



# What is Animal Action Week?



Animal Action Week is now in its 14th year. It is organized by IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare – [www.ifaw.org](http://www.ifaw.org)) in 15 countries all around the world and reaches many more thanks to the internet.

There are activities for everyone, but the focus is mainly on young people. The week's goals are education, awareness and campaigning. Becoming involved in Animal Action Week is your chance to play a part in saving animals around the globe.

You could participate in our education programme, or perhaps nominate someone for our IFAW Animal Action Awards.

Although attention is focused around the actual week, activities are not limited to just those seven days. Many people get involved long before and continue with their efforts well after the official week. You can join in and help save animals as part of the campaign whenever it suits you.

## Animal Action Week is supported by Animal Planet

IFAW and Animal Planet are partnering to promote Animal Action Week internationally in 2006. Both organisations are focused on generating interest in animal welfare and bringing powerful stories to the public's attention.



## Sealing their Fate

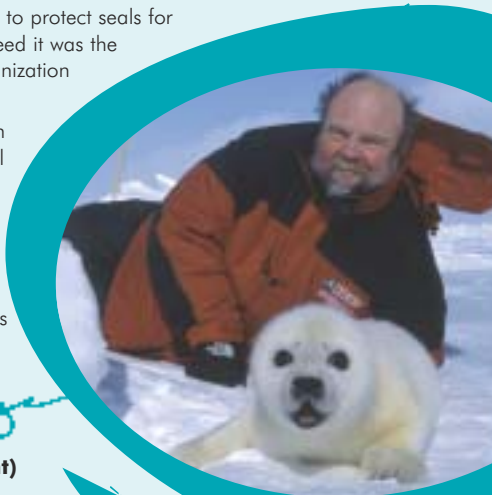
“When I visited the seal ‘nursery’ on the ice in the Gulf of St Lawrence, Canada with my family it was a wildlife experience of a lifetime. None of us will ever forget it. Seals are even more beautiful than any photographs can prepare you for when you first encounter these wonderful animals in their natural habitat. That’s why it was hard for any of us to believe that just days after we had seen them, many of the seal pups would be killed.”

Today, seals face many threats, including pollution, global warming, entanglement in fishing nets, and hunting. In the past, many species have been pushed to the brink of extinction and others are now under serious threat.

IFAW has been campaigning to protect seals for more than 35 years and indeed it was the campaign on which the organization was first founded.

It is important that we cherish and preserve these wonderful marine mammals for all generations to come. I hope you enjoy discovering more about seals through IFAW Animal Action Week – together we can work towards a safe future for them.”

**Fred O'Regan (President)**



# 7 Days that

With the activities we have lined up for IFAW Animal Action Week this year we really can all make a difference. In this information booklet you will see why it is so important to help with the issues facing seals.



You will find out more about their history, biology and threats they face – then, if you want to, you can also do your part to help protect seals.



## Free Film and Education Pack

Get your school or youth group to join in. We have a superb 15-minute film (video and CD), introduced by actor Goran Visnjic, all about seals and the threats they face. The education pack is ideal for young people of all ages, but has been particularly designed to be appropriate for school classes for 11-14 year olds. The education pack includes a special eight-page classroom guide in colour with pages that can be photocopied for students. All the material is also downloadable from the web.

**Any teacher or youth group leader can obtain it in the following way.**

- Write to:** Free Film and Education Pack, IFAW, FREEPOST SEA13616, ROCHESTER ME1 1BR
- Fax to:** 01634 830930
- Email:** [animalactionweek@ifaw.org](mailto:animalactionweek@ifaw.org)
- Telephone:** 01634 830888



# t Can Change the World

## 2 Animal Action Awards

IFAW's awards now run in 15



countries all around the world. The IFAW Animal Action Awards are run in the UK in partnership with *The People* newspaper and are presented at the House of Lords each year. If you know someone who has done something outstanding for animals then you can nominate them for an award. Perhaps they devote their lives to saving animals at a sanctuary, campaign tirelessly for animal welfare or have carried out a brave rescue of an animal. We want to recognise these exceptional people, so tell us why you think they should receive an award by writing to:

**IFAW Animal Action Awards,  
186 High Street, Rochester, Kent ME1 1EY.**  
Please include details about your nominee's work and daytime contact numbers for both of you.

