



Central Puget Sound

Marine Mammal Stranding Network

MEET ELLIE

Our elephant seal Matriarch

This is the final edition in a series of newsletters about our Whidbey Island born elephant seal family of four.



Ellie is not exactly like the matriarch of orcas or elephant families, but she is the mother of our three local elephant seals, so maybe she deserves that name?

Possibly the first sighting of Ellie was on April 25, 2010, on the beach in Mutiny Bay at the same site she still uses today.

Female elephant seals generally give birth in January. Ellie, however, gives birth in March, which is unusual. She then returns in late April/May to spend several weeks during the molting process. The more we learn about our local elephant seals, the more we discover how unusual they are.

Another female elephant seal molting sighting was reported on June 9, 2012. These early sightings of a female elephant

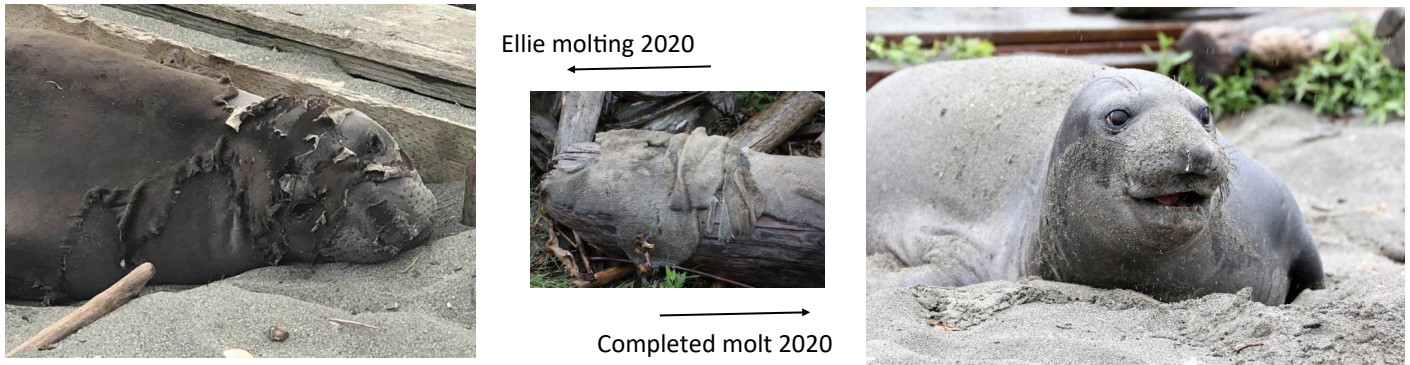


seal coming back to exactly the same spot are possible evidence of Ellie showing “site fidelity”. Two years later on June 11, 2014 another sighting was reported of a molting elephant seal at exactly the same site on Mutiny Bay.



The next report of Ellie was on March 18, 2015, same site, but this time with a newborn pup, Ellison. This time Ellie and her pup were monitored by neighbors and Stranding Network volunteers every day. Since then she has produced two more pups, both female, Elsie Mae in 2018 and Eloise in 2020.

A female elephant seal with a life span of 20 years could have her first pup at the age of 4-5. If Ellie were here in 2010 she may have been too young to give birth—let's say 2-3 years old. By 2015 she could have been 7-8 years old. And now, in 2020 could be 12-13 years old (pure speculation).



The elephant seal (Ellie) goes through an annual molt, called a “catastrophic molt”. They lose their old fur and much of their skin before growing a pristine new fur coat in about 5 weeks. Meanwhile they prefer to rest on the beach, undisturbed drying the skin so it will slough off. The nose will run, eyes will weep and breathing sounds labored. This is all natural.

There are so many questions about Ellie and her family. They are now in a behavioral study to monitor and document all activities. Please help us accomplish this by sending reports of all sightings of these elephant seals to dubpernell@yahoo.com for the archives, include photos, if possible.

All marine mammals are protected under the Federal Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 USC 1361-1407). Harassing these animals in any way that disturbs their natural behavior could face civil penalties of up to \$11,000 in fines and possibly one year in prison.

We welcome your comments and questions. Please share this information.

Report any violations to one of the numbers below.

Thanks and enjoy... and please share your knowledge.

Orca Network: 1-866-ORCANET (1-866-672-2638)

NOAA Enforcement Hotline—1-800-853-1964

Sandy Dubpernell, Investigator/Archivist for CPSMMSN
dubpernell@yahoo.com - 360-678-3765

Garry Heinrich, Investigator, Volunteer Coordinator for CPSMMSN
ghretired10@gmail.com - 1-949-233-2822

Jill Hein, Investigator, Editor, Photographer for CPSMMSN
jillhein@comcast.net—1-425-444-1263



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