



ARTICLE

2019 Harbor Seal Monitoring Updates

Golden Gate National Recreation Area (<https://www.nps.gov/goga/>), Point Reyes National Seashore (<https://www.nps.gov/pore/>)

Breeding Season Summary

The 2019 harbor seal pupping season (March–May) was an average one. The maximum number of pups recorded during [Pinniped Monitoring Program \(https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/pinnipeds.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/pinnipeds.htm) surveys at the main Marin County locations was approximately 1,060. That count is very similar to the baseline average of 1,100 pups. Drakes Estero was the most popular pupping site, with 368 pups recorded. This is an average count for Drakes Estero, but biologists saw an increase in the number of pups at Bolinas Lagoon, and decreases in pups at Double Point and Tomales Point, compared to their respective site averages. Very low pup mortality was recorded, indicating a successful season.



Two harbor seals and a pup haul out on rocks in Point Bonita Cove.

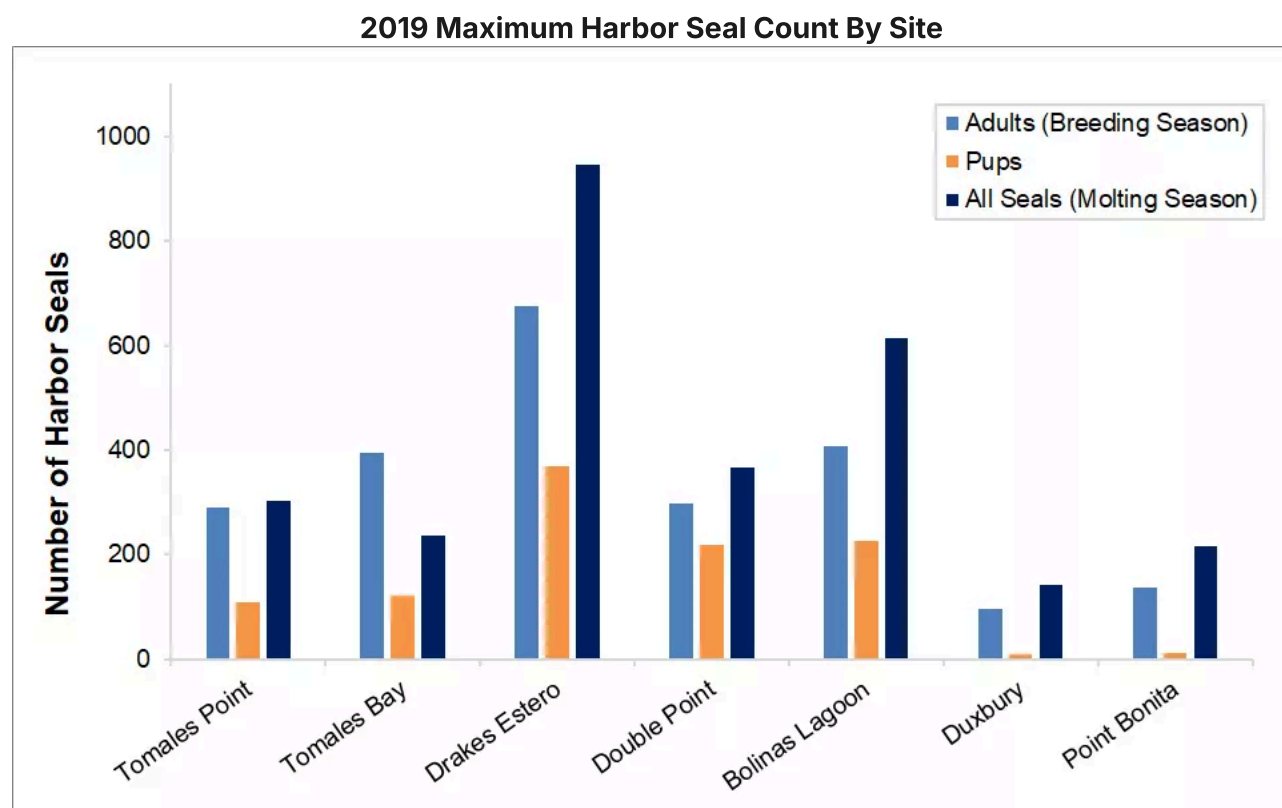
NPS / Kris Liang

Molting Season Summary

Following the pupping season, the seals are monitored during the molt season (June–July). During this time, all age groups come ashore at the main haul-outs to shed their fur. This gives biologists a good estimate of the total number of seals at the main Marin County locations. In 2019, the maximum number of seals recorded during the molt season was approximately 2,800, which is less than the baseline average of 3,670 seals and