## 3 Seal Petition

One of the greatest threats to seals is being hunted mostly so their fur can be used in the fashion industry around the world. Every year hundreds of thousands of seals are killed to satisfy this demand. One of the best ways to stop this is to ban seal skins and seal parts from being imported into countries. Already a number of governments around the world have such bans. Now the UK government is being asked to introduce a ban and this petition will help persuade the politicians to take action.



**Free T-Shirt**  
Collect 100 signatures and you will receive a FREE Animal Action Week T-shirt.

## 4 'Adopt a Seal' - for Free

**With BBC TV Vet Steve Leonard**



You can join IFAW's web-based free seal adoption programme and be a part of our campaign for their protection. In this way you will receive email updates on all IFAW's campaigns and other great benefits. Because this activity is completely free, the adoption programme can only be run on the internet to avoid costly postage and printing.

All you have to do is register for the adoption programme on our IFAW Animal Action Week web site. Find this by going to IFAW's home page at [www.ifaw.org](http://www.ifaw.org) and following the links to Animal Action Week.

**Your adoption includes:**

- an adoption certificate with your seal's photo
- email updates about IFAW campaigns
- a special report
- a special screen saver of your seal
- a special card to send to friends via email.



## 5 Web Game

Be the first of your friends to live like a seal with your very own seal colony at [www.ifaw.org](http://www.ifaw.org). Build a thriving online seal paradise and

have your colony declared a natural wonder! You'll have to work with others to fend off threats, create alliances and protect your seals. Also visit the web site to download materials, watch clips from our video *Making Waves for Seals* and enjoy other interactive pages.

## Email Alert

**With Animal Planet TV presenter Shauna Lowry**

Let your friends know about IFAW Animal Action Week and our campaign *Making Waves for Seals*. Send out our email alert to as many friends and family as possible and get them to be a part of the action as well.

## 6 Design a Calendar



**With TV's Neil Buchanan**



Help our celebrity judge Neil Buchanan, the presenter of TV's *Art Attack*, create a calendar for next year. Paint or draw a colourful picture of one of the animal species that IFAW helps to save. The overall winner will receive a sealwatching trip for two off Scotland with Sea Life Surveys and the other best entries will receive a limited edition animal print by famous artist Pollyanna Pickering. A selection of the winning entries will be used to create our Animal Action Week wall calendar for 2007. An entry form is included in this pack.

## 7 Fundraising

One of the best ways you can help IFAW help seals and other animals is to raise funds for our work. Perhaps you can do a

sponsored event, such as a run, walk, swim or other fundraising activity and get support from your friends and family. A sponsorship form is included in the pack to help you. You can use your own great fundraising ideas too.

## Join IFAW

Show that you care about animals and the environment in which they live. Become a supporter by writing to:

**International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW),  
87-90 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UD.**  
or go to our web site at [www.ifaw.org](http://www.ifaw.org)



**IFAW Animal Action Week 2006..... 1-7 October**

# The Story of Seals



Scientists believe that seals evolved from land animals – the relatives of modern mammals like dogs and bears. These creatures took to the sea about 30 million years ago, perhaps because there was more food available there. The earliest fossils of these seal ancestors date back more than 23 million years.

The first seals lived in the Pacific Ocean off what is now California in the United States. Over millions of years they dispersed throughout the north Pacific and into the Atlantic via an ancient waterway that separated North and South America. They later moved into the southern hemisphere.

Seals have evolved to take advantage of the rich resources of the sea while maintaining close ties to the land where they rest, moult, give birth and nurse their young. Today, seals are found all over the world, but the largest numbers live in the cold of the Arctic and Antarctic, where food is most abundant.

Many legends and stories have become part of the myth of these beautiful sea creatures. In some tales the seals are said to turn into people when they come ashore. In one such story a beautiful girl turns back into a seal and is tragically killed by her fisherman husband.

