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## MARINE BIOTA OF THE MONTH - AUGUST 2007



### *Neophoca cinerea*

More commonly known as the Australian sea lion, these curious pinnipeds are found in temperate waters ranging from the Abrolhos Islands in Western Australia to the Page Islands in South Australia. Australian sea lions can swim great distances and to depths greater than 150 metres to find a variety of food such as: fish, rock lobsters, squids, sharks and sea birds.

Male Australian sea lions are usually chocolate brown, up to two metres in length and weigh up to 300 kilograms. Females are generally smaller with a silvery ash-grey back and a yellow to cream under part (as pictured above). *N. cinerea* are a non migratory species, and often stay around their haul-out and breeding sites. However, migration of adults and sub-adult males has been recorded on the west coast of Western Australia between the breeding islands in the Jurien Bay area and the non-breeding islands of Perth. The Australian sea lion has a pupping interval of 17-18 months.

The estimated size of the Australian Sea-lion population is less than 10,000 with 70 % occurring in South Australia and 30 % in Western Australia. Due to historical pressures and the vulnerability of this species they are fully protected in Australian waters.