



Northern Elephant Seals



Northern Elephant Seals (*Mirounga angustirostris*)

Physical Characteristics

- Non- articulated hips
- No ear flaps
- Dark brown to gray coloration
- Thick blubber to insulate



Photo by Richard Allen

Amazing Elephant Seal Facts

- Extreme sexual dimorphism
- Longest migration (males - up to 14,000 miles total)
- Deep dives (males - over 5000 ft/1500 m, avg. 525 m)
- Fast for up to 3 months during breeding season



• *Huge!!*

Northern Elephant Seals - Sexual Dimorphism

Males

- live up to 17 years
- 12 - 18 feet long
- 3,000 - 5,000 pounds



Photo by Richard Allen

Northern Elephant Seals - Sexual Dimorphism

- Females

- 8 - 10 feet long
- 1,000 - 1,900 pounds
- live up to 22 years



Elephant Seals - Decimation

- *Historic Range*

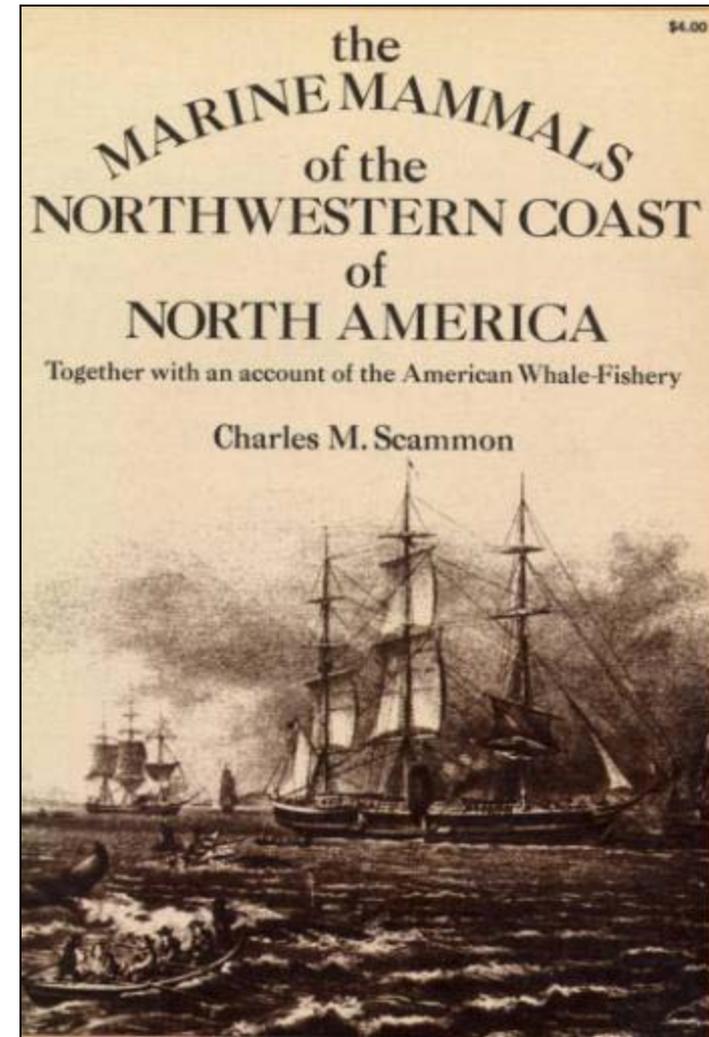
Historically recorded as far north as Point Reyes
Bones of pups in Native American middens in WA

- *Scammon's whaler turned naturalist notes*
25 gallons of high quality machine oil per bull

- *Reasons for demise*

Yearly haul outs make easy hunting

Population went through 2 population bottlenecks



CLUB AND LANCE USED IN THE CAPTURE OF THE SEA ELEPHANT.



Elephant Seals – Recovery

- Remnant population found on Guadalupe Island
- 1890: Fewer than 1000 seals
- Smithsonian collected specimens
- 1922 Mexican government declares Guadalupe Island a national preserve
- US Marine Mammal Act - 1972



