

**Equivocal Indicators of Steller Sea Lion Population Trend in  
Prince William Sound, Alaska**

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The Steller sea lion population in Prince William Sound, Alaska has been portrayed as one of the most rapidly declining segments of the western U.S. population during recent years. This appears to be supported when examining counts of nonpups on rookeries and haulouts in the region. However counts of pups on Seal Rocks, the major rookery in the Prince William Sound area, show little or no decline since the 1970s unlike nearly all other rookeries in the western population. These data suggest little decline in the “resident” Steller sea lion population and we hypothesize the large decline observed in nonpup numbers is largely a result of a reduction in the presence of immature and nonbreeding animals from the adjacent Central Gulf of Alaska where numbers of pups born on rookeries have declined by about 90%. There is also limited support for the hypothesis of immigration of breeding animals to the Prince William Sound area.

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## Abstracts



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