

How fisheries threaten seals and sea lions in South America

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Seals, sea lions, and fur seals are at risk from interactions with fisheries and aquaculture, as they can become entangled in nets or cages, and drown. In a study published in *Mammal Review*, investigators analyzed

research from the last 25 years on operational and biological interactions between these marine mammals and fisheries and aquaculture activities in South American waters.

The authors found that two species are primarily involved in interactions in many countries: the South American sea lion *Otaria flavescens* and the South American fur seal *Arctocephalus australis*. Despite the high frequency of interactions, the [economic losses](#) to fisheries and aquaculture related to sea lion depredation are low. Incidental capture and mortality of seals has been reported widely, but the magnitude of the problem remains unknown.

Limited progress has been made to incorporate measures to mitigate fisheries interactions, likely due to a limited understanding of ecosystem complexity, the costs of modifying fishing gear, and the scarcity of fishing controls. The authors stressed that more work is needed to aid the conservation of these species, and stakeholder education is key to this work.

"This study provides a deep analysis on the interactions between pinnipeds and fisheries and aquaculture in South American waters, highlighting the need to improve policy and management relating to marine mammal [interactions](#)," said corresponding author Maritza Sepúlveda, Ph.D., of the Universidad de Valparaíso, Chile.

More information: Sea lion and fur seal interactions with fisheries and aquaculture in South American waters: threats and management perspectives, *Mammal Review* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/mam.12311](https://doi.org/10.1111/mam.12311)

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