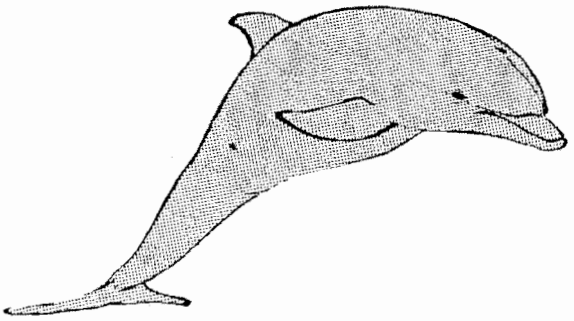
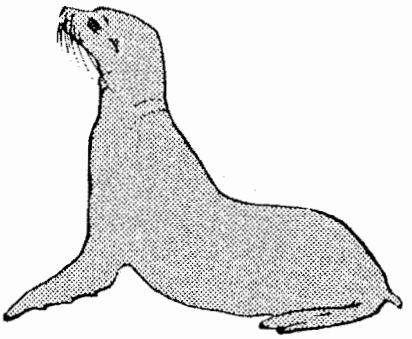
SEX AND AGE SEGREGATION IN ALASKAN SEA OTTER POPULATIONS. Karl Schneider, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Anchorage, Alaska 99502

Knowledge of patterns of geographical segregation of sea otters by sex and age is essential to any active conservation and management program on that species. The sexes and ages of sea otters harvested or captured from several Alaskan populations were examined by specific location and season.

All populations contained large female areas where most adult females and dependent pups in the population were found. The number of sexually mature males over 6 years old in female areas fluctuated seasonally and was positively correlated with the number of estrous females. Sexually immature males between the ages of 1 and 6 years appeared to be actively excluded from female areas. Where high densities of sea otters were continuous and range expansion had ceased, many adult males and most immature males concentrated in geographically discrete male areas. Permanently established male areas did not exist in some populations where areas of high sea otter density were separated by areas of low density or where the population was expanding into vacant habitat. Areas of low sea otter density and the fringes of expanding concentrations appeared to function as male areas in these populations.

Topography, habitat quality, population density and male breeding behavior appeared to influence patterns of sex and age segregation. Segregation may influence survival, productivity, population composition and vulnerability to natural events and human activities.





PROCEEDINGS
(ABSTRACTS)

Second Conference
On
The Biology of Marine Mammals

San Diego, California
12 — 15 December 1977