Although most seals feed mainly on fish the leopard seal eats penguins and sometimes other seals. The largest seal population in the world belongs to the crabeater seal, which does not actually eat crabs at all. It feeds on krill (small shrimp-like creatures), which it filters through teeth that are specially adapted for this purpose.

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©IFAW/Stewart Cook



Seals come back to land, which is known as 'hauling out', for many reasons, including resting, moulting, giving birth and nursing. Species such as harp and hooded seals

haul out on to ice and turn this frozen paradise into a vast nursery with thousands of seal pups and their mothers.

Some seals migrate thousands of kilometres between their feeding and breeding grounds. Others dive to incredible depths – the northern elephant seal holds the record for the deepest dive at more than 1,000 metres. The longest dive recorded is one hour, 13 minutes in the Antarctic by a Weddell seal.

*They really are amazing animals!*

©IFAW/David White



## Elephant Sized

The largest of all species is the northern elephant seal, with male 'bulls' weighing up to nearly four tonnes, as heavy as a large truck. They can grow to 6.5m (21 ft) in length and got their name because their large noses reminded people of the trunks of elephants. The smallest species in the world are ringed and Baikal seals which weigh up to only 64 kg (140 lb) and measure 1.37 m (4 ft 6in) in length.

©Dan Costa

# Seal Science



The scientific name for seals is pinnipeds, which means fin-footed and refers to their webbed feet.

There are 33 species of seals and sea lions. These are divided into three families or groups. There are 18 species of true seals, which are also known as 'earless seals' and have small holes for ears just behind their eyes. The second group includes 14 species of fur seals and sea lions, which are often called eared seals because of their small external ear flap. Finally there is the walrus, which merits a group all of its own. It has a combination of the features of the other two types of seal, but also some major differences. Unlike other pinnipeds the walrus is the only species which grows large tusks.



© IFAW/1. Gavrilov

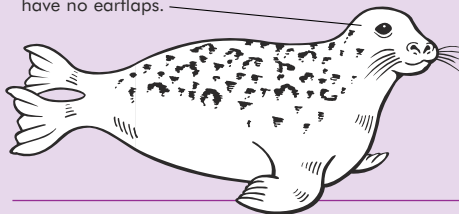
Seals range in size from small female fur seals of about 50 kilograms (110 pounds) to huge male northern elephant seals weighing 3,600 kilograms (almost four tonnes) – more than 40 people would normally weigh! In many species the males are larger than the females.

True seals cannot bring their rear flippers forward to walk on land. They use strong claws on their front flippers to haul themselves along the ice or ground. Fur seals and sea lions can bring their hind flippers beneath their body so they can sit upright, walk or run on land, even though rather awkwardly.

© IFAW/Jon Hrusa

## True seal

These seals are named 'true seals' because they have no earflaps.



## Eared seal

These seals are named 'eared seals' because they have earflaps.



Seals are perfectly adapted to their underwater environment. Their bodies are sleek and streamlined for swimming fast. Their eyes and noses are on the top of their head making it easy to breathe at the surface of the water. They can even sleep underwater for brief periods.

Seals are warm blooded and feed on their mother's milk as pups. This milk has such a high fat content that some seal pups will put on as much as 2.2 kg (5 lbs) a day in weight – the equivalent of about five average sized cans of baked beans. Most of that growth goes into a layer of fat under their skin, which is called blubber.

© IFAW



## Cool Customers

Seals are so well insulated they can overheat. To cool down in warmer climates, they bury themselves in the cool sand. To cool off in the sea, fur seals and sea lions wave their hind flippers above the water.



© IFAW/Jon Hrusa

# Threats to Seals

Apart from commercial hunting, seals face many other threats around the world. These include entanglement in nets, pollution, habitat loss and climate change.

## Trapped in Nets

Every year thousands of seals become entangled in fishing nets and drown. Drift nets are giant fishing nets which float free in the sea. They are sometimes tens of kilometres long and huge numbers of seals and other marine mammals, and even diving birds, are caught in these underwater walls of death.

