

Marine Wildlife of New York

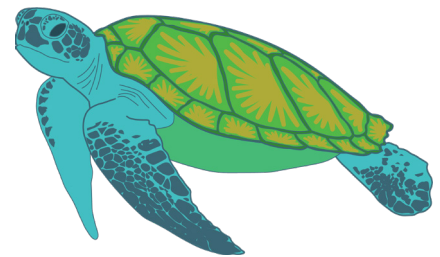
View responsibly

New York's ocean is home to a diverse array of marine species, including several species of whales, seals, and sea turtles. If you happen upon one of these interesting and federally protected animals, remember to always follow responsible wildlife practices. For both their safety and yours, *leave wild animals alone!*

Sea Turtles

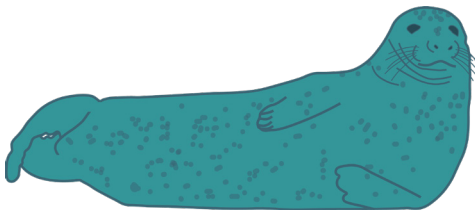
Green Sea Turtle • Loggerhead Sea Turtle • Leatherback Sea Turtle • Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle

Sea turtles can be found swimming or on our beaches during the warmer months of May through November and are particularly fond of warmer, shallower waters. Watch for them as you're boating, as they can be particularly vulnerable to vessel strikes. As temperatures get colder, sea turtles start to migrate south. If you see a sea turtle during colder months—even if it looks dead—it may be "cold-stunned," which is a dangerous form of hypothermia that must be addressed by a professional. It's important to report these sightings and allow an expert to assist.



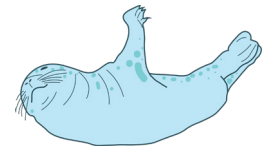
Seals

Harbor Seal • Gray Seal • Harp Seal



Seals "haul out" or rest on the beach very often. They may be warming themselves, resting, or napping in groups or alone. If you see a seal on a beach, keep your distance to avoid stressing or injuring the animal or yourself (seal bites can be serious). Seal pups are also often left to rest on the beach alone, with mom watching or feeding nearby. If you get too close, it can cause the pup to become dangerously stressed and could even cause it to be abandoned by its mother, so make sure to keep your distance!

It's important not to disturb these animals. You're disturbing them if they change their behavior in any way, but some signs that a seal's feeling especially stressed or threatened include showing their teeth or flippers, yawning, or eating sand and rocks.

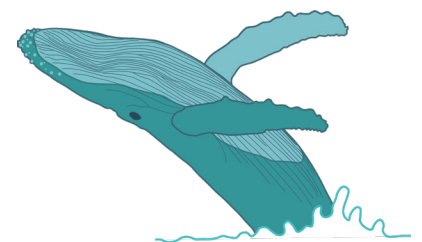


showing flippers is a sign of stress

Whales

Humpback Whale • Finback Whale • North Atlantic Right Whale • Sei Whale
Sperm Whale • Blue Whale

Whales can often be found feeding, swimming, or even jumping at the surface of the water. You may be able to witness these behaviors from a distance, but irresponsible human behavior (like getting too close to the animal) can have detrimental effects on whale behavior like interrupting the important acts of feeding and resting. When boating, you may find yourself inadvertently close to a whale that unexpectedly surfaces near your vessel. If this happens, **wait** until the whale moves before moving out of the area to avoid injury to you or the whale. Whales can sometimes also be seen in relatively shallow waters, but will only be seen on a beach if severely stressed. If you see a whale on a beach, whether it's living or not, make sure to report it and **don't** approach it.





Credit: N. Starkweather, NYSDEC

Seek out opportunities to experience marine animals in a safe and responsible way. These include visiting an aquarium or participating in a seal or whale cruise, where you can see these animals at a safe distance and without disturbing them, guided by knowledgeable professionals. Check out www.nyseagrant.org/newyorkocean for more information about professionals that are involved in this area.

What to do if you encounter a marine animal: The Do's and Don'ts

- DO** stay at least 150 feet away from seals and sea turtles, 300 feet away from whales, and 1500 feet away from the critically endangered North Atlantic Right Whale when on the water. When on the beach, stay at least 150 feet away from any animal.
- DO** leave the animal alone. Make sure you, your kids, and your pets all stay away and that you're not disturbing the animal or causing it stress.
- DO** remember that it's illegal to approach marine wildlife. Doing so can result in hefty fines.
- DO** report your sighting to NYSDEC's Flipper Files survey (<https://arcg.is/0LKO01>). Whether on the water or on the beach, you can log your data using this citizen science tool to help scientists learn more about these animals.
- DO** call New York's 24-Hour Stranding Hotline at 631-369-9829 if you believe that an animal is injured or truly needs assistance. Be sure to note the animal's condition and exact location to help with response. If you're outside New York, call the local stranding network or NOAA.
- DON'T** try to help the animal yourself. If you think it needs help, report it and leave it to the professionals who know how to take care of the animal in the safest way possible.
- DON'T** report an animal that is displaying normal behavior and appears healthy. Response teams' time and resources should be saved for animals that truly need help.
- DON'T** disturb the animal or get too close. If your actions are impacting its actions, you're disturbing it. Follow the guidelines above for both your safety and the safety of the animal. If you get too close, you could get bitten or seriously stress and harm the animal. That means no selfies with marine wildlife.



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