

Action statement

Flora & Fauna Guarantee Act 1988

Australian Sea-lion (*Neophoca cinerea*)

Taxon ID: 11539

Action statements are developed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act). Their preparation and implementation complement the FFG Act strategy *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037* and its vision that “Victoria's biodiversity is healthy, valued and actively cared for”.

Species and Distribution



Australian Sea-lion. Image by Katie Howard.



Australian Sea-lion Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA) records since 1970. See [NatureKit](#) for an interactive map.

Conservation Status

Critically endangered

Listing criteria: 4.1.1; 4.1.3(a), (b)(i) of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Regulations 2020.

This means that:

- the Australian Sea-lion has undergone, is suspected to have undergone, or is likely to undergo in the immediate future, a severe reduction in population size; and
- the total number of mature individuals is low, the number is likely to continue to decline at a very high rate, and each subpopulation is very small.

Corresponding International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criteria: A2b, C1+C2a(i).

More information on IUCN listing criteria can be found here: [IUCN Red List criteria](#).

Species Information

Species information such as its description, distribution, ecology and references are provided in the [Australian Sea-lion Conservation Advice](#).

Threats

Threats listed below have been identified through expert consultation, published literature and spatial analysis.

Threat	Description
Habitat loss, degradation or modification	
Construction, development and/or infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onshore and offshore development can degrade, and result in the loss of, important coastal habitats. Benthic habitats are key feeding grounds for the Australian Sea-lions, activities that impact in those environments could impact on the food availability (e.g., dredging).
Human disturbance	
Aquaculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rack and line structures used for mussel and oyster farming in shallow waters often cause loss of seagrass beds, which are important foraging habitat for Australian Sea-lions.
Commercial fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a risk of mortality through bycatch in rock lobster pots and gillnets placed near the seabed.
Recreational activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disturbance from land and boat-based wildlife tourism, commercial and recreational boating activities may result in behavioural disturbance, including displacement from, or abandonment of sites.
Native species	
Sea urchins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High density populations of the Black Sea Urchin (<i>Centrostephanus rodgersii</i>) may cause sea urchin barrens and contribute to loss of kelp forests/feeding habitat for the Australian Sea-lion.
Pollutants and toxicants	
Litter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marine debris, discarded fishing line and hooks, plastic fragments, packaging, and containers, as well as marine rope fragments leads to habitat degradation, ingestion, entanglement and may cause injury and/or mortality.
Oil spills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oil spills can lead to hypothermia if a seal's fur is covered, or poisoning if oil is ingested, resulting in reduced foraging and reproductive fitness or mortality.
Pollution from terrestrial sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land-based runoff and pollutants pose a threat to the species, either through direct impacts on health, or indirectly by affecting food availability.
Climate change	
Sea-level rise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sea level rise will lead to habitat alteration, shifting and/or loss.
Temperature extremes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing ocean temperatures could reduce availability and diversity of food.

Please note: the above threats occur in Victoria. This species visits Victoria rarely and does not breed here. The threats that will have the greatest impact on persistence occur in other jurisdictions.

Conservation Objectives

Conservation objectives are informed by the conservation status and criteria under which the species was listed under the FFG Act. This provides a framework to understand how we can work towards recovery and improve the species' conservation status over time as per the objectives of the FFG Act.

The key objectives of this action statement are:

- Mitigate threats to marine mammals and habitat to increase resilience and minimise future population decline.
- Support community participation and improve awareness of the importance of marine habitats.

Conservation Actions

The actions below have been identified through expert consultation, published literature and spatial analysis. Actions are listed in alphabetical order to allow all interested parties to prioritise based on their context, capacity and capability. Landscape scale actions may mitigate threats for other species. For more information on where to undertake actions that benefit multiple species and identify the most beneficial locations to undertake actions for this species, please refer to [NatureKit](#).

Action	Description
Community education and awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with tourism operators to reduce threats and disturbance from non-commercial vessels and jet skis, encouraging adherence to the regulations and other solutions to supporting healthy marine environments.
Manage impacts from aquaculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement measures (including monitoring, management response, compliance, and review) to minimise impacts from aquaculture.
Manage over-abundant native species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue implementing Parks Victoria's management of over-abundant native species program to control Black Sea Urchins.
Minimise and mitigate the impacts of pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require all vessels to have oil spill mitigation measures in place and implement jurisdictional oil spill response strategies when required.
Mitigate pathogens and disease risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve wastewater management in areas of Australian Sea-lion habitat to minimise dispersal of bacteria, parasites, and pollutants into the marine environment.
Protect key habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the species' habitat from degradation from offshore developments (e.g., dredging).
Reduce and manage the impacts of litter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the delivery of the Commonwealth government's threat abatement plan for the impacts of marine debris on the vertebrate wildlife of Australia's coasts and oceans (2018).

