

**MARINE MAMMAL  
COMMISSION:  
ANNUAL REPORT  
TO CONGRESS, 1991**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649111862

Marine Mammal Commission: Annual report to Congress, 1991 by Various

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**VARIOUS**

**MARINE MAMMAL  
COMMISSION:  
ANNUAL REPORT  
TO CONGRESS, 1991**



# MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

---

Annual Report to Congress

1991



---

Marine Mammal Commission  
1825 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20009

31 January 1992

---



## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	iii
Executive Summary .....	v
<b>I. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Personnel .....	1
Funding .....	1
<b>II. Species of Special Concern .....</b>	<b>3</b>
West Indian Manatee .....	3
Hawaiian Monk Seal .....	15
Steller Sea Lion .....	24
Harbor Seal in Alaska .....	31
North Pacific Fur Seal .....	32
Pacific Walrus .....	37
Sea Otter .....	43
Polar Bear .....	47
Northern Right Whale .....	51
Humpback Whale .....	55
Bowhead Whale .....	61
Gray Whale .....	66
Killer Whale .....	69
Gulf of California Harbor Porpoise .....	70
Harbor Porpoise .....	73
Bottlenose Dolphin .....	76
<b>III. Marine Mammal-Fisheries Interactions .....</b>	<b>79</b>
Interim Exemption for Commercial Fisheries .....	79
Development of a New Regime to Govern the Incidental Take of Marine Mammals after October 1993 .....	84
The Tuna-Porpoise Issue .....	92
<b>IV. International Aspects of Marine Mammal Protection and Conservation .....</b>	<b>109</b>
International Whaling Commission .....	109
High Seas Driftnet Fisheries .....	119
Conservation and Protection of Marine Mammals in the Southern Ocean .....	126
Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (The Cartagena Convention) .....	134
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) .....	136
North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) .....	137
IUCN—The World Conservation Union, Species Survival Commission, Marine Mammal Specialist Groups .....	138

<b>V. Marine Mammal Strandings and Die-Offs</b>	<b>141</b>
Unusual Events Occurring in 1991	141
Development of a National Die-Off Response Plan and Improvement of the Regional Stranding Networks	143
Workshop on Release of Rehabilitated and Captive Marine Mammals	146
<b>VI. Impacts of Marine Debris</b>	<b>147</b>
Background	147
The Marine Entanglement Research Program	149
Domestic Regulations for Disposal of Ship-Generated Garbage	150
Annex V of the Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships	150
<b>VII. Marine Mammal Management in Alaska</b>	<b>155</b>
Species Conservation Plans and Species Reports	155
The Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska Ecosystems	156
The <i>Exxon Valdez</i> Oil Spill in Prince William Sound	159
Federal Marine Mammal Marking and Tagging Regulations	162
Litigation Related to Marine Mammals in Alaska	162
<b>VIII. Outer Continental Shelf Oil, Gas, and Mineral Development</b>	<b>167</b>
Proposed Offshore Lease Sales	167
Impact of Oil Spills on Arctic Natives	169
Small-Take Exemptions	170
The Minerals Management Service's Environmental Studies Program	175
<b>IX. Research and Studies Program</b>	<b>177</b>
Survey of Federally-Funded Marine Mammal Research	177
Research Program Reviews, Workshops, and Planning Meetings	177
Commission-Sponsored Research and Study Projects	178
<b>X. Permits for Marine Mammal Research, Public Display, and Enhancement</b>	<b>187</b>
Permit Application Review	187
Review of the Permit System	188
Implementation of the 1988 Amendments to the Marine Mammal Protection Act	189
Swim-with-the-Dolphin Programs	190
Feeding Wild Marine Mammals	192
Other Litigation	193
<b>XI. Marine Mammals in Captivity</b>	<b>195</b>
Animal Welfare Act	195
Lacey Act	196
<b>Appendix A: Commission Recommendations: Calendar Year 1991</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>Appendix B: Reports of Commission-Sponsored Activities Available from the National Technical Information Service</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>Appendix C: Selected Literature Published Elsewhere Resulting from Commission-Sponsored Activities</b>	<b>221</b>



