



FACTSHEET

New Zealand Fur Seal



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Common Name: New Zealand Fur Seal

Scientific Name: *Arctocephalus forsteri*

Conservation Status: Listed as Least Concern under ICUN (2014). Protected under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972. Listed as Other Protection Fauna under Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 (Western Australia). The waters around Rottneest Island are a designated Marine Reserve.

Habitat: Rocky shores, islands, inshore waters

Body length: 1.5-2.5 m

Weight: 30-180 kg

Gestation period: 8-9 months

Number of young: 1

Description:

New Zealand Fur Seals have dark brown fur which is lighter underneath. Their fur has two layers, the under layer is very dense with a sleek fur layer on top. They have two pectoral flippers and a tail flipper. Their eyes are big; they have long whiskers and

a distinctive pointed nose. Their ear flaps are on the outside of their heads. The male seals are much bigger and heavier than the females.

Diet:

Fish, squid, octopus, lobster, penguins.

In the Wild:

New Zealand Fur Seals mainly breed in New Zealand but are found around Australia's southern coasts. Rottneest Island is lucky to have a colony of these fur seals that lives at Cathedral Rocks. Throughout the year, fur seals live in colonies at particular haul-out sites (places where the animals leave the water). New Zealand Fur Seals spend about half their time out of the water at these sites where they can be seen resting on the rocks. Their colonies are called rookeries and are normally found on rocky shores which provide shelter and protection especially for their pups. The colonies are busiest during the breeding season in summer.

Fur seals are quite slow and clumsy on land but they are very agile and fast in water.



They use this speed and agility to hunt their prey and can dive below 100 m. Their main predators are sharks, orcas and sea lions.

Threats:

- Human disturbance (divers, boat traffic)
- Entanglement in fishing nets
- Entanglement in debris/rubbish
- Climate change affecting their breeding and feeding sites and food supply
- Pollution especially oil spills

DID YOU KNOW?

New Zealand Fur Seals were hunted for their fur by Polynesians and Europeans for hundreds of years. They nearly became extinct in the nineteenth century.

These seals were given national protection in 1972.