

# Celebration of Conservation

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## SEAMAIL™

FROM: Patrick Robinson  
TO: Team Elephant Seal Virtual Science Team  
SUBJECT: Elephant Seal “6967”

Hello Team Elephant Seal!

One of the most important aspects of many elephant seal studies is to know the history of individual seals. To do this, we attach plastic flipper tags to the webbing of their hind-flippers. It is very similar to an ear ring. Each tag has a unique number. It’s similar to a name, except they are not as exciting as human names. For example, one tag has “6967” printed on it.

This flipper tag will remain attached to the seal for its entire life! This is exciting for researchers like me because we can walk through the seal colony and look for seals that have a flipper tag. We then carefully record the tag number, the age of the seal, whether it has a pup, and if it is molting. Molting means it is shedding its skin and fur. Elephant seals molt every year. That way, when they head out to sea after breeding season, their fur is in perfect condition to help keep them warm.

After many days, months, and YEARS of data collection, we look at the observations. Then we figure out how long seals usually live and how often they give birth.

Okay, Team Elephant Seal. I have a report for you to review. Attached is the complete history from seal “6967.” What do you know about elephant seal 6967 from this information?

In the next Seamail, I’ll check in to compare notes.

*Patrick*

Dr. Patrick Robinson, Director, Año Nuevo Island Reserve  
University of California Natural Reserve System  
[seamail@whaletimes.org](mailto:seamail@whaletimes.org)



Natural Reserve System  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



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