



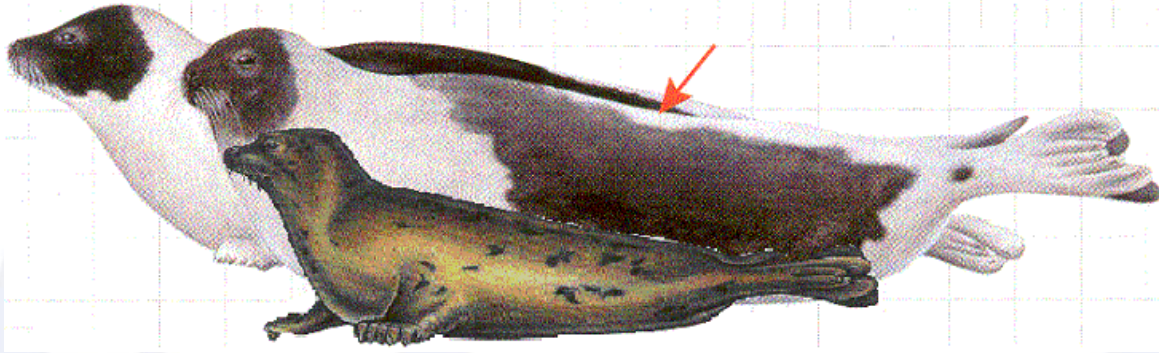
Natural History & Species ID

Harp, Hooded, and Gray Seals



Harp Seals

P. groenlandica



Harp Seals



Order: Carnivora

Family: Phocidae

Genus: *Pagophilus*

Species: *groenlandicus*

Adult weight	130 kg
Adult length	1.7 m
Age at sexual maturity	5-6 years
Life span (max.)	about 30 years
Number of pups per year	1
Pup birth weight	11 kg
Duration of nursing	about 12 days
Growth rate of pup per day	2.2 kg
Weaning weight	36 kg

Harp Seals

Phoca groenlandica

- Physical Description:
 - Up to 5.5 ft long, 300 lbs
 - Many stages of development
 - Head similar in appearance to Harbor Seals
 - Juveniles are gray, silver, or tan with irregular “ink blot” spots
 - Adults are silvery gray w/characteristic harp pattern on the back and a black head
- Behavior:
 - Form large groups on the ice when pupping or molting
 - Usually very active in the water
 - Sometimes travel in large groups
 - Go catatonic



Habitat

- Harp seals inhabit the North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans from northern Russia to Newfoundland, and the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
- Separated into three populations based on where they breed.
- The White Sea, The “West Ice”, and the Northwest Atlantic.
- They are associated closely with pack ice
- Migrations can be up to 2500 km



Reproduction



Facts

- Pup birth weight is ~11 kg
- Nursing period ~12 days
- Pup growth rate is around 2.2 kg/day
- Weaning Weight ~36 kg



Harp Pupping

- Females spend most of their pregnancy feeding off of Greenland
- Give birth on the pack ice from mid-february through early march to one pup.
- Female recognizes her pup from smell and sound.
- The mother feeds very little while nursing and uses energy stored in her blubber
- Females may lose over 6.5 lbs a day while nursing
- By the time nursing is finished the female has lost more than one quarter of her total body weight.





Ragged Jacket

- Start molting white lanugo coat
- This stage lasts about a week
- At this stage the seal can be legally killed during the commercial hunt.



Beater

- White coat is completely molted
- Has this coat from 25 days to 1 year
- Name comes from the not so great swimming skills of these animals, because they “beat” the surface of the water as they are making their first attempts to swim and dive.
- This is the age/coat pattern MMoME mostly sees







Bedlamer

- Beater pelt is molted around 13-14 months
- Replaced by a similar coat
- Name comes from the French word “bete de la mer” which means beast of the sea.
- This coat lasts from 13 months to 4 years.



