



The Sea Lion — Social

Giants of the Pacific Coast

Reading Worksheet — Level F | [tahricteaches.com](https://www.tahricteaches.com)

Sea lions are intelligent marine mammals that inhabit the coastlines of the Pacific and other **oceans** around the world. Unlike true seals, sea lions have visible ear flaps and long front flippers that let them walk, and even gallop, on land. A fully grown male sea lion, known as a bull, can weigh over 300 kilograms and often defends a stretch of beach as his own **territory** during the breeding season, fighting off rival males that attempt to intrude.

In the water, sea lions are remarkably agile. They can **dive** to depths of over 180 meters while hunting, holding their breath for several minutes at a time as they chase down fast-moving prey. When they are not actively swimming, sea lions often **float** at the surface in a position researchers call "juggling," with one or more flippers raised out of the water to help regulate their body temperature in the sun.

Sea lions are highly social animals that gather in large groups called a **colony**, sometimes made up of thousands of individuals crowded onto a single beach or rocky outcrop. Within a colony, sea lions communicate constantly through loud barks, growls, and roars. Scientists believe this social behavior, combined with their intelligence and trainability, is why sea lions are often chosen to **perform** in marine shows and aquariums around the world.

Despite their adaptability, sea lion **populations** face serious **threats** from human activity. Many sea lions become entangled in discarded fishing nets, while ocean **pollution** introduces harmful toxins, such as domoic acid from algal blooms, into their food supply. Climate change has also disrupted the fish stocks sea lions depend on, forcing some colonies to travel farther than ever before in search of enough food to feed their pups.

Conservation laws such as the United States' Marine Mammal Protection Act have helped many sea lion populations recover and **survive** after decades of hunting had nearly wiped them out. Today, scientists continue to monitor sea lion colonies closely, since these animals serve as an important indicator of overall ocean health. Protecting sea lions, in the end, means protecting the entire marine ecosystem that they and countless other species depend on to thrive.

A. Vocabulary

1. territory _____

a. to do something, often in front of an audience

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|--------------------|--|
| 2. dive ____ | b. to continue to live, especially after a difficult event |
| 3. float ____ | c. something that may cause harm or danger |
| 4. colony ____ | d. a very large area of salt water that covers most of the Earth |
| 5. perform ____ | e. an area of land that an animal defends or controls |
| 6. population ____ | f. to go down under the water, usually head first |
| 7. threat ____ | g. to rest on top of water without sinking |
| 8. pollution ____ | h. a large group of animals living together in one place |
| 9. survive ____ | i. the total number of a kind of animal living in an area |
| 10. ocean ____ | j. harmful substances that damage air, water, or land |



B. True or False

1. Sea lions are a type of fish. ____
2. Male sea lions sometimes defend a territory during breeding season. ____
3. Sea lions cannot dive very deep underwater. ____
4. "Jugging" describes sea lions floating at the surface with flippers raised. ____
5. Sea lions never gather together in large groups. ____
6. A large group of sea lions is called a colony. ____
7. Sea lions are sometimes trained to perform in aquarium shows. ____
8. Ocean pollution has no effect on sea lion populations. ____
9. Conservation laws have helped some sea lion populations survive and recover. ____



C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: dive, colony, threat, pollution, survive

1. Sea lions can _____ to depths of over 180 meters while hunting.
2. Thousands of sea lions may gather together in a single _____ on a beach.
3. Discarded fishing nets are a serious _____ to sea lion safety.
4. Ocean _____ can introduce harmful toxins into the sea lions' food supply.
5. Conservation laws have helped sea lion populations _____ after decades of hunting.

D. Comprehension Questions

1. How do sea lions differ from true seals, and what role does territory play during the breeding season?
2. Describe how sea lions behave in the water, including diving and "juggling."
3. Why are sea lions often chosen to perform in aquarium shows?
4. What specific threats do sea lion populations face from human activity?
5. How have conservation laws affected sea lion populations, and why do scientists consider them an indicator of ocean health?

E. Discussion Questions

1. Should marine parks be allowed to have sea lions perform in shows for the public? Why or why not?
2. What steps could people take to reduce ocean pollution and protect marine mammals like sea lions?
3. Why might scientists use an animal like the sea lion as an indicator of the health of an entire ocean ecosystem?





Answer Key

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A. Vocabulary: 1-e, 2-f, 3-g, 4-h, 5-a, 6-i, 7-c, 8-j, 9-b, 10-d

B. True/False: 1-F, 2-T, 3-F, 4-T, 5-F, 6-T, 7-T, 8-F, 9-T

C. Fill Blanks: 1-dive, 2-colony, 3-threat, 4-pollution, 5-survive

D. Comprehension:

1. Unlike true seals, sea lions have visible ear flaps and long front flippers that let them walk on land, and a bull sea lion often defends his own stretch of beach as territory during breeding season, fighting off rival males.
2. Sea lions dive to depths of over 180 meters while hunting, holding their breath for several minutes, and when not swimming they often float at the surface juggling, with flippers raised to help regulate body temperature.
3. Sea lions gather in large colonies and communicate constantly through barks and growls, and their intelligence and trainability make them well suited to performing in marine shows and aquariums.
4. Sea lion populations face threats such as entanglement in discarded fishing nets, ocean pollution that introduces harmful toxins like domoic acid into their food, and climate change disrupting the fish stocks they depend on.
5. Conservation laws like the Marine Mammal Protection Act have helped sea lion populations recover after near-extinction from hunting, and scientists monitor them closely because they serve as an indicator of overall ocean health.