



## NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

### Ross Seal (*Ommatophoca rossii*)

#### Description

Ross seals are 'true seals' which are characterized by lack of an external ear flap and short forelimbs (unlike sea lions). They are small with a thick chest, short neck, small head, blunt snout, and very large eyes. Adults are brown to black with a light brown or tan belly. They are easily identified by the brown to reddish streaks that run from the mouth down the throat and chest. Ross seals are rarely encountered and not well studied.



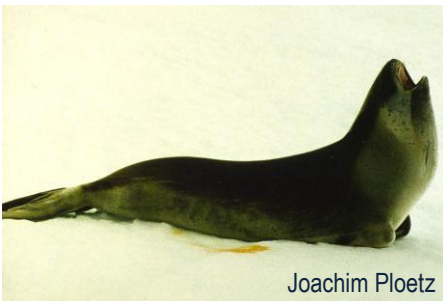
Joachim Ploetz

#### Habitat and Distribution

Ross seals have a circumpolar distribution around Antarctica. In summer, they are primarily found in areas of heavy, consolidated pack ice, although at other times they may range far north of the pack ice.

#### Sounds

Ross seals are solitary and widely dispersed. They are very vocal underwater and produce a siren-like call that can be heard over several miles. On ice they produce trilling, chugging and popping sounds with the mouth fully or mostly closed.



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#### Feeding

Limited data suggests that Ross Seals prey on deepwater squid and fish at night.

#### Threats

Ross seals have had limited interactions with humans and there are no known human-caused threats. Other potential threats include canine distemper virus and loss of sea ice due to global climate change.

#### Fun Fact

When closely approached, Ross Seals assume a head-up open-mouthed posture (as seen in the bottom left photo) and may make growling or gurgling threats.

Family:	Phocidae
Population:	~ 130,000
Status:	Least Concern
Length:	5.5 — 8 feet
Weight:	290 — 440 lbs