

Seal diet



Finding out what Australian fur seals eat

Australian fur seals are important predators in marine ecosystems of south-eastern Australia.

We study their diet by looking for prey remains in seal scats (poo and regurgitates).
We collect 20-30 scats at regular intervals to monitor the seals' diet.

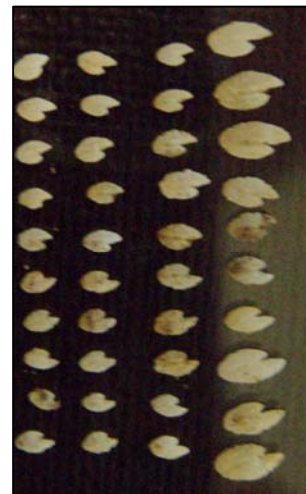
Fish can be identified from otoliths (ear bones), jaws, teeth and other bones; cephalopods (octopus, squid and cuttlefish) from beaks (mouth parts) and crustaceans (crabs etc) from outer shell fragments.

More information

Kirkwood R, Hume F & Hindell M (2008) Sea temperature variations mediate annual changes in the diet of Australian fur seals in Bass Strait. *Marine Ecology Progress Series* 369:290-309

Deagle B, Kirkwood R & Jarman S (2009) Analysis of Australian fur seal diet by pyrosequencing prey DNA in faeces. *Molecular Ecology* 17 pages, doi: 10.1111/j.1365-294X.2009.04158.

**Otoliths (ear bones) from a fish called redbait -
One of the main prey of Australian fur seals.**



Common prey of Australian fur seals



- Red bait - *Emmelichthys nitidus*



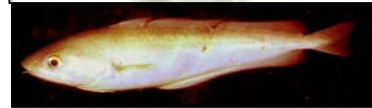
- Jack mackerel - *Trachurus declivis*



- Barracouta- *Thyrsites atun*



- Arrow squid - *Nototodarus gouldi*



- Red cod - *Pseudophycis bachus*



- Gurnard - Family Triglidae



- Leatherjackets - Order Tetraodontiformes

Proportions of fish eaten by Australian fur seals at Seal Rocks in different years, based on numbers of otoliths in scats.

