



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

Leopard Seal (*Hydrurga leptonyx*)

Description

Leopard Seals are ‘true seals’ which are characterized by lack of an external ear flap and short forelimbs (unlike sea lions). They are often described as reptilian with a long slender body, massive head, and huge gape. Adults are dark gray with a light gray belly and dark blotches scattered over the chest, belly, and flanks. Pups are born with a similar pelage although the hair is longer and softer.

Habitat and Distribution

Leopard Seals are widely distributed in the Southern Ocean around Antarctica. They are most abundant in pack-ice and fast-ice closer to Antarctica, especially along the Antarctic Peninsula.

Sounds

Both male and female Leopard Seals sing during the breeding season. Males produce other vocalizations including the high double trill, medium single trill, low descending trill, low double trills, and hoot with a low single trill. Individual males can be recognized by the sequence of their vocalizations.

Feeding

Leopard Seals forage on other seals, penguins, fish, squid, and krill.

Threats

There are no obvious threats to Leopard seals, although loss of sea ice is a potential threat to their habitat.

Fun Fact

Leopard Seals are top predators and prey on nearly anything – an adult platypus was found in the stomach of one Leopard Seal near Sydney, Australia!

Ilse Van Opzeeland



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Family:	Phocidae
Population:	~ 300,000
Status:	Least Concern
Length:	11 — 12 feet
Weight:	990 — 1300 lbs