

CURRENT STATUS OF PINNIPEDS IN THE SEA OF OKHOTSK

TRUKHIN Alexey M.

V.I.II'ichev Pacific Oceanological Institute, FEB RAS. 43, Baltiyskaya St., Vladivostok, Russia, 690041,
trukhin@poi.dvo.ru

Seven species of pinnipeds inhabit the Sea of Okhotsk, two species of eared seal (Steller sea lion and Northern fur seal) and five species of true seal (bearded seal, ringed seal spotted seal, harbor seal and ribbon seal). The Steller sea lion population in the Sea of Okhotsk is no longer decreasing. There is evidence of a slow, but stable increase. There are 11 functioning sea lion rookeries. During the last ten years the number of Northern fur seal pups on Robben (Tyuleny) Island increased from 16 to 33 thousand individuals; population growth of fur seals is still going on. There are also 2 rookeries on the Kuril Islands. Distributions of spotted seal have a distinct seasonal nature. In winter, it is closely connected with ice-covered waters, in summer and autumn this seal species concentrates on the coastal haul-outs. Harbor seals can be found only on the Kuril Islands. Ringed seals and bearded seals relocate in winter towards the pack ice and shore ice, and in summer occupy the shallow water sea areas. Ribbon seals, after their departure from the ice, move into the open sea areas. In recent years in the Sea of Okhotsk there has been a low level of ice coverage here due to warming of the climate. It is as yet unclear what effect this has on the ice-bound seal populations.