

Rake-a-Line Program

<http://www.save-our-seals.org>

Volunteers regularly rake a line in the sand at the site to show a safe distance for viewing the harbor seals.

Contact Dorota at rakealine@gmail.com to help.

Wildlife Committee, SD Chap.Sierra Club

<http://sandiego.sierraclub.org/conservation/>

This group advocates year round protection of the seals, and meets monthly to discuss wildlife conservation in the San Diego area.

WildCoast

<http://www.wildcoast.net/>

This group works to preserve this precious resource so that it can continue to be enjoyed by children who may not have the financial means to observe wildlife in other settings.

La Jolla Friends of the Seals

<http://www.lajollaseals.com/>

This group maintains a docent program to educate the public on harbor seals.

Animal Protection & Rescue League

<http://www.aprl.org>

APRL has taken action to protect the harbor seal colony as well as protecting the rights of volunteers working to conserve this site. APRL funds night security at the rookery.

San Diego Coastkeeper

<http://www.sdbaykeeper.org/>

This group has been involved in legal activities to protect the harbor seal colony at Casa Beach.

What can I do?

Whether you live in the area or are just visiting, you can take action to preserve this precious resource for the future. Here's how:

Contact the mayor & demand that city law protecting the seals be enforced:

§63.0102(b)(10) of the Municipal Code states:

"It is unlawful to take, kill, wound, disturb or maltreat any bird or animal, either wild or domesticated, unless the same shall have been declared noxious. . . "

Mayor Sanders can be contacted at:

City Administration Building

11th Floor, 202 C Street

San Diego, CA 92101

Phone: (619) 236-6330

Fax: (619) 236-7228

Email: JerrySanders@saniego.gov

Contact the NMFS & demand that they enforce the MMPA at Casa Beach

NMFS Southwest Regional Office

501 W. Ocean Blvd.

Long Beach, CA 90802-4213

(562) 980-4000

Email: otha.easley@noaa.gov

Donate to or volunteer with the organizations working to conserve this site.

Please visit the web sites listed in this brochure.

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<http://www.save-our-seals.org/>

If you scare them, they could go away. . . forever



Despite the concept of "shared use" espoused by some people, scientific studies have shown that constant human disturbance negatively affects the behavior of harbor seals.

Harbor seals may perceive human noise and activity as a predatory threat, which could cause them to abandon a haul-out site. This happened in the 1980s in the Bay Area at a harbor seal haul-out site. In the 1970s, harbor seals hauled out on an area of beach known as Strawberry Spit. During the 1970s, as many as 100 seals used the area as a haul-out site. Then, by the 1980s, developers began to build in the area, and humans and dogs began disturbing the seals on a regular basis. By the late 1980s, the harbor seals abandoned the site. The same thing could happen to our treasured harbor seal colony at the Children's Pool in La Jolla.

A few humans approach and flush the seals from their haul-out site on a regular basis because they want to reclaim the beach for their own use. They claim that they are not "anti-seal", but their actions show otherwise. The Marine Mammal Protection Act prohibits such activity, but federal authorities are slow to enforce the law. Likewise, the San Diego Municipal Code has a provision that prohibits the mistreatment of non-noxious animals in city parks. Yet, local authorities are hesitant to take action on these violations as well, claiming that the jurisdiction falls to the federal government.

To watch a short documentary about the seal harassment at the Children's Pool, go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2xqgXp3-p0>

What about sharks?

Another argument asserted by the anti-seal people is that the harbor seals will serve as "shark bait," which will threaten human swimmers in the area. They frighten swimmers by creating a scenario of great white sharks swarming the beaches of La Jolla.

Again, scientific facts about sharks seem to dispel these theories as well. Recent studies show a sharp decline in shark populations. According to the International Shark Attack File of the Florida Natural History Museum, from 1926 through 2004, there have been only 10 shark attacks with one fatality in San Diego County. That fatality occurred in 1956, long before the seals began to use the Children's Pool as a haul-out site.

What about the children?

Surveys of school children in the San Diego area have shown that the children would prefer to conserve the harbor seal colony at Casa Beach in La Jolla. Every month, about 80,000 people come to visit the seal rookery. Many of the visitors are families with children.

This site is a living laboratory. It provides children with a rare opportunity to witness the behavior of wildlife that is not in captivity. Although text books may describe harbor seals and other marine mammals, the haul-out site lets children see these animals firsthand. There are few places in the country where children can have this unique experience. The site is educational; the view is beautiful; and, there is no admission fee. The show comes compliments of nature, but like other benefits of nature, it cannot be taken for granted. The animals are wild and should be viewed from a safe distance for their safety as well as ours. The National Marine Fisheries Service asserts a safe viewing distance of at least 100 feet on land and 100 yards in the water.

However, this recommendation is not observed at the Casa Beach haul-out site. Although the San Diego City Council has recently voted to replace a rope barrier at the site during pupping season, they have determined that the season ends on May 1.

After that date, there will be no protection for the seals against human harassment that has occurred on a regular basis since the rope barrier was removed. The laws that are on the books do not serve as a deterrent to such harassment because they are not adequately enforced.

There is no shortage of beaches for humans in the San Diego area. Due to the fact that harbor seals have less blubber and fur than other pinnipeds, they need to haul-out daily for about 7 to 9 hours to conserve energy. If they continue to be harassed at the haul-out site at the Casa Beach, they could be frightened into leaving the site altogether.

What's being done?

Several San Diego environmental groups continuously work to preserve this precious natural resource. These groups include:

San Diego Animal Advocates
<http://www.animaladvocates.org/>
<http://www.saveourseals.com>

SDAA has taken legal action to protect this harbor seal rookery & has spoken at numerous city council meetings, advocating year-round protection of the harbor seals. SDAA also funds security at the haul-out site, and distributes educational literature about the seals to the visitors of the beach.