

A species on the rebound: diet and gene flow in New Zealand fur seals

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As the New Zealand fur seal population continues to recover from an extreme population bottleneck due to human hunting, this species will increasingly come into direct contact and conflict with human populations. We use molecular approaches to estimate the ancestral population which implies that the NZ fur seal could grow a magnitude more common if it recovers to pre-human size. We also use molecular techniques to determine fur seal diet based on faeces collected from colonies around the country. NZ fur seal appear to be extremely generalist in their food intake with around 40-50 fish and 15 cephalopod prey species consumed by a colony at any given time. Commercial fish species make up at least part of the diet.