**Indicates landscape-scale actions that may deliver benefits to multiple species*

Past Actions

The key conservation management actions listed below have been delivered in the past 10 years.

Past action	Description
Management of over-abundant native species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since March 2019, Parks Victoria have controlled Black Sea Urchins in the Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary. This project contributes to a statewide initiative in partnership with the University of Melbourne, Deakin University, and volunteers to manage overabundant urchins in marine protected areas.
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 1 February 2023 regulations came into effect in Victoria banning single-use plastics from sale or supply, to reduce plastic pollution in waterways and the marine environment. From 1 July 2021, releasing balloons into the environment is illegal in Victoria. A National Threat Abatement Plan for the impacts of marine debris on the vertebrate wildlife of Australia's coasts and oceans was published in 2018.
Recovery Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A National Recovery Plan was published in 2013, and a revised plan is in preparation at the time of publishing this action statement.
Reduce the impacts of litter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the Marine Biodiversity Response Planning, in partnership with the South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association (SETFIA) and Phillip Island Nature Parks, the Victorian Government has promoted correct waste disposal to reduce marine pollution and entanglement of marine mammals. This project improved waste management practices onboard SETFIA vessels. Multiple clean-up campaigns and days have been held across Victoria, to minimise the amount of litter reaching the ocean. The Seal the Loop program from Zoos Victoria and Victorian Fisheries Authority installed and monitor multiple bins in popular fishing locations across Victoria to reduce the amount of abandoned fishing gear along our coastlines.
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Australian Sea-lion monitoring framework was developed to guide appropriate monitoring design for Australian Sea-lions.

Decision Support Tools

Decision making for conservation actions is supported through the following Victorian Government tools which may be of assistance in choosing the most appropriate or beneficial actions for biodiversity:

- [CoastKit](#)
- [Biodiversity Knowledge Framework](#)

Further Information

- [Australian Sea-lion Conservation Advice](#)
- [Final recommendation report – Australian Sea-lion \(*Neophoca cinerea*\)](#)
- [Commonwealth Species Profile and Threats database](#)
- [Threatened Species and Communities Risk Assessment](#)
- [Victoria's changing climate – understanding the impacts of climate change on Victoria](#)
- [Genetic Risk Index](#)
- [Commonwealth Threat Abatement Plans](#)

- [Flora and Fauna Guarantee Regulations 2020](#)
- [IUCN criteria summary](#)

Get Involved and Take Action

If you are interested in supporting this species' recovery, there are some important things you need to consider.

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) is committed to engaging and partnering with Traditional Owners on how they wish to be involved in the planning and implementation of actions for this species. Steps must be taken to avoid harm and where appropriate ensure actions can deliver cultural benefits.

You can find advice about required approvals, land manager and/or owner permissions, options and incentives for private land conservation, and engagement with Traditional Owners and public land managers here: [Action statements \(environment.vic.gov.au\)](#)

To identify the relevant Traditional Owners, use the [Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and Information System \(ACHRIS\) Welcome to Country and Acknowledgements Map](#).

You can also register your interest in taking action so we can connect you to other people or organisations working to help us secure the future for this species at threatened.species@deeca.vic.gov.au

Reporting Actions

Activity data is critical to monitoring the implementation and progress of actions and evaluating action statements. These data are also used to:

- Determine progress towards achieving the contributing targets for [Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037](#).
- Inform the five-yearly State of the Environment Report.

For guidance on reporting actions undertaken on this species, refer to [Activity Data](#).

Submitting Monitoring Data

The Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA) provides a foundational dataset showing where biodiversity occurs across the Victorian landscape and how it may have changed over time. As a core input for decision support tools that inform conservation action, public land management, research activities and reporting, we encourage all participants in the delivery of on-ground actions to submit species records and observations, including for introduced plants and animals, as they carry out their projects.

For further information see: [Victorian Biodiversity Atlas \(environment.vic.gov.au\)](#)

Sign up and begin submitting your data today at: <https://vba.biodiversity.vic.gov.au/>

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



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