



Seals and Sealing Facts

Conservation: Seals are abundant

- The Northwest Atlantic harp seal population is abundant and well conserved, numbering around 8 million. Since the 1970s, the population has multiplied by five. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (also known as the World Conservation Union) lists the harp seal as a species of “least concern” on its Red List of Threatened Species.
- The grey seal population in Eastern Canada has increased from a level of approximately 5,000 in the mid 1960s, to some 350,000 today. This represents an almost 70-fold increase. The IUCN also lists the grey seal as a species of “least concern”.

Eco-system impacts: Seal management is a must

- Canada’s harp seal population alone consumes in excess of 13 million tonnes of fish annually. By comparison, Canada’s total annual commercial fisheries, all coasts and all species, yield less than 1 million tonnes.
- Consumption estimates indicate that harp seals consume more than 500,000 tonnes of cod per year. Canada’s total annual commercial Atlantic cod quota for fishing is currently 22,973 tonnes. Atlantic cod is listed as “vulnerable” by IUCN.
- A new peer reviewed study in Fisheries Research, Seal-cod interactions on the Eastern Scotian Shelf, O’Boyle and Sinclair, 2012, suggests that grey seals play an important role in the failure of Southern Gulf cod stocks to recover while commercial and subsistence fishing is prohibited.
- If seal management harvest quotas were taken every year, the Canadian fishing industry would have access to over \$1 billion worth of seafood (400, 000 seals X 1.4 ton of seafood X \$2 000\$ market value) without even increasing their actual fishing quotas.

Animal Welfare: The best methods are applied and monitored

- Since 1987, seals are NOT hunted before they reach maturity. No other young animals get the same preferred treatment. Veal, lamb, pig, chicken... all get slaughter before they reach maturity.

- Seal hunting methods in Canada are effective and conform to established practices of animal welfare, as recommended by the Independent Veterinarians' Working Group (IVWG 2005), The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Conservation Organization (NAMMCO), the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) and the Malouf Commission.
- A new Study by Daoust, P.-Y. and Caraguel, C., 2012, The Canadian harp seal hunt: observations on the effectiveness of procedures to avoid poor animal welfare outcomes, reaffirms the high animal welfare standard of seal hunting employed by professional hunters in Canada.

Seal products: Great economic potential for small coastal communities

- Seal hides, or “pelts” are handled locally in Canada, where they are tanned into high-quality materials providing much needed economic benefit to remote coastal and northern communities and also across Canadian seal related businesses. The fur business (all animals) sold for a record of 15 billion of dollars in 2012.
- Seal meat and seal oil (rendered from fat) provide locally-sourced, organic and highly nutritional protein and Omega-3 essential fatty acids (EFA) for human consumption. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency certifies production facilities, inspects products and issues export certificates.
- Promising biomedical studies have been made on seal collagen and heart valves. Both products might one day help heal and even save human lives. Other parts of the seal such as bones, claws, whiskers and teeth are used in the arts and crafts industry.
- Seal appears on the [Smart Seafood List](#) aimed at promoting underused species to protect biodiversity.

Culture: A way of life

- Harvesting seals is an important part of life for Inuit in the north and for non-Inuit communities in Atlantic Canada. In the North and in remote coastal regions, where economic options are few and food is very expensive, seal meat is an important “country” food staple. Seals products (meat, oil and fur) allowed the first settlers to make it throughout the rough winter season. Both the Inuit and the people in Atlantic Canada have kept very close ties with the sealing tradition and have great respect for this natural, valuable and renewable resource.