

## Sea Lions

Sea lions are marine mammals. They have a unique look and shape and many people think they are “cute.” Sea lions are different than seals, and you can tell them apart because sea lions have little ears on the outside of their heads. Sea lions live in large groups and like to be with others. Females are called “cows,” males are called “bulls” and their babies are called “pups.”

Female sea lions swim to shore when they are ready to give birth, and they usually have only a single pup. They will stay with their pup for a few days, but will then return to the ocean to feed. The mother will return to nurse her young every few days. The pup will join other pups to play together in a group of up to 200 sea lions – that’s a lot of friends to play with! How does a sea lion mother recognize her own pup? She does this by vocalizing, listening for a response, and then inspecting a pup by sight and smell to make sure it’s her own.

In the wild, sea lions can live to be 15-25 years old. Their favorite meals are squid, crabs, lobsters and fish, and they do not need to drink water to survive!

They are strong swimmers and can remain under the water for up to 40 minutes before they must surface for air. They do this by pinching their nostrils together instinctively as they enter the water, just like we do when we jump into a swimming pool.

Sea lions used to be hunted often for their oil and skins, but the good news is that they now have some protection from hunters.

