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Chances of Encountering Seals Increases As Summer Approaches
Important to Respect Wildlife and Keep a Safe Distance

As summer begins, the chances of seeing seals in coastal waters and along the shore increases. NOAA is issuing this reminder for responsible wildlife viewing so that both seals and humans can safely share the shoreline.

May and June are peak months for harbor seals to give birth along the Northeastern U.S. coast. Harbor seals tend to haul out on rocky islands and ledges to give birth or just rest, but they may also find a sandy beach to occupy.

"It is important that people don't approach, handle or feed these animals," said Mendy Garron, marine mammal stranding coordinator for the Northeast Region of NOAA Fisheries Service. "Even though they look cute, these are wild animals and getting too close puts the animal, humans and pets at risk."

A disturbed seal can bite and even transmit diseases like distemper virus or rabies to humans and pets. In other instances, a disturbed seal may abandon its pup to flee an approaching human or dog. If this happens and the pup is nursing, it will not survive. However, a female seal is more likely to return to reclaim her pup, if the disturbance near the pup goes away. Observing the animal from a distance is the best way to avoid disturbing it or being injured.

Under federal law it is illegal and punishable by law to pick up, handle or interact with free-swimming, dead or beached marine protected species. This includes seals, whales, dolphins, porpoise, sea turtles and manatees. Penalties for harassing these animals can be up to \$50,000 and a year in jail. To report incidents of people or pets tormenting, disturbing or attempting to remove a seal from the beach, contact the NOAA Fisheries Enforcement Hotline (1-800-853-1964).

What to do when encountering a seal on a beach:

- Stay at least 150 feet away from it. Pup's mothers may be just around the corner;
- Don't handle it, and keep other people and dogs away;
- [Call a local marine mammal stranding network member](#);
- Visit NOAA's Northeast Region website (http://www.nero.noaa.gov/prot_res/stranding) for local contact information; OR
- Call NOAA Fisheries Service's stranding hotline at 1-866-755-NOAA (6622).

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