Current California Elephant Seal Breeding Sites

**Current California
population estimate**

124,000 in 2005

**Add Baja colonies for
total of ~ 175,000**

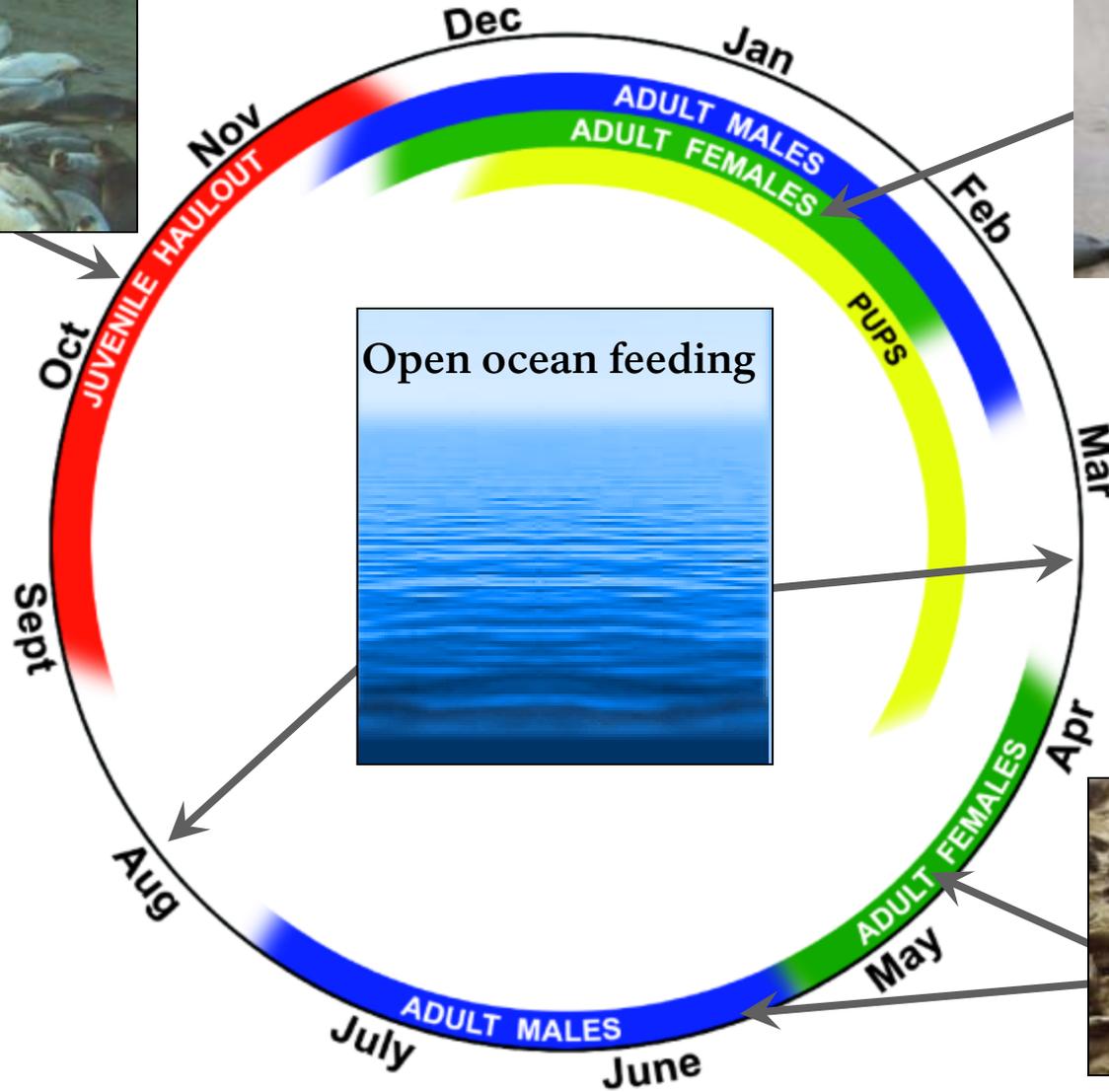




Year in the Life of an Elephant Seal



Juvenile haul out



Mating and pupping



Molting haul out

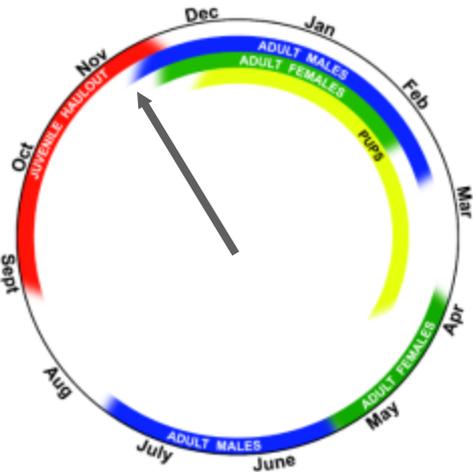
Year in the Life of an Elephant Seal

Males: Pick the Best Beach

- Males arrive first and compete
- Females arrive shortly after



Photo by Richard Allen

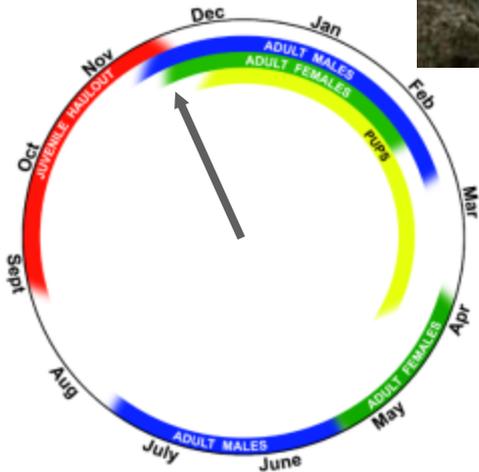


Year in the Life of an Elephant Seal

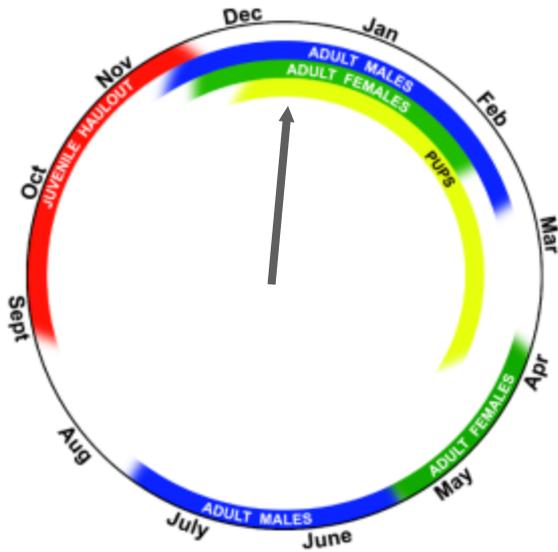
The Concerns of a Female:



- Breeding Strategies
- Many things can affect pupping success



Year in the Life of an Elephant Seal



Sue Van Der Wal



Photo by Patricia Morris

Sue Van Der Wal

The Pupping:

- The first pups are born in mid December
- 4 ft. and 60 to 80 lbs.
- Pup and mother 30 day relationship
- Nurse on rich milk
- Pup mortality