

Draft 2009 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) are summarized here. Polar bear, sea otter and walrus are under U.S. Fish and Wildlife jurisdiction and are not reported to NMFS. Currently a total of 175 events are recorded here, involving between 192-198 individual animals. This data is subject to change as more information becomes available and with further review of records.

Stranding events include animals found dead (floating and beach-cast) and reports of live stranded, mass stranded, abandoned, sick or injured animals. Human interactions like collisions, fishery interactions and entanglements are also included. 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 where the animal(s) could not be examined are included in the numbers below as long as the animal was at least identified as either cetacean or pinniped. Both unconfirmed and confirmed reports are compiled here.

Events involving two or more individuals are rare in the Alaska stranding data: there was an unconfirmed report of three Steller sea lions entangled together and one live stranding situation at low tide that involved between sixteen and twenty-two Cook Inlet belugas; our best count using photos of the event suggests there were nineteen animals involved in the stranding.

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, and by members of the public who reported deceased marine mammals or live animals in distress to NMFS.

Table 1. Draft 2009 Alaska Region Stranding Reports by Month, Number of Events and Number of Animals.

<i>Month</i>	<i>Events</i>	<i>Animals</i>
Jan	1	1
Feb	4	4
March	0	0
April	9	9
May	9	9
June	29	29
July	41	43
Aug	37	55*
Sep	33	33
Oct	6	6
Nov	4	4
Dec	2	2
Total	175	195

*Best count for mass beluga stranding was 19 animals (low=16, high=22).

Table 2. Draft 2009 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Strandings by Initial Condition, Species, and Number of Animals. (One beluga with unknown initial condition not included).

	Initial Condition		
	Alive	Dead	Total
Beluga	21*	10	31
Grey	1	13	14
Bowhead	0	1	1
Humpback	15	3	18
Orca	0	2	2
Dall's Porpoise	0	1	1
Sperm	1	0	1
Harbor Porpoise	2	9	11
Cuviers beaked whale	0	1	1
Unknown Cetacean	1	24	25
<i>Cetacean Total</i>	41	64	105
Bearded seal	0	1	1
Steller sea lion	11	38	49
Northern fur seal	0	1	1
Ringed seal	0	7	7
Spotted seal	0	1	1
Harbor seal	11	13	24
Unknown Pinniped	1	4	5
California sea lion	1	0	1
<i>Pinniped total</i>	24	65	89
<i>Total</i>	65	129	194

*Best count for mass beluga stranding was 19 animals (low=16, high=22).

Table 3. Draft 2009 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
California sea lion	euthanized	1
	<i>California sea lion Total</i>	1
Harbor seal	died	1
	euthanized	1
	released	6
	pending	1
	<i>Harbor seal Total</i>	9
Total		10

Table 4. Draft 2009 Alaska Region Stranding Events involving human interaction. These numbers should be treated as preliminary. They include both confirmed and unconfirmed reports; not all human interaction reports recorded evidence. Fishery interactions are cases where animals have ingested gear and are considered separately from entanglements incidents.

Human Interaction?	Details	Species	Animals
Could not be determined	pos. shot	Steller sea lion	1
		Harbor seal	1
	pos. entanglement	Humpback	2
		Steller sea lion	4
		Unknown cetacean	1
	<i>Could not be determined total</i>	9	
Yes	Collision	Humpback	6
		Unknown cetacean	1
		Steller sea lion	1
	Entanglement	Harbor seal	1
		Dall's porpoise	1
		Grey whale	1
		Humpback	7
		Harbor porpoise	2
	Fishery Interaction	Steller sea lion	6
	Shot	Harbor seal	1
		Beluga	1
		Steller sea lion	1
		<i>Yes total</i>	29

Table 5. Draft 2009 Alaska Region Marine Mammal Strandings by Area, Species, Initial Condition, and Number of Animals. (One beluga report from Southcentral not included, given lack of information over live or dead status).

Area	Species	Animal Initial Condition		
		Alive	Dead	Total
Arctic	Beluga	0	3	3
	Bowhead	0	1	1
	Grey whale	0	6	6
	Unknown cetacean	0	10	10
	Ringed seal	0	6	6
	Bearded seal	0	1	1
	Unknown Pinniped	0	3	3
	Arctic Total	0	30	30
Southcentral Alaska	Beluga	19*	5	24
	Sperm	1	0	1
	Humpback	2	0	2
	Harbor porpoise	0	2	2
	Dall's Porpoise	0	1	1
	Orca	0	1	1
	Unknown cetacean	0	2	2
	Northern fur seal	0	1	1
	California sea lion	1	0	1
	Steller sea lion	2	7	9
	Harbor seal	6	5	11
	Southcentral Total	31	24	55
Southeast Alaska	Cuviers beaked whale	0	1	1
	Humpback	12	2	14
	Unknown cetacean	0	5	5
	Harbor porpoise	1	6	7
	Grey whale	1	1	2
	Steller sea lion	9	26	35
	Harbor seal	1	7	8
	Unknown Pinniped	1	0	1
	Southeast Total	25	48	73
Western Alaska	Beluga	2	2	4
	Grey whale	0	4	4
	Orca	0	1	1
	Humpback	0	1	1
	Unknown cetacean	1	2	3
	Harbor porpoise	1	1	2
	Ringed seal	0	1	1
	Spotted seal	0	1	1
	Steller sea lion	0	1	1
	Harbor seal	4	1	5
	Unknown Pinniped	0	1	1
	Western Total	8	16	24
Kodiak	Humpback	1	0	1
	Grey whale	0	2	2
	Steller sea lion	0	4	4
	Unknown cetacean	0	5	5
	Kodiak Total	1	11	12
Total		65	129	194

*Best count for mass beluga stranding was 19 animals (low=16, high=22).