## List of Tables

Table 1.	Marine Mammal Species and Populations Listed as Endangered or Threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act as of 31 December 1991 .....	4
Table 2.	Known Manatee Mortality in the Southeastern United States (Excluding Puerto Rico) Reported through the Manatee Salvage and Necropsy Program from 1978 – 1991 .....	5
Table 3.	Summary of High Counts of Steller Sea Lions at Rookeries and Haulouts in the United States, Canada, and the Former Soviet Union .....	25
Table 4.	Subsistence Harvest Levels for North Pacific Fur Seals in the Pribilof Islands, 1985 – 1991 .....	34
Table 5.	Estimated Annual Harvests of Pacific Walruses in Alaska and the Soviet Union, 1970 – 1989 .....	38
Table 6.	Sea Otter Population Counts by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game, 1982 – 1991 .....	45
Table 7.	Quotas and Number of Bowhead Whales Taken by Alaska Eskimos, 1973 – 1991 .....	64
Table 8.	Estimated Percent Observer Coverage for Category I Fisheries during the Interim Exemption Period .....	85
Table 9.	Estimated Incidental Kill of Porpoises in the Tuna Purse Seine Fishery in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean, 1972 – 1991 .....	94
Table 10.	U.S. and Foreign Dolphin Mortality, Kills per Set, Sets on Dolphins, and Percent of Observer Coverage, 1988 – 1991 .....	95
Table 11.	Percent of Foreign Tuna Fleets with Observers Aboard .....	100
Table 12.	Summary of Garbage Discharge Limitations under the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (1973 – 1978) and the U.S. Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships, as Amended .....	151
Table 13.	Number of Sea Otters, Walruses, and Polar Bears Presented for Marking and Tagging by Alaska Natives .....	163



## **Executive Summary**

This, the nineteenth Annual Report of the Marine Mammal Commission, describes the activities of the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals during calendar year 1991. The Commission was established under Title II of the Marine Mammal Protection Act to provide guidance on Federal activities and policies, be they domestic or international, that bear on the protection and conservation of marine mammals. The Report is an in-depth summary of Commission activities in this regard. Its purpose is to provide timely information to Congress, government agencies, public interest groups, the academic community, private citizens, and the international community on important issues and events concerning marine mammal protection and conservation. To ensure factual accuracy, the Report was provided in draft form to concerned Federal and State agencies and other involved parties for review and comment prior to publication.

As described in Chapter II, the Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors pay special attention to certain marine mammal species and populations each year. Among the species and populations facing the most urgent conservation problems in 1991 were West Indian manatees, Hawaiian monk seals, Steller sea lions, the California population of sea otters, and northern right whales.

The West Indian manatee is one of the most endangered marine mammals in the United States. It occurs in coastal waters and rivers of Florida and Georgia and is the largest known group in the species' North, Central, and South American range. Numbering something more than 1,800 animals, its long-term survival is in doubt. Known deaths in the past three years have exceeded 550, more than 150 of which were caused by water craft. In 1991, for the sixth time in eight years, vessel-related deaths reached a new record high. However, habitat degradation from development may pose an even more serious long-term threat than boats. As noted in Chapter II, the Commission continued to work closely with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Florida, and other groups in 1991 to strengthen manatee recovery efforts. Encouraging progress was made. Boat speed regulatory systems were expanded, additional manatee habitat was added to Federal and State protected area systems, and shoreline development plans received greater scrutiny. Efforts now appear sufficiently comprehensive to have a chance of succeeding if vigorously sustained, but it will take several years before the effectiveness of this expanded program can be judged.

The most endangered seal in United States waters is the Hawaiian monk seal. This species, which may number fewer than 1,500 animals, inhabits the remote, largely uninhabited Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Over the past two years, significant declines in births and beach counts have been recorded. Over the same period, there has been an increase in reports of seal injuries and deaths due to interactions with the Hawaiian