

AN EVALUATION OF A CENSUS-RELATED DISTURBANCE OF
STELLER SEA LIONS.

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Counts of adult Steller sea lions are highly variable over short periods due to varying portions of the population hauling out. Pups are reluctant to enter the water until they are approximately 28 days old. Pups were counted on Marmot Island on 8 and 10 July 1984 after all other sea lions had been driven from the rookeries. Rookery events were then compared to a normal year with no count related disturbance in 1985. Trampling of pups by adults moving toward the sea during the counts was very low. Increased aggression and territoriality of adult females resulting from the pup counts lasted for approximately one week. The frequency of animals "stampeding" into the sea in response to natural events increased for approximately 3 days after the pup counts. Approximately 15 percent of adults moved to an area where no disturbance had occurred and 35 percent left the study area for approximately one week. Pups were displaced from the largest rookery which was disturbed twice in three days. Both the accuracy and disturbance of pup counts may be influenced by rookery topography and pupping chronology.

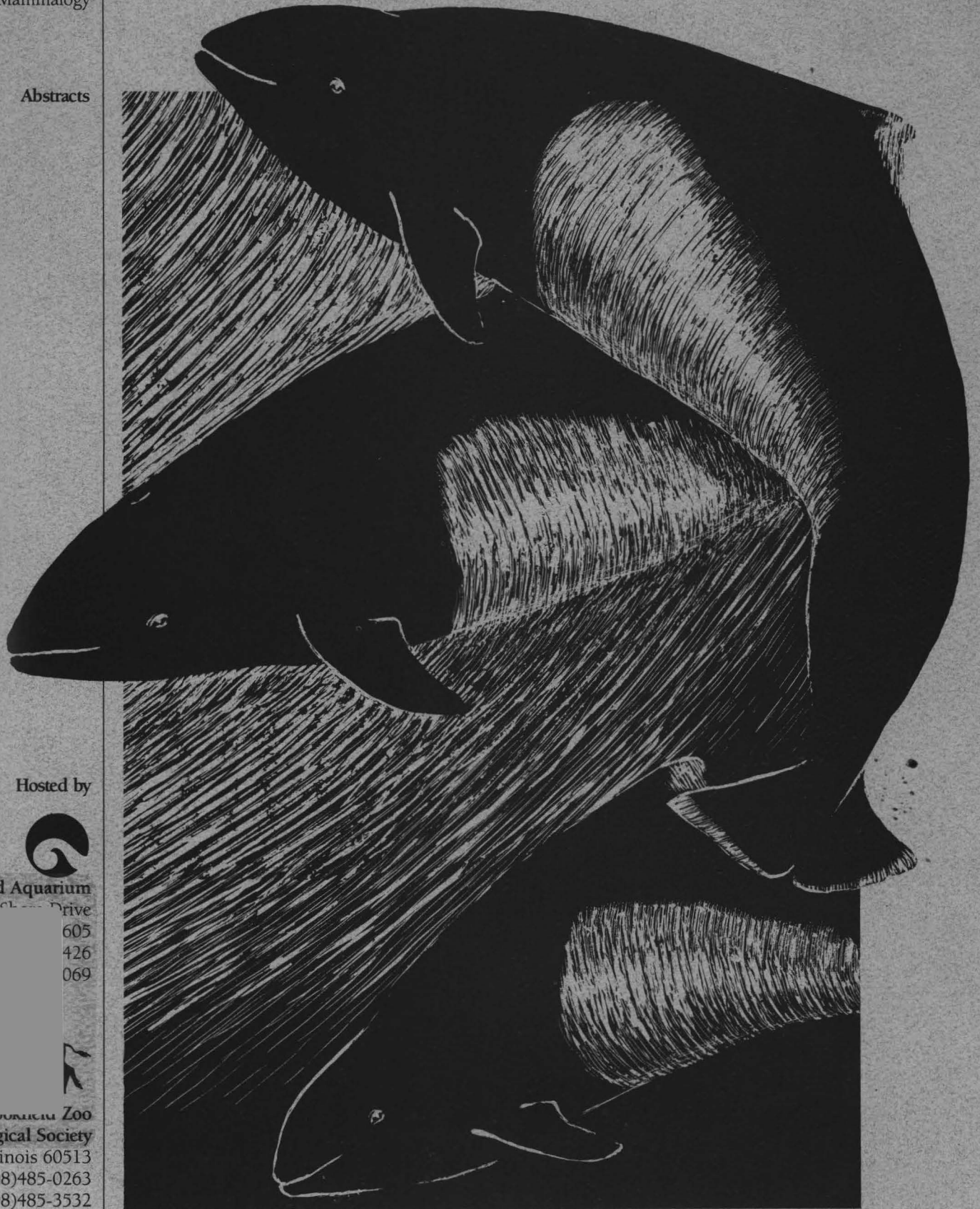


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