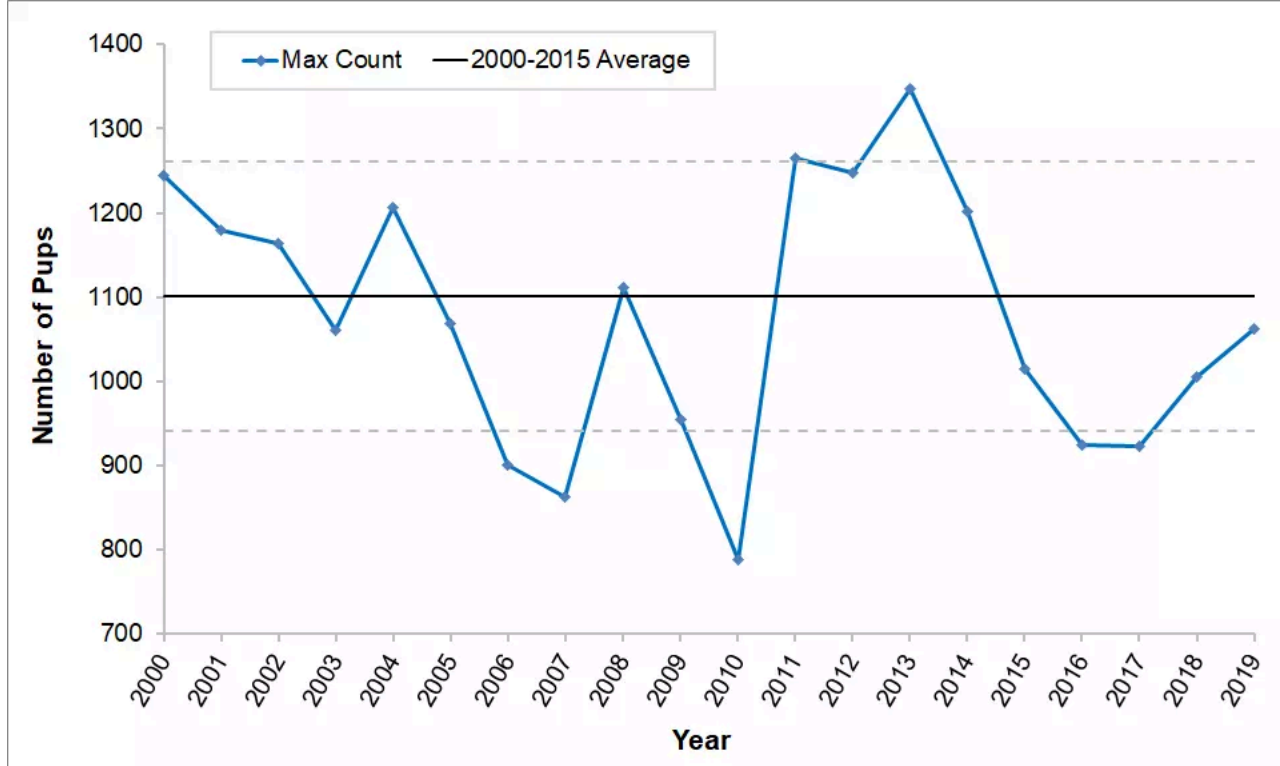
follows the past two years of low counts. All sites had a decrease in seals compared to their respective averages except Bolinas Lagoon, Duxbury Reef, and Point Bonita. Bolinas Lagoon has had higher than average counts since 2014, while Double Point has had extremely low counts since 2016. The peak counts recorded at Tomales Bay and Tomales Point were among the lowest counts ever recorded at each of those sites. The reasons for the decreases at these sites are unknown. During the molt season, the sites with the highest number of seals recorded was Drakes Estero (940) and Bolinas Lagoon (615).

