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Elephant seals fighting gif

The southern elephant seal is one of two species of live elephant seal. These two species get their name from the torso-like nose, which men develop as they become sexually mature. Only the strongest, most dominant males gain the right to mat with females, and 90% of males die before developing a harem. Harems, which the strongest males defend, can reach 120-150 females. Fights between dominant men and challengers can be long, bloody and extremely violent, with the loser often suffering serious injuries. Both pupping and myon occur simultaneously on ice-free beaches. Since females continue to breastfeed their offspring during the farm season, the offspring are often in danger of being trampled by fighting males. Although the cubs are usually the offspring of one of the fighting males, apparently the risk of losing part or all of a harem is sufficient for the potential to kill some offspring while defending it. Southern elephant seals are open ocean predators and spend most of their time at sea. They come to shore only to breed and soften their fur. The rest of the year feed is spent at sea, where they rest by swimming on the surface and feed on diving to significant depths in search of large fish and squid. Their time at sea often brings them far from their breeding grounds and they can travel very long distances between time spent on land. Large southern elephant seals have few predators, but killer whales, leopard seals and some large sharks are known to feed on this species. Historically, southern elephant seals were hunted in very low numbers due to the value and volume of their blubbers, which turned into oil. Commercial hunting ended in 1964 because the numbers were too low to touch a long trip to the Southern Ocean. Since then, populations have recovered nicely, and the southern elephant seal is considered the least concerned species. However, the potential effects of fishing in the Southern Ocean and ongoing climate change on the populations of this seal are not well known, so it is important to continue studying and monitoring these and other Antarctic seals. Oceana joined forces with the Marines for Sea, an ocean conservation organization dedicated to training and interacting with the world's boat community. Marine sailors have developed the KELP (Children's Environmental Lesson Plans) program to create the next generation of ocean servants. Click here or below to download hands-on marine science activities for kids. Additional Resources: IUCN Red List