

**MOVEMENTS AND DIVING BEHAVIOR OF JUVENILE
STELLER SEA LIONS IN SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA**Swain, Una G.¹, Pitcher, Kenneth W.¹*(1) Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Wildlife Conservation**First Author Address: Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Wildlife Conserv,
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Steller sea lion (*Eumetopias jubatus*) numbers are declining throughout most of their range in western Alaska and Russia. Reduced juvenile survival is suspected to be the proximate mechanism behind the decline, however, very little is known about the life history of juvenile Steller sea lions. Movements and diving behavior of juvenile Steller sea lion were investigated in southeastern Alaska, where the population is high, using satellite-linked time depth recorders (SDRs). Twelve SDRs were deployed on 10 month old sea lions at a haulout in March 1998. Data were received from 30 to 142 days. Half of the sea lions remained at the haulout, while three traveled limited distances and three traveled extensively, one ranging 550 km. About 50% of all dives were less than 10m and 70% less than one minute. Although mean dive depth was 21m, the juveniles had the ability to dive deeply, to depths greater than 200m. Time at depth data as well as dive frequency and duration (foraging effort) indicated that they spent an average of two hours a day at depths below 4m. Overall, juveniles spent a mean of 53% of their time on land and approximately 80% on land or at depths less than 2m. A greater percentage of shallower dives (<50m) tended to occur at night (2100-0300), which accounted for 42% of all dives. Dives were deeper and vertical distances traveled greater as the season progressed into summer.

We are unsure whether this pattern reflected increased experience, physiological capacity, or the onset of weaning.

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ABSTRACTS

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