Preliminary Data



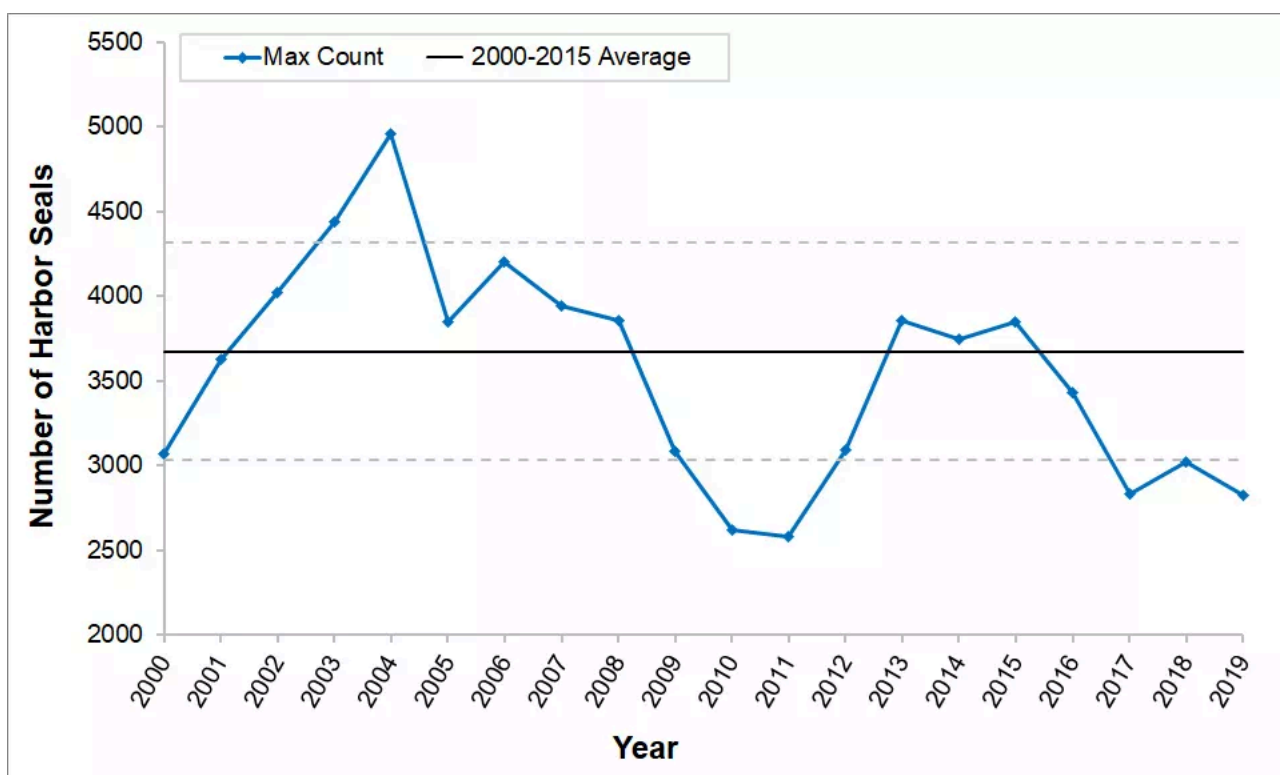
Maximum harbor seal counts by site during the breeding season (adults and pups) and molt season (all seals).

Maximum Harbor Seal Pup Counts, 2000-2019



Maximum harbor seal pup counts for 2000-2019 at Marin County sites. The black solid line on the graph represents the baseline mean, or average, of the maximum pup counts from 2000-2015 (mean = 1,101), and the dashed lines represent one standard deviation from the mean.

Maximum Harbor Seal Molt Counts, 2000-2019



Maximum harbor seal molt season counts for 2000-2019 at Marin County sites. The black solid line on the graph represents the baseline mean, or average, of the maximum seal counts from 2000-2015 (mean = 3,673), and the dashed lines represent one standard deviation from the mean.

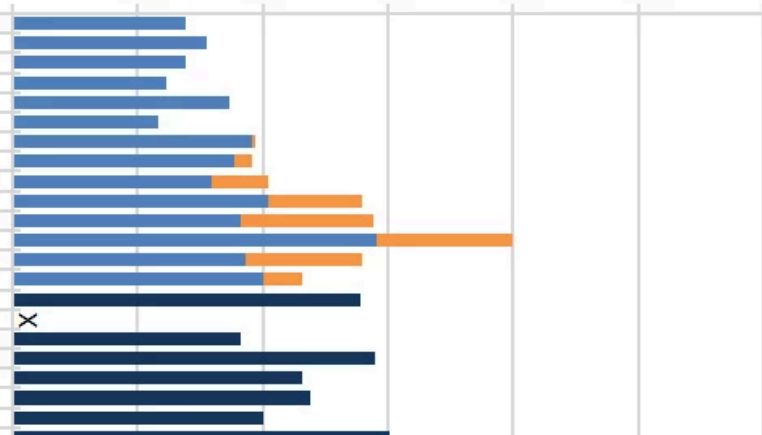
The Details: 2019 Weekly Maximum Harbor Seal Counts By Site

