

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE A STRANDED OTTER?

- Stay back a safe and respectable distance. The general rule is 100 ft back. If the animal's behavior changes as you approach, you are too close!
- Call the Alaska SeaLife Center for guidance, do not touch the animal.
- Take pictures to confirm species and the condition that animal is in. Remember to keep your distance!
- Note the exact location of the animal.
- Observe and report anything abnormal (i.e., injuries, malnourishment).



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Sea Otters in Kachemak Bay



Any information regarding stranded otters is greatly appreciated.

Please contact the Alaska SeaLife Center's 24/7 response hotline if found on Alaskan beaches.

[1-888-774-SEAL](tel:1-888-774-SEAL)

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WHAT CAUSES OTTERS TO STRAND?

Sea otters may strand ashore for many different reasons. In the northern populations, studies suggest there are 2 primary causes of death:

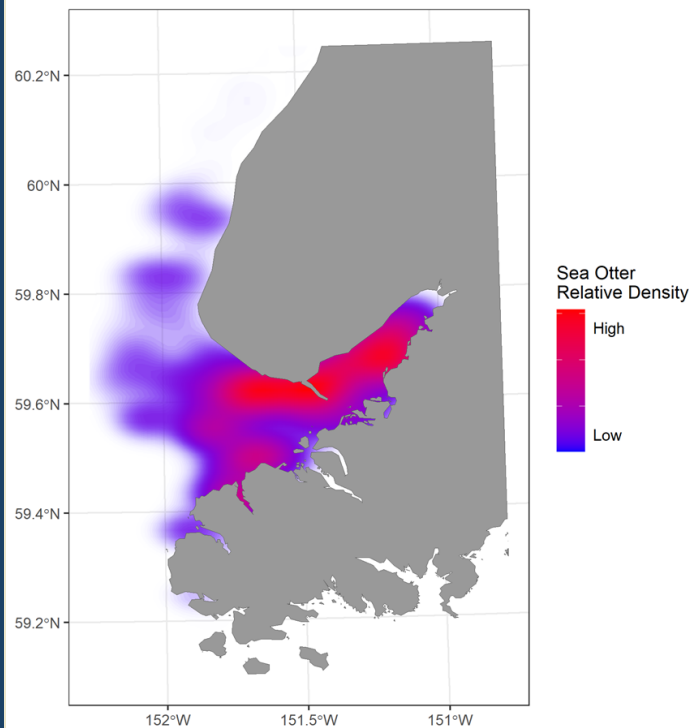
- **Strep syndrome:** a bacterial infection with an unknown origin caused by the bacteria *Streptococcus*. Studies point to mussel consumption, specifically blue mussels, as the likely route of infection (Counihan-Edgar et al., 2012). This disease causes a variety of health issues for otters:
 - **Endocarditis:** an inflammation of the heart lining which can lead to blood clots.
 - **Septicemia:** a blood infection caused when *Streptococcus* enters the blood stream.
 - **Encephalitis:** an inflammation of the brain due to *Streptococcus* infection.
- **Trauma:** Stranded otters may show signs of trauma indicating boat strike, gunshot, mating or fighting wounds, or predation.

(Burek Huntington et al., 2021; USFWS, unpublished data)

MANY OTTERS CALL KACHEMAK BAY HOME

Sea otters are abundant in Kachemak Bay, with the latest population estimate at nearly 6,000 otters. Many otters spend time in habitat that is close to high boating activity like Homer Spit.

(Garlich-Miller et al., 2018)



Heatmap depicting kernel density estimation of sea otters in Eastern Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay from aerial surveys flown in May 2017.

(Esslinger et al., 2021)

It's OTTER-ly amazing!

USFWS Best Boating Practices

- Do not assume otters will dive out of the way!
- Give otters room when passing (100 meters (330 ft) for individuals, 200 meters (660 ft) for mother-pup pairs, and 500 meters (1,640 ft) for rafts).
- When visibility is low, travel at slower speeds to reduce the likelihood of injuring an otter.



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- Garlich-Miller, J., Esslinger, G. G., & Weitzman, B. (2018). Aerial Surveys of Sea Otters (*Enhydra lutris*) in Lower Cook Inlet, Alaska, May, 2017. US Fish and Wildlife Service.