## Pollution

The oceans are being used as dumping grounds for all sorts of waste that is harmful to seals and all marine life. The poisonous chemicals from industry and even from our

everyday lives at work, school and home all too often find their way into the sea. This toxic waste, including pesticides, can end up collecting in the blubber of seals. It is believed the seal population in the Baltic Sea is declining because of pollutants that affect the seals' reproduction. Toxic factory waste from paper mills has also been dumped into the world's largest fresh water lake in Russia, Lake Baikal, home of the Baikal seal.



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## Habitat Loss and Climate Change

As humans have developed coastal areas and encroached on the seas of the world, often making them busy shipping highways, parts of these important habitats have been closed off to seals and other marine life. Climate change may have a number of significant impacts on seal populations, not the least because warming temperatures are greatly reducing the ice where some seal species traditionally haul out to give birth to their young.

©IFAW/Stewart Cook



## Sad Seals?

Seals have beautiful large eyes, but they lack the ducts to drain away tears and so on land they often appear to be 'crying'. In reality it is just because there is nowhere else for the water to go.





© IFAW/Stewart Cook



© IFAW

## Front or Rear Engine

Eared seals swim with their front flippers and use the rear ones to steer. But earless seals swim using their rear flippers for propulsion and front flippers for steering.

# Seal Hunting

Seals have been hunted for centuries. The Inuit have always hunted seals in the Arctic. Archaeological evidence suggests that seals were hunted by people living on the east coast of North America 4,000 years ago. It is also known that they provided food and fur to Norse settlers in Greenland from around 985 AD.

## History

Over the past 200 years, commercial hunting has brought some species to the brink of extinction. In the 19th century, fewer than 100 northern elephant seals were left alive – today's elephant seal population is descended from just those few. Walrus were also hunted extensively for ivory and their blubber, which was made into oil. The Atlantic walrus used to live all along the east coast of North America from Labrador to Cape Cod, but the entire east coast population was hunted to local extinction by 1800.



Seals have been hunted in most places where they have had contact with people, but gradually the majority of countries have ended the killing. However, large scale commercial hunting still takes place in Canada, Russia, Greenland, Norway and Namibia.

## The Largest Marine Mammal Hunt in the World

Between 2003-2005 more than one million harp seals were killed in Canada, making it by far the largest hunt for any marine mammal in the world. The quota for the hunt in 2006 was 335,000 which is one of the highest ever.

This huge hunt has been hotly debated by the pro and anti-sealing sides of the issue for many years. The Canadian government and other seal hunt supporters say it is humane and well regulated. They claim it is necessary to control seal numbers so that they don't eat too many of the fish that fishermen rely on for a living. Those opposed to it, which includes many Canadians and millions of other people around the world, argue that it is cruel, puts the seal population at risk and damages Canada's image.

Today an average of more than 300,000 harp seals are killed every year in Canada, mainly so their fur can be used by the fashion industry around the world. The killing of 10,000 hooded seals each year is also permitted in Canada.



## Shivering Seals

When harp seals pups are first born they keep warm by shivering. Inside their mother's womb it is cosy, but once they enter the icy world outside they often face temperatures below freezing.



Harp seals give birth to their young in the Gulf of St Lawrence and off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada in late February and early March each year turning the ice floes into a giant white nursery. Despite a decision in the 1980s by the European Economic Community to ban the import of whitecoat seal pup pelts, in recent years more than 95% of the seals killed are less than three months old. It is legal to kill seal pups once they start to moult, which is at about 14 days old.

The sealers use clubs and guns to kill the animals. For the clubs they sometimes have hakapiks, which have a large metal spike on the end. One of the problems with shooting is that seals are sometimes wounded and go back into the water to die slow and painful deaths.



©IFAW/Florian Graner

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Scientists report that the hunt puts the harp seal population in danger because killing such high numbers each year is not sustainable. A recent study shows that the Canadian government's plan for harp seals risks reducing the population by 70%. Scientists also point out that there is no evidence that killing seals helps protect fish stocks. The collapse of the cod stocks in Canada was caused by overfishing – even most fishermen agree that is the case.

