

### Live-Capture Method for Steller Sea Lions Using SCUBA

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Continuing declines have resulted in the western stock of the Steller sea lion (SSL), *Eumetopias jubatus*, in U.S. waters being listed as endangered and the eastern stock being listed as threatened. This decline appears to be concentrated in the juvenile age class and necessitates investigations requiring live-capture of juveniles for physiological and morphometric sampling. We developed a technique for live-capturing juvenile SSLs using two SCUBA-equipped divers. By employing a relatively simple system of a noose attached to a floating buoy and a baited pole, a SSL can be safely secured and brought to a small skiff. Using a combination of a specially designed capture blanket and holding box, up to 3 SSLs can then be brought aboard the skiff and transported to a nearby research vessel for anesthetizing and sampling. To date 179 SSLs ranging in mass from 50-230 kgs, and from 2 months to 5 years of age, have been captured, anesthetized, sampled and released with no apparent injuries or capture-related deaths. The ongoing development of new techniques and equipment now permit reliable sampling of SSLs during all seasons.

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