Number of Harbor Seals

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000

Tomales Point

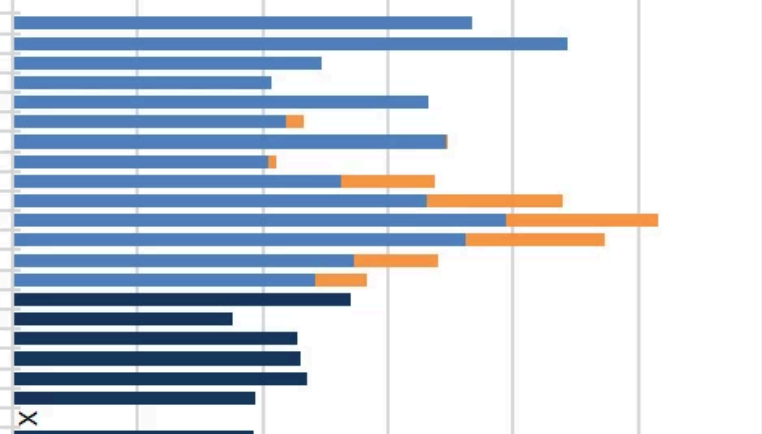
Feb 25
Mar 11
Mar 25
Apr 8
Apr 22
May 6
May 20
Jun 3
Jun 17
Jul 1
Jul 15



