Name:

When Is an Elephant Not an Elephant? When It's a Seal, Of Course!

By Mikki Sadil

Everyone knows that elephants have trunks. But did you know there is a kind of seal that also has a trunk? This is the elephant seal, which gets its name from the extra large proboscis, or nose, on the male that resembles an elephant's trunk. The females don't have a trunk.

Elephant seals are the largest pinnipeds, or fin-footed animals, in the ocean. There are two types of elephant seals: the southern elephant seal, which stays in the frigid waters of Antarctica, and the northern elephant seal, which swims in the warmer waters of the Pacific from Canada down to Mexico.



The male elephant seal (called a bull) can be 14 to 16 feet long, and weigh between 3,000 and 5,000 pounds. That's longer and heavier than an average sized automobile! The female (called a cow) is slightly shorter and lighter. She can be 9 to 12 feet long and weigh between 900 and 1,800 pounds.

These seals are extraordinary swimmers and divers. They spend up to ten months a year living in the ocean without ever touching land. They can dive down to 5,000 feet and stay underwater for up to two hours, and when they come up for air, they only remain near the surface for three or four minutes before they dive again. The females feed primarily on squid and octopuses in the deepest parts of the ocean. Males hunt along the shallow Continental Shelf and look for small sharks, stingrays, and other bottom-feeding fish.

Every year, elephant seals gather together on beaches and rocks near the shore. These large groups of elephant seals are called rookeries. While on land, the seals go through a process called molting, in which they shed their skin and hair. This can take as long as two months, and during this time they just lounge around on the beach. They don't even go back into the water for food! Can you imagine laying around and not eating for two whole months?

The elephant seal may get his name from the elephant, but he is an amazing creature all on his own.

Name:

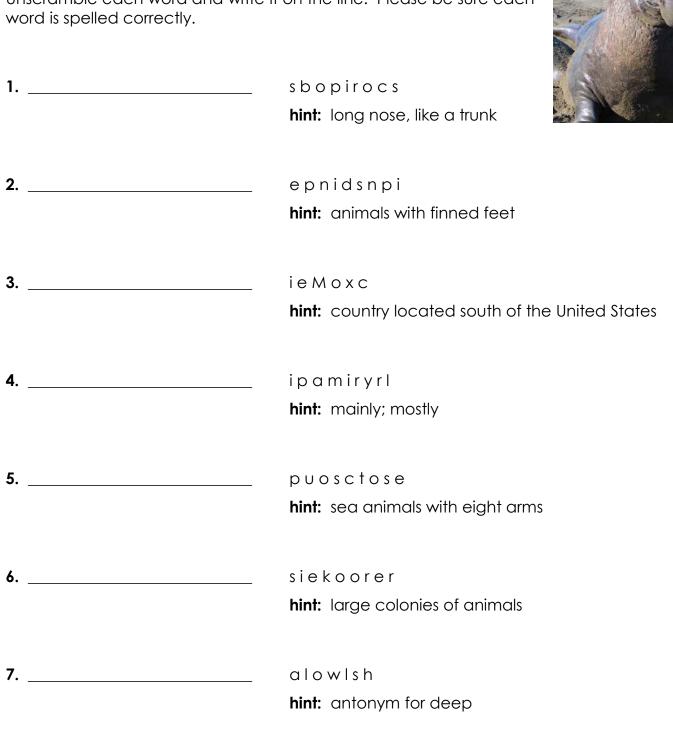
When is an Elephant Not an Elephant? When it's a Seal, Of Course!

Whe a. b. c.	on an island near Antarctica in the ocean off the coast of Florida on a beach in California
d. Wha	on a rocky shoreline in Europe It do elephant seal cows eat?
Wha	t do elephant seal bulls eat?
If you	It do elephant seal bulls eat? U were to see a rookery of elephant seals from a distance, how could you tell which a males and which were females?
If you	u were to see a rookery of elephant seals from a distance, how could you tell which o
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If you were	u were to see a rookery of elephant seals from a distance, how could you tell which a males and which were females? th fact abut elephant seals is true?
If you were Whice	were to see a rookery of elephant seals from a distance, how could you tell which as males and which were females? They spend most of their lives on beaches.

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The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.



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In the article, "When Is an Elephant Not an Elephant?", you learned about an unusual-looking animal called the elephant seal. What is another unusual-looking animal that you know about? Research the animal to find five interesting facts about it. Write a paragraph to					
describe your animal.					
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ANSWER KEY

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- 1. Where would you be most likely to see Northern Elephant Seal? c
 - a. on an island near Antarctica
 - **b.** in the ocean off the coast of Florida
 - c. on a beach in California
 - **d.** on a rocky shoreline in Europe
- **2.** What do elephant seal cows eat?

squid and octopuses



3. What do elephant seal bulls eat?

small sharks, stingrays, and bottom-feeding fish

4. If you were to see a rookery of elephant seals from a distance, how could you tell which ones were males and which were females?

Males would have a trunk (proboscis). Females would not.

- 5. Which fact abut elephant seals is true? d
 - **a.** They spend most of their lives on beaches.
 - **b.** They all have a large proboscis, like an elephant.
 - **c.** They usually weight more than 5,000 pounds.
 - d. They spend most of their lives underwater.
- 6. About how much would five adult, male elephant seals weigh? Show your work in the space below and write your answer on the line.

Accept any answer between 15,000 pounds and 25,000 pounds.

ANSWER KEY

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1. proboscis shopirocs

hint: long nose, like a trunk

2. <u>pinnipeds</u> epnidsnpi

hint: animals with finned feet

3. Mexico ie Moxc

hint: country located south of the United States

4. <u>primarily</u> ipamiryrl

hint: mainly; mostly

5. octopuses puosctose

hint: sea animals with eight arms

6. rookeries siekoorer

hint: large colonies of animals

7. shallow alowish

hint: antonym for deep

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