

Seal Watch Volunteer Training



Presented by:

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods

Agenda

- 9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Introduction to Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods – Justin Lindenberg, Executive Director

Introduction of Presenters – Heather Rowe, Interim Seal Watch Coordinator

- 9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Natural History of Harbor Seals with Dr. Sarah Allen
- 10:15 a.m.– 10:25 a.m. Break
- 10:25 a.m. – 11:25 a.m. Rescuing and Rehabilitating Harbor Seals in California with Justin Hodges and Adam Ratner, The Marine Mammal Center
- 11:25 a.m. – 11:35 a.m. Break
- 11:35 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. The Seal Watch Program with Heather Rowe

Talking about Climate Science

- If a visitor asks you about impacts of climate change on the seals or their habitat, don't panic! If you know, great! If not, that's ok.
- You're not expected to be an expert.
- Talk about how climate change has affected you – tell your story, keep it local. Ask the visitor about their experience.
- Some visitors may have opinions that are not factual. Avoid using phrases that may sound judgmental. Sometimes using "my understanding is..." avoids confrontation.
- Enroll in the UC Climate Stewards Course to learn how to engage others about climate change. More information coming to the Stewards' website soon!
- Questions? Contact CathyConnorJohnson@gmail.com

Harbor Seal colony at the confluence of the Russian River and Pacific Ocean, September 2022



Training Overview

- Seal Watch History
- The habitat at the confluence of the Russian River & Pacific Ocean
- Protections for the Jenner harbor seals
- Why volunteering for Seal Watch matters
- The role of a Seal Watch volunteer
- Interpreting the seals and their habitat
- Shift duties and TeamUp
- Continuing education and resources



Photography by Dianne Monroe

The Seal Watch Program

1985 - Local activism

Stewards – Promote safe viewing
of seals and their habitat

Guided interpretation to promote
conservation and protection



Haul out at the confluence of the Russian River and Pacific Ocean

Why volunteer?





DON'T BE THAT GUY.

WARNING
HELP PROTECT OUR WILDLIFE
DON'T FEED, TOUCH, OR DISTURB
MARINE MAMMALS

This poster was created by Cal Poly San Luis Obispo students Reid Vizcarra, James Butler, Felix Ng, Emma Lacey, Alice Tierz, and Hannah Jacobson to help protect the wildlife of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. It was modified to fit this magazine. Original image courtesy of Cal Poly SLO

5 TIPS for Seeing and Protecting Sanctuary Animals

National marine sanctuaries are some of the best places in the world to see wildlife. From birdwatching to whale watching, these special places have something for everyone. But what are the best ways to watch wildlife without disturbing the animals or putting yourself in harm's way?



1. LEARN BEFORE YOU GO

Read about the wildlife, viewing sites, and local regulations to get the most from your wildlife viewing experience. Research online, stop by your sanctuary visitor center, buy regional viewing guidebooks, and hire local guides to increase your chances of seeing marine wildlife.



2. DON'T BE THAT GUY

While that elephant seal may be the first one you've seen all day, you're probably not the first human it's seen, and you may be interrupting time it needs to rest or eat. Always give animals plenty of space—if it's looking at you, or if you're close enough to take a selfie, you're too close.



3. BINOCULARS ARE YOUR FRIEND

Come prepared to watch from afar! Binoculars can help you see a distant whale, and a zoom lens can help you snap the perfect photo.



4. TAKE ONLY PICTURES

Souvenirs are best left on the beach! Resist the temptation to collect shells, rocks, or other underwater artifacts, because they provide homes for sea creatures and good surfaces for young plants to hold to. If you must collect something, gather your friends together for a beach cleanup.



5. KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

If you're paddling or boating around whales, keep your distance and let them come to you. Never follow a whale or get between a mother and calf.

For more information, visit:

[SANCTUARIES.NOAA.GOV/PROTECT/OCEANETIQUETTE.HTML](https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/protect/oceanetiquette.html)

