



**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

Greater Atlantic Region

# SEAL VIEWING GUIDELINES



Seals are federally protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Under this law it is illegal to harass, harm, or disturb a seal's natural behaviors. Seals bite so getting too close can be dangerous as well. If you see a seal, follow NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Seal Viewing Guidelines to keep yourself and the seal safe.

Stay at least 150 feet away.

Leave seal pups alone- their mothers may return soon and human interference can cause them to be abandoned.

Seals bite. Never attempt to touch them and keep pets on leashes when seals are near.

Keep the area quiet and limit disturbance.

Do not pour water on or attempt to cover seals.

Never feed seals- this is illegal and can make the animals sick or dependent on people.

Do not push seals back into the water, follow seals into the water, or attempt to swim with seals.

Kayakers and paddleboarders- keep your distance from animals resting on shore. Your quiet vessels may scare the seals and make them return to the water.

Call for help if seal appears injured or sick.

**NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Marine Animal Reporting Hotline**

**866-755-NOAA (6622)**

# Common Greater Atlantic Seals



Illustrations by Uko Gorter

## Gray Seals

Males are typically larger than females, reaching 7-8 feet in length and 770 pounds. Gray seals may stand their ground and can be aggressive. Their heads have a distinct horse-like shape. They pup between December- February in Maine and Massachusetts. Pups are nursed for about 16 days.

## Harbor Seals

Harbor seals average 4-5 feet in length and 220-250 pounds. Their faces have a dog-like resemblance. Adults will typically retreat to the water, though juveniles may remain on the beach. Pupping in New England occurs between May-June. Pups are nursed 4-6 weeks.

*Barking, yawning, flipper waving, and moving towards the water are signs that seals are stressed. If you see any of these signs, slowly depart the area.*