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RED LISTED SEA LIONS NEED WEST COAST SUPPORT

Australian Sea Lion colonies in the Chain of Bays region of South Australia need more support according to the Friends of Scaale Bay Adelaide Convener Dave Kirner. The endangered marine mammals have made the 2008 International Union of Conservation Nations Red List amidst concerns may only be 10,000 animals left in the world. <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/14549>

Mr. Kirner has called on the local council to play a greater role in wildlife conservation by supporting scientific expeditions to the region and the local school to consider building wildlife studies into curriculum to link up with scientific research and marine biology study pathways to university. The Australian sea lion is Australia's only endemic marine mammal.

"The Friends of Scaale Bay would also like to see a plan of action from the Eyre Natural Resource Management Board backed up by funds to help protect and preserve these animals that provide a source of tourism revenue. Tourism providers and local businesses should also be able to contribute a portion of their earnings into a wildlife preservation fund that allows protection of these animals. This could later be extended to other locally endangered species like the Osprey and White Bellied Sea Eagle"

The fact that an island with a breeding colony of Australian sea lions was found by a researcher off the Chain of Bays as recently as 2002 is evidence of the remoteness of the area and its particular value as an isolated site suitable for habitat protection. Dr Peter Shaughnessy of the South Australian Museum (and formerly with CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems) first heard of sea lions located on the unnamed island near Scaale Bay in 2001. During the next pupping season Shaughnessy was able to verify that the unnamed island, now called Nicolas Baudin Island, did indeed support a breeding colony of sea lions - with high pupping numbers. Since then Shaughnessy has visited the island and the Chain of Bays a dozen times and estimates the total sea lion population in the region at about 1300 - 12 per cent of the total estimated national population of 11 000. Source CSIRO's Ecos Magazine #140 Jan 08 "Chain Reactions" pg19

"We know that for only \$3,000.00 an expedition can be mounted to count Australian Sea Lion numbers at Nicholas Baudin Island and at present the Friends of Scaale Bay are in discussions with government and scientific researchers about how to make sure the count takes place in 2008. Some local government support could help this and also the media coverage shows that the Chain of Bays is the place to be to see wild animals."

Previous scientific visits have commented on shark fishing and rock lobster potting around colonies as presenting a problem. "The Chain of Bays critically has a number of breeding colonies and these need to be integrated and protected within a major national park system incorporating the coastline and marine waters."

Released this week by prominent conservationist Jane Goodall - "The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ is widely recognized as the most comprehensive, objective global approach for evaluating the conservation status of plant and animal species. From its small beginning, the IUCN Red List has grown in size and complexity and now plays an increasingly prominent role in guiding conservation activities of governments, NGOs and scientific institutions. The introduction in 1994 of a scientifically rigorous approach to determine risks of extinction that is applicable to all species, has become a world standard. In order to produce the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™, the IUCN Species Programme working with the IUCN Survival Commission (SSC) and with members of IUCN draws on and mobilizes a network of scientists and partner organizations working in almost every country in the world, who collectively hold what is likely the most complete scientific knowledge base on the biology and conservation status of species." Source The Red List IUCN 2008

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