

YZC Animal of the Month, October 2011
Southern Elephant Seal
(*Mirounga leonina*)



This month's animal is one of the giants in the museum – the Southern Elephant Seal. It's pretty easy to find. Just walk down the stairs and look straight in front of you. You can't miss him.

The Southern Elephant Seal is the largest of all seal species. Not really a surprise given its name! Males can reach 6m in length and weigh a massive 4000kg. The females are rather

smaller, weighing in at a mere 400-900kg and a maximum of 3m long. Male Elephant Seals have another elephant-like character: a trunk-like snout which they can inflate like a balloon.

Southern Elephant Seals live in the Southern Ocean (the ocean that surrounds the icy continent of Antarctica).

In the Spring (late August to November down there) they haul themselves out onto sub-Antarctic islands like South Georgia to give birth and mate. At these times you can see them on beaches in huge numbers.

Elephant Seals survive on a diet of squid, fish and other sea creatures. They can dive for quite long stretches of time – dives of 2 hours have been recorded!