

# 10 Things You Should Know About... <sup>Antarctic</sup> Fur Seals

Family Otariidae  
*Arctocephalus gazella*

**1** Fur seals and sea lions are in the same family. Some refer to them as “eared seals.” There are nine fur seal species. (There are 5 species of sea lion.) “True seals” are in a different family.

**2** Fur seals and sea lions have small ear flaps. They have long front (pectoral) flippers. The front flippers have little or no hair. They have long hind flippers.

**3** Fur seals and sea lions use their front flippers to swim. On land, a fur seal or sea lion can rotate its hips underneath its body so it can crawl.

**4** Fur seals have a thick coat to keep them warm. It has outer guard hairs and thick under fur (Sea lions have a single coat.)



Photo Credit: AERD/NOAA

**5** Male antarctic fur seals average 6.3 ft (1.9m) long; average weight 424.5 lb. (188 kg). Large bulls may weigh up to 507 lb (230 kg).

Females are smaller, averaging 3.9 ft (1.2 m) long and weigh 77 lb (35 kg). A large female may weigh 110 lb (50 kg).

**6** Fur seals mainly eat krill. They also eat fish.



Photos Courtesy NOAA/Dept. Commerce.

**7** Newborn Antarctic fur seal pups weigh between 10 to 13 lb (4.8 to 5.9 kg). By the time a pup is 110-115 days old, it weighs 31 to 34.5 lb (14 to 17 kg).

**8** Like other marine mammals, the mother's milk is very rich. An Antarctic fur seal's milk can be 40% fat. The pup's grow quickly, gaining 2.5 to 3.9 oz (70 to 110 g) a day. Pups are weaned by 4 months.

**9** Leopard seals are an antarctic fur seal's main predator. Killer whales might hunt them sometimes, too. Leopard seals sometimes even stalk and eat pups on land.

**10** In the 1790s, people started hunting these fur seals for their thick fur. They were extensively hunted, to near extinction a couple times, during the next century. Hunting finally stopped in 1907. At that time, only a few hundred antarctic fur seals survived. The populations have rebounded over the last century. Today the population is estimated to be about 3,000,000.



Mother and Pup

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Antarctic Fur Seal Pup

Photo Credit: David Demer

The fur seals species include:

- Northern fur seal (*Callorhinus ursinus*)
- Guadalupe fur seal (*Arctocephalus townsendi*)
- Juan Fernandez fur seal (*Arctocephalus philippii*)
- Galapagos fur seal (*Arctocephalus galapagoensis*)
- South American fur seal (*Arctocephalus australis*)
- South African/Australian (*Arctocephalus pusillus*)
- New Zealand fur seal (*Arctocephalus forsteri*)
- Antarctic fur seal (*Arctocephalus gazella*)
- Subantarctic fur seal (*Arctocephalus tropicalis*)



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