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ABOUT THE COVERS

Front: Two albatrosses keep their life-long relationship going strong. How? With a cuddle and a coo, they remind themselves that they belong together. Photo by Tui De Roy/The Roving Torbelle

Back: This infant koala could be wondering why its ears are getting squashed. But after all those months in Mom's pouch, it's probably just happy to see the world outside at last. Photo by Daniel J. Cox/Natural Exposures ©

Ranger Rick (ISSN 0738-4054) is published monthly by the National Wildlife Federation, a nonprofit corporation, 1100 Wildlife Center Dr., Reston, VA 20190-5303. Periodical post age paid at Reston and at additional mailing offices.

Memberships: Ranger Rick is available to a benefit of junior memberships in the National Wildlife Federation, annual dues \$19.95. Add \$2 for addresses outside the United States. Send check to address below, or call 1-800-695-1599.

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Postmaster: Send address changes to Ranger Rick, P.O. Box 2036, Halesite, IA 51243-0036.

Canada Postmaster: Send Canadian address changes to: DNE, 7476 Bath Road Unit 2, Mississauga, Ontario L4T 1L2, Canada. Canadian Publications Agreement No. 40010949.

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“C’mon, Mom, wake up already!” says Leo, a California sea lion pup. The little pup wants to nurse and play, but his Mom would rather nap. She needs her strength to take care of Leo! Turn the page to learn this pup’s story.



1



2

California sea lions spend most of their lives in the sea. But in May and June, hundreds of them “haul out” together onto island shores. There, the females give birth to their pups. And that’s where our story begins.

Little LEO'S Great Adventure



3



FAST FACT
Sea lion pups nurse from their mothers for five to six months—and sometimes up to a year.

BY DEBORAH CHURCHMAN; PHOTOS BY SUZI ESZTERHAS

Push, push—plop (photo 1). A 15-pound pup is born. (We’ve named him Leo.) Mom takes a big whiff of her baby. From here on out, she’ll be able to recognize Leo by his smell and his cry.

Leo is tired and feeble from the work of being born. But after resting for a bit on the sandy beach, he scooches over and looks for one of Mom’s nipples. There, he nurses on her rich milk (2).

What a nice life for Leo! For the next few months, he nurses and naps, sometimes crawling onto Mom’s back for a soft-bed snooze. But every day, the tide goes in and out, and he and Mom must move with it. Sometimes they waddle into the water for a while (3). But then Mom goes back onto land, and Leo hurries to follow her. That’s not always easy for poor Leo! Turn the page to see.

4



One day, Mom and Leo were snoozing on the rocks when the tide came in (4). The sea lions needed to go up higher to stay out of the surf.

But—oops!—those rocks were too slippery for Leo (5).

5



He slipped and fell.

Very young sea lion pups aren't good swimmers. Little Leo wasn't strong enough to battle the raging surf (6). "Help! Help!" he bleated to Mom. What will happen next?

6



FAST FACT

California sea lions eat fish and squid. They're fast swimmers and can dive deep. Males can go almost 1,800 feet (550 m) below the surface. That's equal to the length of six football fields!

Uh-oh, what's happening to Leo?

When Mom saw Leo struggling in the water, she knew what to do. She swam over and grabbed the pup just like a mother cat grabbing a kitten (7).

7



Holding Leo gently in her mouth, Mom used her flippers to climb out onto the rocks. She hauled herself and Leo above the swirling surf (8).

8



Finally, both Mom and Leo lay down for a long summer's nap (9). Both of them were tuckered out. That's enough excitement for one day! 🐾

9



Leo's Mom dived right in to save her pup!

FAST FACTS

- When California sea lion pups are about a week old, their mothers start going to sea for a day or two every week to feed. The pups stay

behind, playing together in small groups.

- California sea lions can be playful. They like to toss objects around and often go body-surfing.

- California sea lions aren't endangered. There are about 200,000 of them, all living along the Pacific Coast from Canada to Mexico.