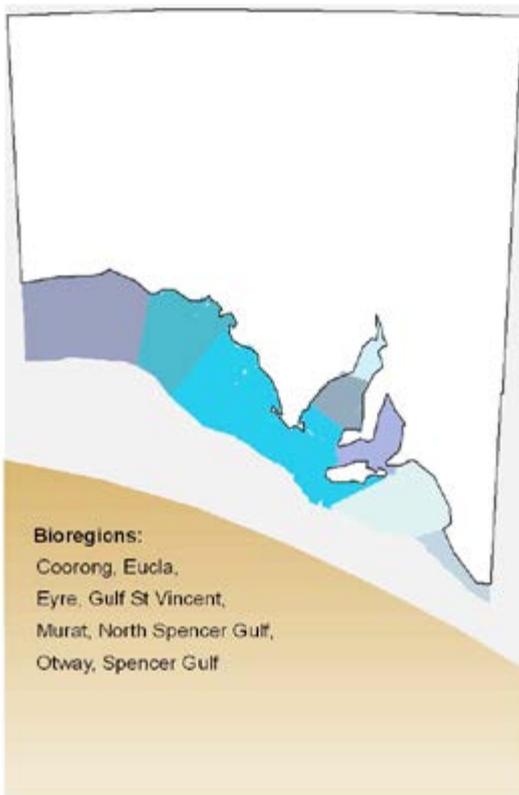


# Australian Sea-lion

*Neophoca cinerea*



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

The Australian Sea-lion belongs to the Eared Seal family, Otariidae (they have external ears). They propel themselves through the water using their front flippers and are capable of walking on land on all four flippers.

Sea-lions are sociable animals and gather in groups, called colonies, of 10-15, to rest and sunbathe on rocks and beaches. Males (called bulls) are darker and larger than females (cows) and can weigh up to 300 kg. Pups are born with a dark brown coat and moult to look like an adult at three to four months old.

## Diet

Unlike New Zealand Fur Seals that feed in the water column, Australian Sea-lions find most of their food on the sea floor. An adult female with an unweaned pup (baby sea-lion) will eat about eight to ten kg of food per day at sea.

Their carnivorous diet is opportunistic, eating squid, octopus, scale fish, penguins, rays, small sharks and some crustaceans.

## Breeding

Their long life span (up to 25 years) means it takes a while for them to reach maturity (an age where they can reproduce). When they finally have pups they only have one every 17.6 months, and only about 30 per cent of pups from each breeding season survive to maturity.

## Habitat

About 80 per cent of the world's Australian Sea-lion population occurs in SA. These animals travel large distances to find food but return to the same places to rest on land.

## Threats

The Australian Sea-lion is one of the rarest seal species in the world. Only 10,000 to 12,000 remain in the world. Hunting decimated their population in the 18th and 19th centuries and they have been slow to recover.

Sea-lions are now protected in Australian waters, but there are still many threats to their survival in SA. Australian Sea-lions are killed illegally and accidentally. This is often a result of entanglement in nets (especially those used for gillnet fishing) and marine debris. Australian Sea-lions die from diseases related to parasites, are eaten by sharks, suffer from habitat destruction and clearance on coasts and are sometimes harmed by boat strikes.



In a 3 day foraging trip an individual makes 900-1200 dives!

### Conservation

You can help the Australian Sea-lion by:

- putting rubbish in a bin, as litter makes its way to the ocean from everywhere and Sea-lions can die from eating it or becoming entangled in it
- taking any rubbish home with you after going fishing, including fishing line, hooks and nets as these can harm marine animals
- keeping your distance if you see Sea-lions in the wild, in the ocean, or on the beach and don't disturb them.

## For further information

### Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

**Eastwood:** (08) 8273 9100

**Gawler:** (08) 8523 7700

**Lobethal:** (08) 8389 5900

**Willunga:** (08) 8550 3400

### Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

**Northern Adelaide:** (08) 8406 8289

**Barossa:** (08) 8563 8436

**Central Adelaide:** (08) 8234 7255

**Southern Adelaide:** (08) 8384 0176

**Southern Fleurieu:** (08) 8551 0524



Photo by Robyn Morcom

Australian Sea-lion



Photo by Simon Bryars

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