

Endangered Finnish seal stock makes small recovery

November 11 2010



An undated handout photo provided by the World Wildlife Fund shows a rare Saimaa ringed seal, resting on a rock in Finland's biggest lake, Lake Saimaa, in the eastern part of the country. The Saimaa ringed seal population in Finland, which has been on the brink of extinction for decades, increased slightly last year thanks to aggressive conservation efforts, experts said Thursday.

The Saimaa ringed seal population in Finland, which has been on the brink of extinction for decades, increased slightly last year thanks to aggressive conservation efforts, experts said Thursday.

The entire population, which lives around the vast waterways of Lake Saimaa in eastern Finland, grew by 10 individuals to around 270 seals in 2009, [conservationists](#) said.

The increase was almost exclusively thanks to one isolated group

totalling about 90 animals in a far corner of the lake district in an area called Pihlajavesi, according to Matti Maeaettae, a spokesman for state-run forestry and conservation company Metsaehallitus.

"The local residents are very careful about leaving dens alone and avoiding net fishing (the biggest killer of adult seals), so they seem to understand very well how careful they have to be," he told AFP.

In addition to the heightened awareness of locals, the Pihlajavesi area has introduced more lakeshore protection measures designed to prevent encroachment on the seals' preferred areas.

"The Pihlajavesi seal population is doing all right, but other populations are still in an extremely critical situation," Maeaettae said.

Part of the problem is that these tiny populations are isolated from each other, he said, adding however that animals often have a "miraculous" ability to preserve [genetic diversity](#) even in small gene pools.

Maeaettae is hopeful that other local seal populations might show some signs of improvement in the next few years thanks to stricter measures against net fishing.

The Saimaa ringed seal is a subspecies of the ringed seal that became a freshwater mammal some 9,500 years ago when it was trapped in the lake after the last ice age.

(c) 2010 AFP

Citation: Endangered Finnish seal stock makes small recovery (2010, November 11) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-11-endangered-finnish-stock-small-recovery.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.