Harbor Porpoises of the San Francisco Bay

by

GOLDEN GATE CETACEAN RESEARCH

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Harbor Porpoise

(Phocoena phocoena)

length: 5 ft
weight: 100-150 lbs
avg. lifespan: 10-12 yrs

Courtesy of Uko Gorter
Harbor Porpoise range maps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Pop. Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bering Sea</td>
<td>66,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf of Alaska</td>
<td>41,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inland WA</td>
<td>10,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monterey Bay</td>
<td>1,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morro Bay</td>
<td>1,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor. California-Sou. Oregon</td>
<td>17,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon-Washington Coastal</td>
<td>37,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco-Russian River</td>
<td>9,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Alaska</td>
<td>17,076</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Harbor Porpoise History

< 1300’s Porpoise Remains in Emeryville Mounds

1800’s Capt. Charles Scammon reports porpoises in SF Bay

1930’s Porpoises frequently seen in SF Bay

1940’s Porpoises excluded from Bay (likely due to WWII)

1970’s Hundreds of Stranded/Dead Porpoises From Gill Net Interactions

1980’s in coastal waters

2008 Pod of 25 Porpoises, (2 Cow/Calf Pairs) seen off Cavallo Point
   ~likely not the first ones in the bay, but good time approximation

2012 We are Collecting Sightings By Citizen Scientists
From Artillery at the Golden Gate by Brian Chin
GGCR investigators are authorized under a 5-year permit from NMFS (LOC No. 15477) for close approach of porpoises and dolphins from Bodega Bay to Half Moon Bay (SF-Russian River Stock)

1. Western limit; 2. COLREGS Line; 3. Golden Gate Bridge
4. SF-Oakland Bay Br; 5. Richmd-San Rafael Br; 6. San Pablo Bay NWR
Photo-identification of recognizable individuals

By boat
From the Golden Gate Bridge: photographing from the pedestrian walkway (230 ft above sea level)
Color variation

SFB 45
dark skin

SFB 154
light skin
Color variation

Your Basic white porpoise
April 30, 2011
Scars

SFB-167

seen from boat
Sept. 2010

re-sighted from bridge
October 2010
Anthropogenic impacts

SFB 172 net entanglement?
September 2010
sighted 4 times

October 2010
Historical Data  
(Citizen Science)

• Spoke with Tiburon/Angel Island Ferry Personnel
  – Harbor Porpoises Common until the early 1940’s

• Questionnaire of Local Boaters
  – N=~30
  – Same General Pattern
  – NO PORPOISES UNTIL A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO (2008)
San Francisco Bay
areas of porpoise sightings

Cavallo Pt.
Ebb Tide Surface Currents
looking east
Feeding

Porpoise following fish
November 2010
Mating Behavior

Possible courtship

July 2010
Mothers & Calves

gestation: 10.5 months
born in summer
no twins
nursing: 10 months
birth rate: every year?

Calf about to take a breath next to its mother

October 2010
Mother and Calf, Lactation & Resting
San Francisco Bay
areas of porpoise sightings

Cavallo Pt.
RETURN OF THE PORPOISES TO SF BAY....

Eat
Mating
Lactation
Resting
Golden Gate Cetacean Research

www.ggcetacean.org

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