

Watch Your Step: Harbor Seals Pupping

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - The harbor seal pupping season has started, nursing pups remain with their mothers for four to six weeks, and then are weaned to forage and survive on their own. Mothers will often leave their pups on the beach for several hours at a time while they're foraging for food. It's normal for seal pups to be alone on the beach. This does not mean they're abandoned.

LocationTime of Year

Columbia River, Willapa Bay, Grays HarborMid-April - June

Olympic PeninsulaMay - July

San Juan Islands, Eastern Puget SoundJune - August

Southern Puget SoundJuly - September

Hood CanalAugust - January

* Table provided by Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, Marine Mammal Investigations.

Human disturbance near the pup may cause stress and delay the mother's return because of natural wariness. The best thing you can do is leave the pup alone and keep your distance so its mom will return.

Seals and sea lions use shoreline habitat on a regular basis to rest and regulate their body temperature. NOAA Fisheries Service advises the public to stay at least 100 yards away from all marine mammal species to avoid disturbing or harassing them, and to protect people and pets from diseases.

All marine mammals are protected by law. You can be fined if you harass any marine mammal. If you see anyone handling or harassing a marine mammal, call the Office for Law Enforcement at 1-800-853-1964. If you believe a marine mammal is stranded or injured, or a seal pup has been alone for 24-48 hours, please call your local stranding network or NOAA's stranding hotline at 206-526-6733. For more information on marine mammals please visit the NOAA website at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Marine-Mammals/index.cfm>