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Marine Mammals

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Overview

Marine mammals are mammals that are well adapted for life in the marine environment. Two major groups of marine mammals are:

1. Cetaceans ([whales, dolphins, and porpoises](#))
2. Pinnipeds ([seals, sea lions, and walruses](#))

There are approximately [125 marine mammal species worldwide](#) managed under the MMPA. Of those 125, 8 species are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (walrus, polar bear, sea otter, marine otter, West African manatee, Amazonian manatee, West Indian manatee, and dugong).

Status of Marine Mammals

All marine mammals are protected under the [Marine Mammal Protection Act \(MMPA\)](#); some marine mammals may be designated as "[depleted](#)" under the MMPA. Endangered and threatened marine mammals are further protected under the [Endangered Species Act \(ESA\)](#).

The table below includes marine mammals found in U.S. waters and endangered/threatened foreign species. Note: Species listed as endangered or threatened under the ESA are, by default, also considered "depleted" under the MMPA.

(E = "[endangered](#)"; T = "[threatened](#)"; P = "[proposed](#)"; C = "[candidate](#)"; S = "[species of concern](#)"; D = "[depleted](#)"; DL = "[delisted](#)"; F = "[foreign](#)")

| Species | Status |
|--|--------|
| ■ Atlantic Spotted Dolphin (<i>Stenella frontalis</i>) | |
| ■ Atlantic White-Sided Dolphin (<i>Lagenorhynchus acutus</i>) | |
| ■ Baird's Beaked Whale (<i>Berardius bairdii</i>) | |
| ■ Bearded Seal | |



Video
What do marine mammals eat?
Credit: Alaska Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Ocean Media Center



MMPA Fact Sheet

After the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill



Dr. Brian Stacy, NOAA veterinarian, cleans a young Kemp's ridley turtle
Photo: NOAA/GADNR

• [Sea Turtles, Dolphins, and Whales and the Gulf of Mexico](#)