



ROSS SEAL

Ommatophoca rossii





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Order : *Carnivora* — Family : *Phocidae*



- Size : 1.7-2.5 m
- Weight : 129-216 kg

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE :

Ross Seals have a circumpolar range in Southern Ocean waters surrounding Antarctica. Vagrants have been reported from many sub-Antarctic islands including the Kerguelen Islands.

HABITAT :

Ross Seals typically haul out in dense consolidated pack ice in which it is very difficult to navigate, which is why little is known about this species.

DIET :

Ross Seals eat mostly krill, squid and fish.

BEHAVIOR :

Unlike their ubiquitous close relatives the Weddell, Crabeater and Leopard Seals, Ross Seals are a rare and relatively unknown animal, considered the least common ice seal. Ross seals are generally encountered alone. Occasionally, a small number of individuals may be found in the same area, but they are usually widely spaced. Only 3 to 9% of Ross Seals were seen in pairs. Their larynx is very well developed, which allows them to produce trilling, siren-like calls and chugging vocalizations.

REPRODUCTION :

Age at sexual maturity is thought to be 2 to 4 years for females and 3 to 4 years for males. Ross Seals mate in early December, but egg implantation is delayed until early March. Most pups are born in November, after a 9 month gestation. It is estimated that pups weigh about 16 kg at birth, and 75 kg 15 days after birth. Ross Seal pups develop quickly, gaining weight rapidly from their mother's rich milk. Pups are weaned at about one month of age.



THREATS :

The species is categorized as "Least concern" (IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, September 2014). It is thought to be the least abundant seal in Antarctica. However, estimates are little more than guesses, as much is still unknown about its distribution and behavior.