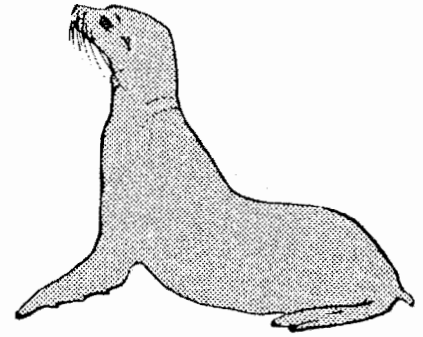
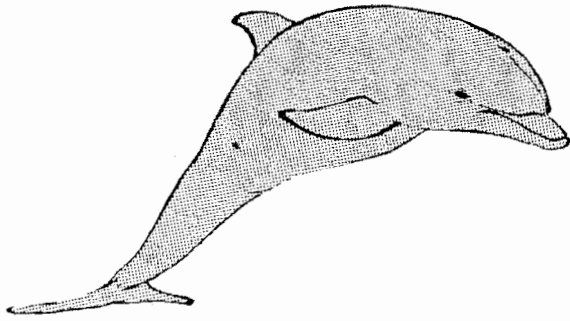


VARIABILITY IN THE DIET OF RINGED SEALS IN THE NORTHERN BERING AND CHUKCHI SEAS. Lloyd F. Lowry*, Kathryn J. Frost, and John J. Burns, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

As part of an integrated study of the biology of the ringed seal (Phoca hispida) in Alaska, specimen material has been collected at several locations in the northern Bering and Chukchi Seas. Examination of stomach contents has shown the diet to vary with geographical location, time of year and sex and age of the animals. Ringed seals collected in Norton Sound ate primarily fishes, the most commonly eaten species being saffron cod (Eleginus gracilus) in fall and spring and polar cod (Boreogadus saida) in winter. In the southeast Chukchi Sea in June and July saffron cod and shrimps were of about equal importance in the diet. Pups ate a considerably higher proportion of fishes than did older animals. Females ate a slightly higher proportion of fishes than males. Animals collected in the eastcentral Chukchi Sea in spring ate fishes of several types, amphipods and shrimps. The diet of animals from the northeast Chukchi Sea in summer was generally similar to that of animals from the eastcentral Chukchi Sea. The foraging strategy of ringed seals will be discussed as selection for food form from a variable spectrum of available prey species.



PROCEEDINGS

(ABSTRACTS)

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