



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

Crabeater Seal (*Lobodon carcinophaga*)

Description

Crabeater seals are 'true seals' which are characterized by lack of an external ear flap and short forelimbs (unlike sea lions). They have a relatively slender body and therefore appear long. They have a small head with a long and narrow snout. Coloration is blond to gray with some dark spotting especially on the sides near the hind and fore-flippers.

Habitat and Distribution

Crabeater seals have a circumpolar distribution in the pack ice around Antarctica.

Sounds

Crabeater seals are especially vocal during the breeding season, producing low moan calls and high moan calls. Sounds produced outside of the breeding season include groans, whistles, screeches, and grunts.

Feeding

Despite their common name, Crabeater seals forage primarily on krill although when krill is not abundant, they also eat fish and squid. In summer, they feed mainly at night.

Threats

Currently, there are no direct threats from human activity throughout most of the species range. Potential areas of future concern include commercial harvesting of krill, global climate change, and increased tourism in the region.

Fun Fact

Crabeater seals have highly modified interlocking teeth that they use to as a strainer to trap invertebrate prey!



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Family: Phocidae
Population: 10 — 15 million
Status: Least Concern
Length: 8 — 9 ft
Weight: 450 — 650 lbs