

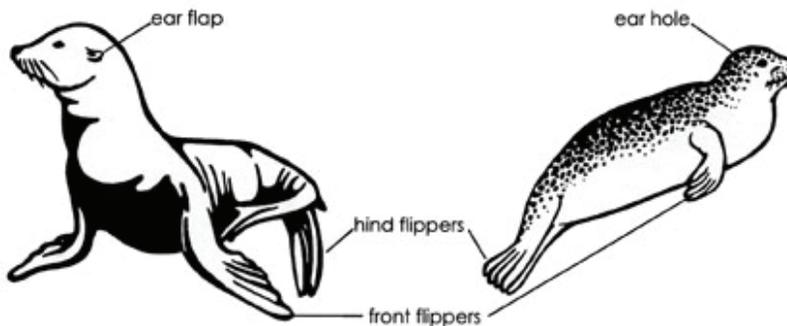


HIKING SUP SURFING CITY TOURS KAYAKING & SNORKELING

Sea Lions and seals WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Sea lions, seals, and walrus are in a scientific group of animals called pinnipeds, which means "wing foot" or "feather foot." You could probably pick out a walrus if you saw one, but how do you tell sea lions and seals apart? Sea lions and seals are marine mammals, spending a good part of each day in the ocean to find their food. They all have flippers at the end of their limbs to help them swim. Like all marine mammals, they have a thick layer of blubber to keep them warm in the chilly ocean. And they all like to eat fish—lots of fish!

So what do you look at to tell "who's who?" Look at their ears. If you see a small earflap on each side of its head, you are looking at a sea lion. Seals just have a tiny opening for their ears. The sea lion's earflaps are turned with the opening downward so water does not enter the ears. Sea lions are also able to rotate their hind flippers forward to help them scoot along beaches and rocky shorelines. Seals cannot do this and must wriggle, hunch, roll, or slide to get around out of the water.





Sea Lions and seals WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Coastal Living

Sea lions live along the coastlines and islands of the Pacific Ocean. These fabulously aquatic animals are extremely fit for what might seem like a harsh marine existence to us. A reflective membrane at the back of the eye acts as a mirror, bouncing what little light they find in the ocean back through the eye a second time. This helps them see underwater, where light may be scarce. Sea lions also rely on excellent senses of hearing and smell.

The front flippers are strong enough to support the animal on land. They also serve to help regulate the sea lion's body temperature. When it is cold, specially designed blood vessel in the thin-skinned flippers constrict to prevent heat loss, but when it is hot, blood flow is increased to these surface areas to be cooled more quickly. When you see an odd group of dark "fins" sticking out of the water in California harbors, it is usually sea lions sticking their flippers into the air to cool off.
