

Steller sea lion foraging behavior in Glacier Bay, Alaska

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To better understand how immature Steller sea lions use the Glacier Bay and Icy Strait region of Southeast Alaska, we captured 7 yearlings and 5 young-of-year pups at South Marble Island and monitored their behavior using satellite dive recorder tags between November 2009 and January 2010. Juveniles and pups used two central-place haulouts within Glacier Bay: individuals hauled out near Tarr Inlet foraged in waters north of Willoughby Island, while those hauling out at South Marble Island foraged in Hugh Miller Inlet, Geikie Inlet and central Glacier Bay. While all pups remained within Glacier Bay, four yearlings travelled throughout northern Southeast Alaska. One individual spent the winter foraging off Cape Fairweather, two foraged off the Inian Islands within Icy Strait and one ranged as far as Tenakee Inlet and southern Lynn Canal. While outside coast foraging trips over the continental shelf were confined to shallower depths (maximum 142 m), yearlings also exploited the deeper inside passages with dives reaching 404 m. Sea lions at Tarr Inlet and southern Lynn Canal made particularly consistent, daily, focused dives to below 300 m. Yearlings made maximum daily dive depths of 148 ± 20 m while pups utilized shallower diving ranges of 82 ± 4 m. Regardless of location, yearlings spent more time foraging during daylight than at night ($30 \pm 5\%$ greater time foraging during daylight). While pup behavior reflects that of young animals dependent on suckling, and yearlings exhibit the more wide-ranging travel and focused diving of a foraging marine predator, stable isotope trends along the vibrissae indicate all but one individual in this study were unweaned at capture and thus continuing to receive maternal support through suckling.



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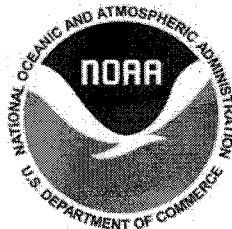
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