
Spotted seal	Rehab/Released	1
	Died	
	Euthanized	
	<i>Spotted seal Total</i>	1
Harbor seal	Rehab/Released	14
	Died	1
	Euthanized	
	<i>Harbor seal Total</i>	15
Total		16

Table 3. 2014 Alaska Region live strandings handled by the Alaska Sealife Center for rehabilitation by species, outcome, and number of animals.