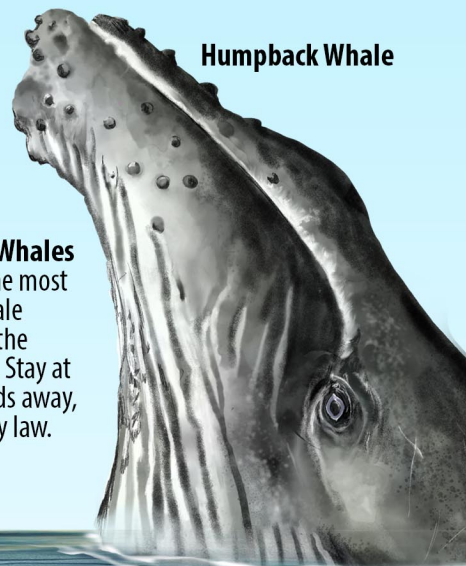


Gray and Humpback Whales are among the most common whale sightings on the central coast. Stay at least 100 yards away, as required by law.



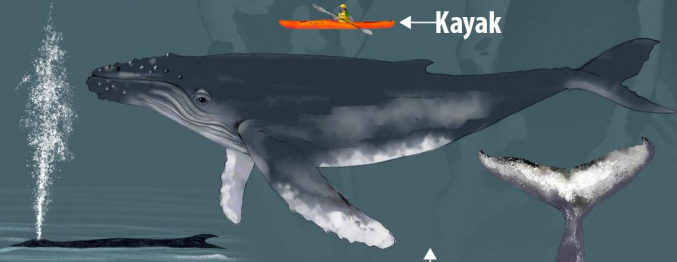
Humpback Whale



Gray Whale



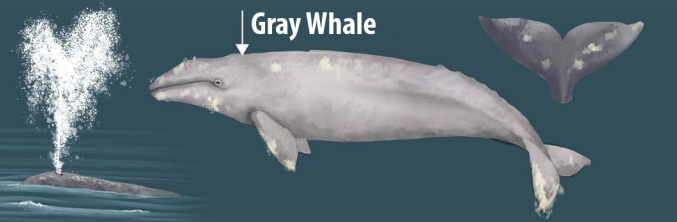
Kayak



Blows

Humpback Whale

Tails



Gray Whale

A Healthy Harbor and Beach Good for People and Wildlife: You can Help!

- Pick up trash whether walking or paddling. Join a clean-up day!
- Report entangled, stranded, sick, or injured marine mammals to The Marine Mammal Center 24-hour hot line: (415) 289-SEAL (7325).
- Fishing line endangers wildlife! Cut up and recycle fishing line in receptacles at your nearest dock or marina.
- Pick up and dispose of dog waste. Dog waste is a major source of water-borne pathogens!

Respect Wildlife

- Keep them wild. Do not feed or touch. Block curious sea otters from boarding your kayak and paddle away.
- Be a courteous guest in their home. The harbor's wild residents are busy staying warm, finding food, caring for young, and resting.
- Give them space. Maintain at least 5 full kayak lengths (>60ft) from resting wildlife.
- Pass by parallel. Direct approaches are threatening.
- Give them room, use your zoom. Strive to leave wildlife undisturbed when photographing them.
- Be a role model. By minimizing disturbance to wildlife, you become a conservation hero!
- Marine mammals are protected from harm and harassment by the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Sea otters are additionally protected by the Endangered Species Act.



Paddle In at Avila Beach



Let this guide introduce you to the variety of views and wildlife at Avila Beach. Explore with a sense of wonder and stewardship.

Enjoy and Protect!

Be Aware, Paddle with Care!

Pass at a distance and don't disturb wildlife.

Approach indirectly; avoid confrontation.

Discreetly and quietly view from afar.

Defer when you observe behavior changes.

Leave wildlife alone and never feed.

Explore with respect and caution!

If an otter's looking at you, you're too close!

California Gull



Western Gull



Ringbilled Gull



Heerman's Gull



Bottlenose Dolphins

are highly intelligent marine mammals that use sound to communicate and to hunt for fish, squid, and crustaceans. Give them plenty of space (at least 50 yards) to keep them and you safe.

Giant Kelp

Growing as much as 2 feet per day and up to 100 feet tall, giant kelp forms an undersea forest. This is the most productive plant community on Earth. Kelp forests provide shelter and food for a variety of marine life including sea otters, harbor seals, invertebrates, and seabirds.

White Shark

White sharks live in warmer coastal and offshore waters. Young white sharks feed on fish but transition to marine mammals and other large prey as their jaws get large enough. The shifting white shark range over the last 20 years is the likely reason they are now the main predator of sea otters in California. White sharks are protected by state law in California.

White Shark Fin



Northern Kelp Crab



Sea Lion Warming Flippers



Dolphin Fin



Pacific Sea Nettle and Moon Jellies

are large jellies of the open bay. Do not be tempted to touch, they have a powerful sting!



Otters enjoy dining on a variety of clams



Macoma



Bean



Razor



Pismo

California Sea Lion

Look for long flippers and external ears to distinguish these common harbor residents from harbor seals. Listen for their bark and watch for them resting on rocks, docks, buoys, and jetties. As with all marine mammals, keep your distance for your safety and theirs.

Fins and Flippers

These illustrations are intended to keep you calm and aware. A white shark fin and cruising swim pattern are very different than the dolphin fin and porpoising behaviors. Sea lions swim and swirl, exposing head and flippers. Keep your distance from all.

actual size otters appear
from 5 kayak lengths away

Respect the Nap: maintain at least 5 kayak lengths (>60ft) from resting sea otters, and be alert for behavior change.

Paddle In at Avila Beach

California's network of 124 marine protected areas (MPAs) protects a wide array of ocean and estuarine habitats and species. By limiting human impacts such as fishing and collecting, MPAs can help sustain, conserve, and protect marine life populations, including those of economic value, and may rebuild those that are depleted. San Luis Obispo County is home to eight MPAs with different levels of protection. For MPA information, maps, and regulations visit www.wildlife.ca.gov/MPAs



Play It Safe

- Check forecasts and tide tables. Tides and winds can affect the safety and enjoyment of your trip.
- Use caution navigating around motorized boat lanes and launch ramps.
- Avoid paddling into the open water. Waves and currents are dangerous.

Cal Poly Pier
(Closed to Public)



Central Coast Aquarium
Avila Beach

Harbor Seal

These seals are often sunning on the rocks. Curious, they may watch you from the water. But be sure to maintain a distance of at least 5 kayak lengths (60ft) and be aware of their behavior.



If I'm looking at you,
you're too close.



CAUTION!

Whale Feeding Area

Stay clear of whales. Paddlers approaching feeding whales risk serious injury



Pelagic Cormorant



Brandt's Cormorant



Cormorants: You may see any or all of these cormorant species in the slough and harbor – diving for fish, nesting, or spreading their wings to dry.

PREVAILING WINDS

North-westerly Winds

Access to Point San Luis Lighthouse
closes at dusk

Light House Beach

Smith Island



Harford Pier

Port San Luis
Harbor District



OFF SHORE WIND Summer/Fall
Santa Ana Winds



NORTH

Legend:



Parking



Restrooms



Kayak Launch



Watch for Motorized Traffic



Resting and Roosting Wildlife
Do Not Disturb

Kelp Beds

Black Oystercatcher

With their distinctive red bill and black feathers, these shorebirds are unmistakable. Pairs are strongly bonded and nest on rocks above the high tide line. The ringing call of the pair warns those approaching too closely.

