Eleven harbor seals from Alsea Bay in Waldport and Netarts Bay south of Tillamook have been fitted with satellite transmitters. Local researchers plan to collect current data about their behavior and movement along the Oregon coast. The work was done under National Marine Fisheries Service federal permit No. 16991. (Courtesy photos)

The researchers are hoping to track the movement of the seals, and there are more harbor seals than there were back then. "We don't really know how many there move and where they go," said Horning.

The purpose of the captures was that the research team could place satellite transmitters on the heads of the harbor seals. They plan to collect current data about the behavior and movement of the seals along the Oregon coast. The work, which was done under National Marine Fisheries Service federal permit No. 16991, will be ongoing for several years, according to Markus Horning, an associate professor of wildlife at Oregon State University.

"This is of interest to us because there are a lot of seals in Oregon coastal waters that are part of the ecosystem," Horning said.

According to the professor, while people have worked with harbor seals off the Oregon coast in the past, no major research has been done for about three decades. "We really have no recent information about harbor seals, and there are many more harbor seals than there were back then," he said.

The group of 11 harbor seals who are now donning new head decorations are part of the ecosystem, "The 13 researchers from Oregon State's Marine Mammal Institute, right, helps place a satellite transmitter on the head of a harbor seal. A team of 13 people, including local researchers, worked to capture 11 harbor seals from Alsea Bay in Waldport, and Netarts Bay south of Tillamook. The purpose of the captures was that the research team could place satellite transmitters on the heads of the harbor seals. They plan to collect current data about the behavior and movement of the seals along the Oregon coast. The work, which was done under National Marine Fisheries Service federal permit No. 16991, will be ongoing for several years, according to Markus Horning, an associate professor of wildlife at Oregon State University. "This is of interest to us because there are a lot of seals in Oregon coastal waters that are part of the ecosystem," Horning said. "We really have no recent information about harbor seals, and there are many more harbor seals than there were back then." We don't really know how many they move and where they go," he said.

The group of 11 harbor seals who are now donning new head decorations are part of the ecosystem. Horning said it is a large project with many different participants, but it was initiated mainly for Steingass' PhD work. "This started some time ago, when we became aware of hypoxia on the Oregon coast," Horning said. He added the hypoxic level seems to be increasing over the decades in terms of extent and areas that they cover. Hypoxic zones are also known as dead zones. "This is of interest to us because there are a lot of seals in Oregon coastal waters that are part of the ecosystem," Horning said. "We really have no recent information about harbor seals, and there are many more harbor seals than there were back then." We don't really know how many they move and where they go," he said.

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