

Sea Otters...

Vania cautioned seal hunters, particularly those in the coastal areas north of Sitka, to observe their quarry carefully before shooting to avoid killing any of the transplanted sea otters.

While sea otters may resemble seals, he said, the two animals can be easily distinguished by an alert observer.

The otters generally have light colored heads with distinct whiskers, small ears, and a dark body and tail. They weigh up to about 90 pounds. Sea otters, unlike seals, spend much of their time floating on their backs — eating, washing themselves and dozing.

At such times, all four feet and the tail are often visible, Vania said. When alarmed, both seals and sea otters dive, but the sea otters' dive is distinctive in that the otter exposes its back and sometimes its tail and hind feet, doing a typical "surface dive," while seals usually just duck their heads beneath the surface.

Vania said a little caution on the part of the seal hunters will aid in insuring the success of the sea otter transplant.