With subsidies in the late 1990s of \$20 million CDN as well as other expenses, the hunt costs Canadian taxpayers money and yet accounts for only a small part of a fisherman's income.

©IFAW/Stewart Cook

## Other Hunts and Culls Around the World

There are several other commercial annual hunts around the world. About 75,000 harp seals from the same population as those off the coast of Canada are landed in Greenland's summer hunt. In Russia more than 40,000 harp seals are targeted, plus 40,000 fur seals in Namibia and Norway kills 9,500 seals in the White Sea and thousands of others off its own coast. The South African fur seal hunt was suspended in 1990. However, the numbers listed above do not necessarily tell the full story – the Greenland hunt actually kills over 150,000 seals, because for every animal that is landed, an additional one has been killed but not recovered. Scientists point to this as one of the cruellest aspects of all such hunting. This also leads to unsustainability since the numbers are not included in the hunt or population statistics.



Common or harbour seals are found in UK waters as well as 35% of the global population of grey seals. In Scotland there have been repeated calls for culls of seals. These calls are led by fishermen who are concerned that the seals are eating large amounts of fish that they believe

would otherwise be available for them to bring ashore. The law in Britain is so vague that seals can even be shot if they are just in an area where fishing gear is in use. Research shows most people in Scotland (80%) think that seals are an important part of Scotland's wildlife.

The Australian fur seal is also regarded as a problem by fishermen and a significant number are killed each year in traps and nets or shot.

## Fisheries Competition

The claim that seals are damaging fish stocks is always used as one of the excuses for commercial seal hunts and culls.

However, scientists say the simplistic argument that seals eat fish and therefore if you kill them there will be more fish for fishermen is nonsense. Seals eat many predators of commercially caught fish and removing seals may in fact have the opposite effect and actually reduce those fish numbers. The reality is that the situation is incredibly complex, but overfishing is universally accepted as the primary cause of collapsing fish populations.



©IFAW/Stewart Cook



## Nose Balloon

Adult male hooded seals have the strange ability to inflate the black sac, or 'hood', which hangs over the end of their nose. Adult males can also inflate the skin-like membrane in their noses, so it forms a large red balloon. They do this when they are being aggressive or defensive, and possibly to impress the females!

©IFAW/David White

# Protecting Seals Around the World

Seals are amongst the most wonderful and beautiful wild animals that we may ever encounter. For more than 30 years IFAW has been campaigning internationally to protect seals around the world.



©IFAW/Florian Graner

In the 21st century the modern approach advised by scientists is to begin protecting and conserving wildlife and their habitats long before species become rare and more difficult and costly to protect. At present, a third of all seal species are listed on the IUCN Red List, which means they are at risk. In some cases, such as the Mediterranean monk seal, the species is listed as critically endangered.



## Campaigning Against Hunting

The campaign against the Canadian seal hunt is backed by politicians from across Europe, the US and other parts of the world. According to a 2005 poll, 69% of Canadians were opposed to the commercial hunting of seals.

### The three key reasons for opposition to the hunt are:

- **cruelty** – a recent report by an international panel of veterinarians estimates that up to 42% of the seals are skinned alive. Clubbing is inherently cruel and shooting often leaves seals to die slow and painful deaths underwater
- **not sustainable** – scientists warn that the current level of killing cannot continue without putting the harp seal population at risk
- **not economically viable** – recent Canadian government grants of \$20 million CDN far outweigh the annual value of seals caught and sold. Sealing accounts for less than one tenth of one per cent of Newfoundland's economy and is only a small fraction of a fishermen's income.

The biggest success in the campaign against the Canadian seal hunt was when the European Economic Community banned the import of whitecoat harp seal pup pelts in the 1980s. At this time, the whitecoat was the prime pelt and hunt numbers dropped substantially for several years, but have now risen sharply again.

