**A significant decrease in sea lion populations is linked to climate change, but how?**

By Shannah Cole

Sea lions are on the verge of extinction. Sea lions just like many other animals are negatively affected by global warming. Both tropical and sub-artic habitats are adversely affected by the change in temperature. This statistic is truly appalling as sea lions offer many benefits to our ecosystem. They help maintain a balance in the food web. Disturbingly, sea lion populations have fallen significantly in recent years. Shocking statistics show a rapid decline in sea lion populations falling from an average of 50,000 to a horrifying 15,291 in 2019 which represents a 65.2% decline in the last 28 years.

How have we let this happen to such innocent creatures?

The loss of land in the sub-arctic regions is alarming as land is essential for sea lions to survive. The change in temperature has resulted in the ice melting and therefore the devasting shortage of land. The restricted access to land forces them to stay in the water, stopping them from basking in the sun and most concerningly, mating. We as humans should be ashamed of ourselves, how would we live without land?

However, in some cases mating does take place but life is still quite strenuous for the pups. Many pups drown as they are forced into the water too soon. Some aren’t strong enough to swim. Others die from the extreme temperatures of the freezing water as they haven’t enough blubber yet to keep their body temperature regulated. This heartbreaking fact is evident across our world. It’s time for us to take some responsibility. It’s time to save these poor animals who are suffering from our mistakes.

It hurts to say that in the tropics the temperature rising is still leaving these innocent sea lions at risk. They are more open to diseases, parasites, and tapeworms. It has also been reported that an annual sea lion sickness is linked to climate change. This is infuriating as we as humans can contribute a lot more to the problem. The climate change problem enrages many of us. We must help the animals who endure agony from this worldwide issue. Warming seas and algae blooms have been the cause of confused and convulsing sea lions showing up on beaches. The condition caused by algae blooms is known as domoic acid poisoning. The sea lions catch this disease as algae accumulates in fish and the sea lions eat fish. The toxin then can attack their brains resulting in severe seizures. If this condition isn’t treated, sea lions force the risk of brain damage and death. “ Climate change and warming waters contribute to more algal blooms and consequently more sick sea lions” says Dr. Cara Field from the Marine Mammal Center.

Do not despair, there is still hope. Ways to help prevent and re-establish habitat loss for the sea lion species can be found on the worldwildlife.org website. The website allows you to donate to their organisation to try help the conservation of sea lion habitats. There are also many organisations providing treatments for sea lions such as the Marine Mammal Centre and the University of Sydney.