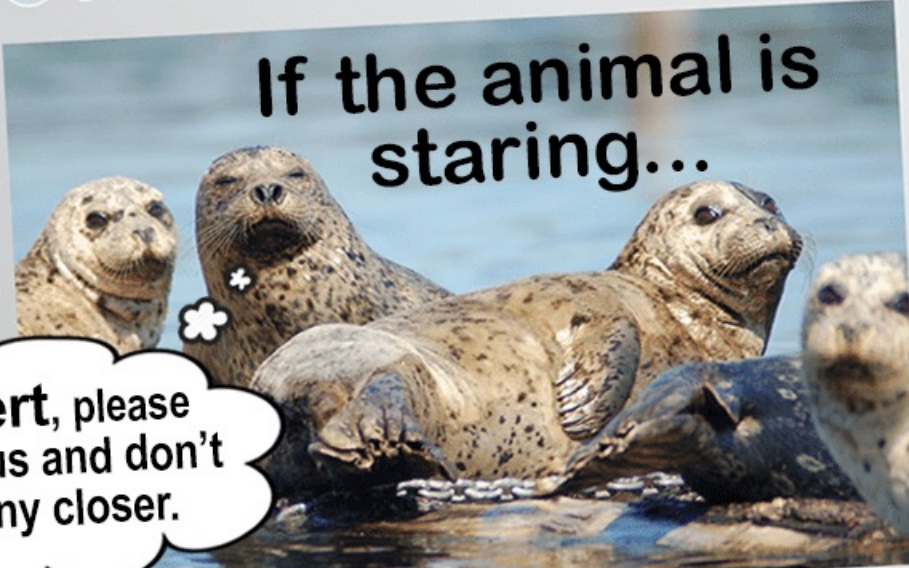
What agencies or laws protect the Jenner seals and other marine mammals?

- NOAA, US Fish and Wildlife, and the MMPA of 1972
- Marine Protected Areas
- California Fish and Wildlife
- California State Parks



How close is too close?

If the animal is staring...



I am **alert**, please be cautious and don't come any closer.

If the animal is fidgeting...



I am **disturbed** it's time for you to back away slowly.

Too late!
I do not feel safe with you this close, you've forced me to flee.

If the animal is fleeing...



NOAA
FISHERIES



Human activity might result in:

- Separation of mothers and their young.
- Disruption of migratory patterns.
- Disruption of resting activities by seals, sea lions, and sea turtles.
- Interference in breeding and/or reproductive and rearing activities.



NOAA FISHERIES

NO Selfies with Seals

If you get too close...
Mother Seals May Abandon Their Pups

SHARE THE SHORE

- 1** Sea lions and seals are protected by federal law.
- 2** It's **ILLEGAL** to disturb them or do anything that might make them change their behavior.
- 3** Enjoy watching them in a safe, responsible way.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE. You are too close if an animal starts to stare, fidget, or flee. Seals and sea lions on land are easily disturbed and may rush into the water or abandon their pups. They become stressed and may be trampled, and continued interruptions could be harmful to their health.

BE CONSIDERATE OF MOTHERS AND PUPS. Seals and sea lions come ashore to rest, regulate their body temperature, and nurse their young. Mothers often leave pups behind while feeding offshore.

KEEP PETS AWAY AND ON A LEASH. Pets can disturb or harm wildlife or separate mothers from their pups. And wild animals can injure or spread disease to pets.

If you see an injured, stranded, or dead marine mammal, call **(866) 767-6114**

You will be asked about the location and condition of the animal.

LEARN MORE:
<http://bit.ly/SharetheShore>



Do not approach the seals!
¡No se acerquen las focas!
请勿靠近海豹

U.S. Department of Commerce | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration | National Marine Fisheries Service

Sample talking points for dog owners

"For you and your pet's safety..." – lead with why it's important for them.

It's important to keep pets away from marine mammals, for their safety and yours.

Dogs are seen as a predator by the seals and may cause pups to be abandoned.

Pets off-leash can bite seals and pups, causing injury or death and spreading disease.

Adult seals and sea lions are large, strong predators with large teeth and can exhibit aggressive behaviors if provoked.

These are wild animals that can spread disease to pets and humans.

Dogs are not allowed on Goat Rock Beach or on the northside of the river, but they are allowed on Blind Beach.



Photography by Dianne Monroe



Photography by Dianne Monroe

Tools for your Goat Rock shift

In storage shed:

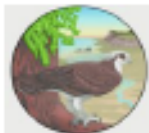
- Binoculars and scope
- California State Parks volunteer vests
- 2-way radio
- Backpack
- Field binder
- Camp chair
- Rope
- Mallet
- Fence stakes

Field binder contains:

- Emergency contacts
- Radio instructions
- Shift reports
- FAQ about harbor seals
- Best practices for speaking with the public
- Tips on interpretation
- Reporting processes and contacts for marine mammals
- TMMC guide for identifying and evaluating pinnipeds
- Field guide to CA coastal birds
- And more!