Spotted Harp

- Animal is now adult size
- Coat begins to show the distinct harp with the onset of sexual maturity
- Males develop the harp shape quickly
- It takes some females many years to develop the harp shape, and some females may never lose all of their spots or develop the complete black harp.



Mature Harp

- Face of the seal is black and the harp marking on the back is very distinct.
- Animals with this coat can be 5 to 30 years old.
- Seals can be up to 6 feet long and weigh 250 lbs or more.
- Females can give birth after they are 5 years old.
- Males do not usually breed until they are 6 or 7 years.

Marine

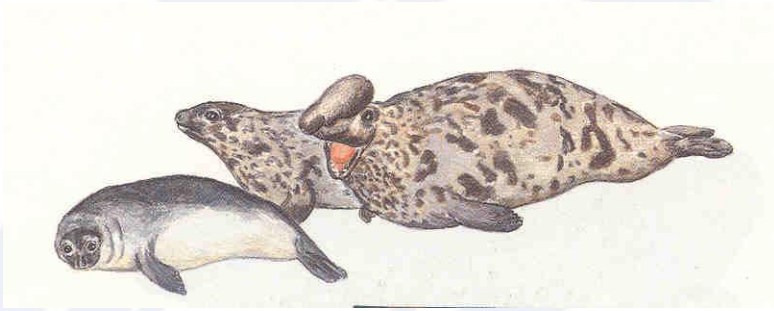


Maine



Hooded Seals

C. cristata



Hooded Seals

Cystophora cristata

- Physical Description:
 - Juveniles (Blue-back)
 - Cream colored belly, bluish gray back, no spots
 - Round head with large, wide-set eyes, flattened snout
 - Adults
 - Silvery gray with dark patches
 - Males have a “hood” over nose and in front of eyes
 - Can inflate red nasal septum
 - Males up to 8.5 ft, 700 lbs
 - Females up to 7 ft, 350 lbs
- Behavior:
 - Usually solitary except when breeding and molting



Habitat and Distribution

- Found only in central and western North Atlantic
- Distribution generally follows the pack ice
- Four major breeding areas: The Gulf of St. Lawrence, east of Newfoundland, Davis Strait, West ice near Jan Mayan.
- Hooded seals have been occasionally seen as far south as the Caribbean.



Mating

- Males have a hood which is actually an enlargement of their nasal cavity.
- They inflate their hoods during sexual displays, or to threaten.



Reproduction

- Females give birth to one pup on the pack ice throughout mid-march to early April.
- Nursing period is four days, the shortest period for any mammal!
- Pups gain between 45 and 65 lbs



Bluebacks

- Pups are born March-April
- Have a cream colored belly and a blue/gray back
- This is the age class MMoME typically sees







Gray Seals

H. grypus



Gray Seals

Halichoerus grypus

- Physical Description:
 - Males up to 8ft, 750 lbs
 - Females up to 6.5ft, 450 lbs
 - Pups born with lanugo
 - Males and females are distinguishable by coat color
 - Mottled spotting pattern
 - Long “roman nose” type head (horse head)
 - Nostrils form a “W” shape
 - Eyes closer to ear than nose
- Behavior:
 - Gregarious on shore
 - Can be seen hauled out with harbor seals
 - Usually solitary or in small groups in the water
 - Commonly seen in the water with only their head exposed



Coloration

- One of the only species in the area where you can tell the sex of the animal by fur coloration.
- Females are light gray with dark spots
- Males are dark gray or black with light spots.





Female: Light gray with dark spots ↑

Male: Dark gray/black with light spots →



Pupping

- Pups are born from mid-December to February.
- Weigh about 15kgs at birth with a lanugo coat for warmth.
- Largest local pupping sites are in Penobscot Bay and Frenchman's Bay.
- Pups Nurse for 16 days.
- Moms milk is 60% fat. Pups gain between 2.5-3lbs a day while nursing.