Adults
Pups
All Seals (Molting Season)
X - Indicates No Survey

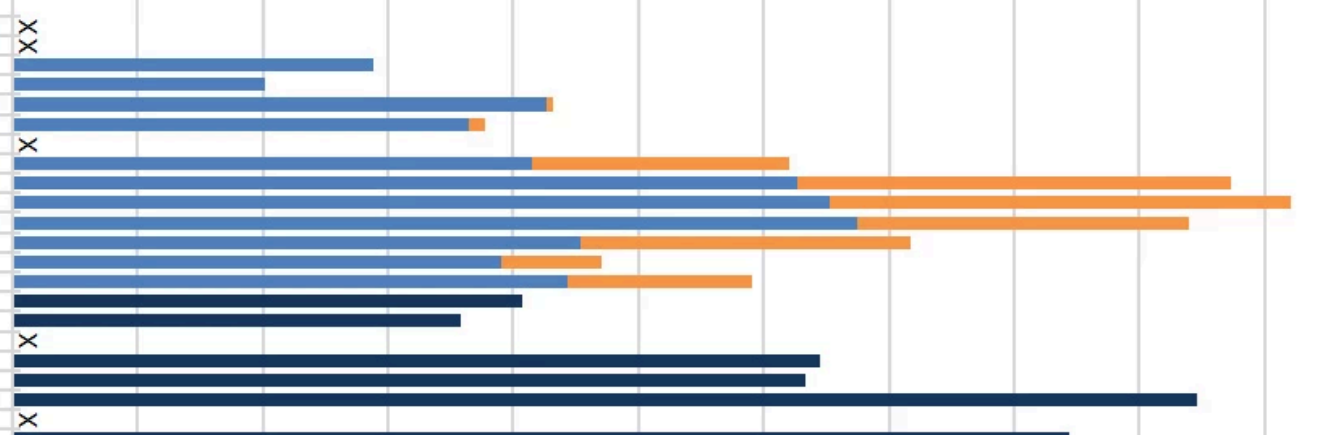
Tomales Bay

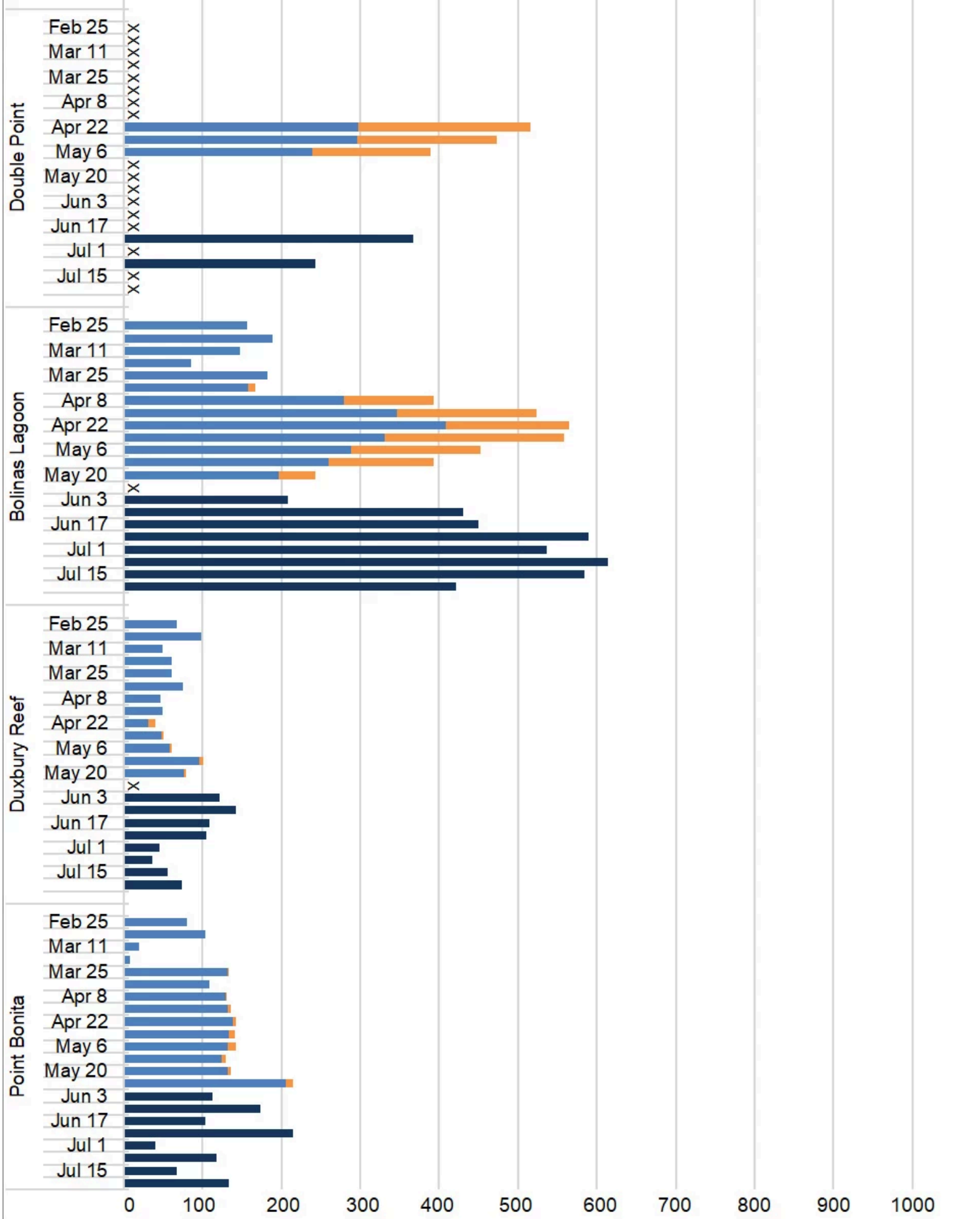
Feb 25
Mar 11
Mar 25
Apr 8
Apr 22
May 6
May 20
Jun 3
Jun 17
Jul 1
Jul 15



Drakes Estero

Feb 25
Mar 11
Mar 25
Apr 8
Apr 22
May 6
May 20
Jun 3
Jun 17
Jul 1
Jul 15





Maximum 2019 weekly harbor seal counts by site and survey week.

For More Information

Contact

Sarah Codde (<https://www.nps.gov/common/utilities/sendmail/sendemail.cfm?o=7884C9BA95EC8CB390BF168FF707B8E3419250&r=/articles/2019-harbor-seal-monitoring-updates.htm>)

Webpages

[San Francisco Bay Area Network - Pinniped Monitoring \(https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/pinnipeds.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/pinnipeds.htm)

[Pacific Coast Science and Learning Center - Harbor Seals \(https://www.nps.gov/rlc/pacificcoast/harbor-seals.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/rlc/pacificcoast/harbor-seals.htm)

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golden gate national recreation area

point reyes national seashore

sfan

harbor seals

pinnipeds

monitoring

breeding

pups

molting

seasonal update

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☐ Yes

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