Bring your own:

- Sunscreen
- Layers
- Sunglasses
- Camera
- Snacks
- Water



STEWARDS OF THE COAST AND REDWOODS
SEAL WATCH 2023

(USE ONLY ONE SHEET PER SHIFT)

VOLUNTEER NAME(S):

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

DATE: _____

SHIFT: AM PM

TIME IN: _____

TIME OUT: _____

WEATHER: (circle all that apply)
FOG, RAIN, COLD, WINDY, PLEASANT,
HOT

RIVER MOUTH: OPEN / CLOSED

Radio answered at check-in? Y / N

Visitors engaged during shift	Total:
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Counts (leave no blanks)

Harbor Seal adults _____

Harbor Seal pups _____

Sea Lions _____

Elephant Seals _____

Whales _____

Births witnessed _____

Other (please explain) _____

Injured or ill marine mammal(s)? Y / N

Observation:

Was TMMC contacted?

Dogs on beach? *Enter # of incidents and describe; leave no blanks:*

Goat Rock _____

Northside _____

Estuary _____

Flushing observed? *Enter # of incidents and describe; leave no blanks:*

Dog _____

Beach visitor _____

Kayaker/Paddle boarder _____

Boat _____

Drone _____

Helicopter _____

Vehicle _____

Other (please explain) _____

Comments or additional information (use other side if needed):



Photography by Dianne Monroe



Jenner boat launch
located next to the
Jenner Visitor Center

Tools for the Jenner boat launch shift

Field binder contains

- Shift report
- FAQs about Harbor Seals
- SCR Sonoma Coast Program info
- MMPA handouts
- Guidance for discussing safe viewing distances with boaters and other water enthusiasts
- MPA educational materials
- FAQs about the Sonoma Coast
 - Where to take dogs
 - Points of interest

Tabling activities

- Educational materials for children
- Volunteer recruitment for SCR

Your role as a
Seal Watch
volunteer

We are stewards, docents, and guide interpretation. We help to create emotional and intellectual connections for visitors with the harbor seals and their ecosystem.

We are not enforcement. It is tempting to cross that line out of concern for the seals, but that is not our role, it's not safe and it is a recipe for burn out. Our role may include informing visitors of regulations that protect the seals and visitors, such as the MMPA regulations, but we do not enforce them.

You have support. Interacting with the public can at times be challenging. Take a rest during your shift. Reach out to your Seal Watch buddy or coordinator if you need to share an experience. Reach out to enforcement agencies when a situation is best for them to address or manage.

The Art of Interpretation

- Training is 10 am – 1pm on February 25 at Goat Rock Beach and Jenner Boat Launch
- “Interpretation facilitates a connection between the interests of the visitor and the meanings of the resource”. – NPS
- “Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings of the resource”. – NAI
- What features of their experience can create that connection? How can the features be relevant to the visitor and their world? We’ll discuss the tools we use to help create these connections for visitors.
- David Berman will lead interpretation exercises on Goat Rock beach. We’ll also visit the Jenner boat launch and review how to discuss safe viewing of the seals with boaters and kayakers.

Ready to dive in?



We need monthly Seal Watch coordinators to support the team and help organize shifts. Let us know if you can help!

Seal the Deal!

Onboarding with Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods and the Seal Watch Program

- Sign up to volunteer with Stewards: <https://stewardscr.org/volunteer-resources/>
- Complete Stewards' New Volunteer Orientation by watching [General Orientation Video](#)
- Sign up for shifts using [TeamUp](#)
- Complete the 2/25/23 training "The Art of Interpretation" at Goat Rock Beach and Jenner boat launch
- Sign up for at least one shift a month

Education, trainings & other resources

- Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods
 - California Naturalist Certification – Contact David Berman
 - Climate Stewards Certification – Coming Soon! Contact Cathy Johnson
 - Sonoma Coast Programs Seminar – Coming Soon! Contact Hollis Bewley
- Marine Protected Areas
 - MPA Collaborative Network – Sonoma
 - Ocean Protection Council
 - NOAA Marine Mammals on the West Coast
 - The Marine Mammal Center
 - National Network for Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation
 - Sonoma Water
- The Marine Mammal Protection Act
 - A Survey of Interpretive Techniques- NPS
 - Interpretive Techniques for Challenging Topics - NNOCCI
 - Wildlife Viewing Guidelines
 - Share the Shore – Watch Marine Mammals Responsibly
 - Russian RiverKeeper

Social Media Tips

- Add hashtags # to your Instagram posts to reach a wider audience. Some suggestions;
- #stewardsofthecoastandredwoods
- #respectwildlife
- #sharetheshore
- #harborseals
- #marinemammals
- #goatrockbeach
- #sonomacoaststatepark
- Follow the accounts of organizations addressing climate change, ocean science, the Sonoma coast and marine mammals
- Share your photos and experiences to educate, inspire and increase awareness!

Thank you!



JOIN ME

Respect • Protect • Enjoy

#WildSanctuaries