©IFAW/Sea Mammal Research Unit

©IFAW/Stewart Cook



## Seal Song

Male bearded seals are very vocal and produce a distinctive song, perhaps even a dialect unique to specific regions. These songs may be used to attract females or to defend underwater territories during the spring breeding season.

©M. Hammill



©IFAW/Richard McLanaghan

### **Mediterranean Monk Seals**

The Mediterranean monk seal is on the brink of extinction and is the most endangered marine mammal in Europe. There are only about 500 left alive in the world!

IFAW is co-funding a four-year project to look at interactions between monk seals and fisherman in order to try and reduce the deliberate and accidental killing of the monk seals. Recently IFAW has produced surveys on monk seals by collaborating with fishermen and using its research vessel, *Song of the Whale*.

In the past two years a number of countries have introduced, or are considering, bans on the import of seal skins and seal products, including Italy, Belgium, Croatia, Mexico, the UK and the Netherlands. In the United States seal imports are already prohibited.

IFAW has also campaigned against the seal hunts in Russia, Namibia, Norway and Greenland and opposed seal culls in Scotland, Australia and other parts of the world.

### **Rescues – Cape Cod**

The shores of Cape Cod are renowned for whale strandings and sometimes sick or wounded seals are also found on the beaches. IFAW works with the Cape Cod Stranding Network team to help rescue them and release them back out into the sea.

### **Oil Spills**

IFAW's Emergency Relief Team works around the world to protect marine wildlife when there are major oil spills. IFAW also campaigns internationally to stop ships deliberately dumping bilge oil and to improve shipping regulations so that oil tankers must have twin hulls and are less likely to spill oil if they run aground.

©IFAW/Jon Hrusa



### **Ice Lovers**

Pagophilic is a technical term meaning ice-loving. Pagophilic seals are those who use ice for some period in their life-cycle. Pagophilus is the genus to which the harp seal belongs. Its scientific name, *Pagophilus groenlandicus*, means "the ice-lover from Greenland".

©IFAW/Stewart Cook



# Seals in our seas

Don't forget that there are lots of seals to be seen around our own coastline. The best places to see them are around Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Cornwall and East Anglia. Do remember that seals are wild animals and they can give you a nasty bite (even if they look cute) – so do keep your distance. Seals and dogs don't get on very well – so please keep your dogs on a lead, if there are seals in the area.

## Injured seals

If you think that a seal is injured, please contact the experts who will come and check on it.

- British Divers Marine Life Rescue **01825-765546**
- RSPCA (England & Wales) **0870-5555999**
- SSPCA (Scotland) **0870-7377722**

## How you can help

A great way to help seals around our coasts is to 'adopt a beach' with the Marine Conservation Society. Visit [www.adoptabeach.org.uk](http://www.adoptabeach.org.uk) to find out how to get involved.

Don't forget to take your litter home with you (or even better – recycle it!) – litter is a real threat to seals and other wildlife.

Did you know? About 100,000 marine mammals and turtles die each year from entanglement or ingestion of plastics.



© Peter Phillips

# Celebrities supporting Animal Action Week



"Join in the fun and fight to protect these beautiful marine mammals for the generations to come."

**Chris Tarrant** – Radio/TV Presenter



"The pain and suffering that many seals face because of humans is unacceptable and unnecessary – let's do all we can to put an end to it."

**Lesley Joseph** – Actress



"It is so vital we protect animals and their habitat. Your support of this campaign can make a real difference."

**Steve Leonard** – TV Vet



"It is a sad tragedy that these wonderful and beautiful innocent animals are killed and their fur used for fashion. It is unnecessary, cruel and a terrible waste."

**Lisa Barbuscia** – Actress



"We should value and protect our wildlife and our wonderful natural heritage, including the seals around our shores."

**Pam St Clement** – Actress



"Seals and other marine mammals are under threat all round the world. It is our responsibility to act now. Get involved in Animal Action Week to do your bit to help them!"

**Shauna Lowry** – Animal Planet



“Seals are such beautiful creatures. We must do everything we can to protect these adorable mammals. They, like all animals on this planet, have a right to be here.”

**Michaela Strachan**  
Presenter – Animal Planet