



SCMMSN Species Fact Sheet

Harbor Seal (*Phoca vitulina*)



Source: FAO Species Identification Guide: Marine Mammals of the World, 1993.

U.S. Range: On the east coast, Gulf of Maine to Delaware Bay, with vagrants appearing occasionally south of Delaware Bay. Along the entire west coast and Gulf of Alaska.

Size: Adult max. Male 6'3" (1.9m) Female 5'7" (1.7m) Neonates 28-40" (70-100 cm)

Identification: Fusiform body with large head and rounded snout. Brownish or tan with dark spotting or black with light spotting. Fore-flippers have strong claws.

Stranding History: Strands throughout its range, more frequently in the Northeastern US. Seal are known to haul out ashore to rest. Usually, they do not need assistance. Because South Carolina is out of the harbor seal's range, a health check is performed when possible and the animal is released. The stranding average is one every 4 years in South Carolina.

Conservation Status: Listed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List.

FYI

The Marine Mammal Protection Act prohibits the handling of any marine mammal, dead or alive, and the collection of any parts (e. g., teeth, bones) by unauthorized persons.

The South Carolina Marine Mammal Stranding Network personnel are authorized and trained to collect valuable biological data during stranding events. Public cooperation is greatly appreciated.

To report a stranding, call the South Carolina DNR hotline: 1-800-922-5431.

The majority of live strandings consist of animals that are sick and dying. Marine mammals may carry **infectious diseases** that might be **contagious** to humans. Remember the beach is an unfamiliar environment for them. They are stressed and scared. Please remain at a safe distance at all times.

For further information on marine mammal strandings or on the South Carolina Marine Mammal Stranding Network, visit our website: <http://bccmws.coastal.edu/stranding>
Thank you for your cooperation.

The South Carolina Marine Mammal Stranding Network would like to thank the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for their permission to use images from the FAO Species Identification Guide: Marine Mammals of the World, 1993.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). 2011. *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. Version 2011.1. Retrieved on October 18, 2011, from <http://www.iucnredlist.org>

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The South Carolina Marine Mammal Stranding Network is administered by Coastal Carolina University under the authority of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Stranding Agreement Letter, under authorization of Sections 112(c) and 403 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act)

