

**Topic:**

## **Pinnipeds: Seals**

QC-0511

**Resource:**

[Riverhead  
Foundation:  
Seals](#)

**Basics:** Seals, sea lions, and walruses are all pinnipeds. They are marine mammals that have fur and blubber for thermoregulation, long whiskers, two sets of flipper limbs, reduced or lost ear flaps, and nasal openings at the tip of the snout. Family phocidae "true seals" has 19 species, all earless. Family Otariidae is made up of Fur Seals and Sea Lions. The Walrus has its own family: Odobenidae.

**Question:** *Do we have seals in waters around Long Island?*

**Answer:** Yes! We have 5 species of Phocid seals that may call Long Island home during the winter months. They are Gray, Harbor, Harp, Hooded and Ringed seals. Harp Seals are the most abundant, and the Gray seal may often be seen on eastern Long Island. Other species are less common for a variety of reasons. Seals may be observed in Long Island waters, especially around inlets, starting in November.

**Question:** *Is it OK to approach seals?*

**Answer:** All marine mammals are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, giving the federal government jurisdiction over all marine mammals in the United States. This act prohibits any individual from capturing, harassing, (paddling to close is harassing) hunting, killing or possessing any marine mammal (dead or alive), except for those persons specifically authorized to do so. It is important to remember that seals are wild animals and can be very aggressive. Never attempt to approach, feed or handle a seal.

**Advanced Concepts:** You may want to get more information on the following:

- Where seals go in the summer?
- What do seals eat?
- What are the major predators to seals?
- How big do seals get?
- What can be done to help a seal that is hurt or sick?

*For more information contact*

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