

DIVING BEHAVIOR OF SPOTTED SEALS ALONG THE
NORTHWEST COAST OF ALASKA

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Although spotted seals (*Phoca largha*) are common along the northern coast of Alaska in the summer, little is known about their diving behavior or seasonal movements. To gain more information on the at-sea behavior of this species, we attached satellite-linked depth recorders (SLDR) to an adult female (BW = 105 kg) and a subadult male (BW = 66 kg) spotted seal. The seals were captured with tangle nets near Utukok Pass, Alaska (130 miles southwest of Barrow) in August 1991. The SLDR's gave geolocation and recorded the depth and duration of dives in six preset ranges. Over a six day period, the female seal made an average of 184 dives per day in the 10-50 m depth range; 24% of the dives were less than 2 min in duration and 60% were 4-8 min. The male seal made an average of 249 dives per day in the 10-50 m depth range; 77% of the dives were less than 4 min in duration. Both seals were tracked up to 60 miles from the area of capture and up to 12 miles offshore. Because the water depth in this area does not exceed 50 meters, dive depth is very limited. As the seals move south at freezeup in the Fall, dive patterns may change.

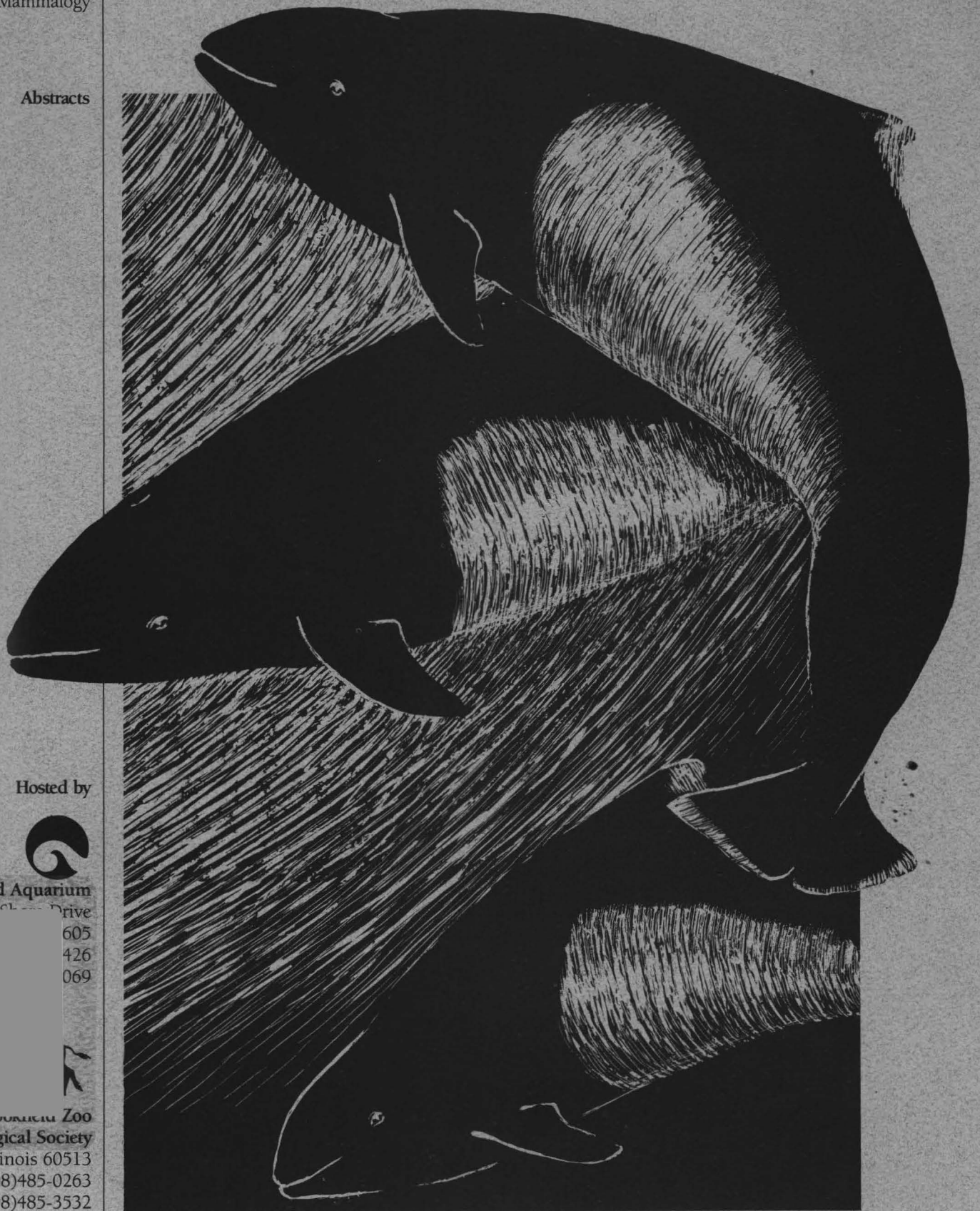


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