

Snack Time for Sea Lions

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What a catch! This *Steller sea lion* is about to gulp down a tasty salmon just outside Alaska's Solomon Gulch fish hatchery. Inside the hatchery, tiny salmon babies hatch from eggs and grow in a protected place for the first few months of their lives. When they're old enough, they're released to live wild lives out in the Pacific Ocean.

Each summer, millions of adult salmon make a long return journey from the ocean to the hatchery to release eggs of their own. But dozens of sea lions are there to meet them—and eat them! They gobble up as many as they're able to catch.

All those salmon in one place make for good eating. But recently, a few clever sea lions figured out an even easier way to fill up on salmon—no hunting required. Waddle over to the next page to find out how!



A female Steller sea lion such as this one can weigh as much as five grownups. And a male can be as heavy as a small car! It takes a lot of food to get that big, and salmon is a favorite meal.



You hungry?

*Always.
How 'bout
salmon?*



*Hey, guys!
There are FISH
in here!*

*Hmm . . .
This is almost
TOO easy.*



Eventually, workers at the hatchery noticed what was going on. They'll make changes next season to keep the sea lions out. But, for the moment, all they could do was watch.

*Hello,
there!*

*Mind if
we dive in
for another
meal?*



One day, a hungry sea lion spotted the special ramp called a *fish ladder* that salmon use to enter the hatchery. Soon, several other sea lions joined in for a closer look (below).



In no time at all, the sea lions were IN the ladder, helping themselves to an all-you-can-eat fish buffet!

After a long day of feasting on fish, a sea lion settles down for a snooze. Sweet fishy dreams! 🐟

