

The HangLine

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Sealocide – A Salty-Dog's Perspective

By Dextor Pike

My friend and I enjoyed fishing, enjoyed the challenge of selecting a rod, reel and lure that would catch a fish I could bring home clean and eat like a pioneer providing sustenance for my family. I enjoyed chatting with the boys at the tackle shop and every now and then picking up one of the fishing rags. Then one day I walked in, picked up my supplies and put them on the cash counter only to be confronted with a petition to cull seals. "Why?" I asked. "Because the bloody things steal our fish - that's why!" The reply came aggressively and filled with anger and hate.

Have we lost our senses? I mean are we actually considering killing another living thing for the sake of making our sport easier? You know, we have special hooks, and sprays, and bobbles and bits, lines and rods and tackle kits, electronic sounders and high speed boats and everything else to make hooking 'the big one' as simple and effective as possible. To think that these 'varmints' make us work for the catch - kill'em , kill'em all. Who cares if they were here first.

Dextor Pike is an old sea dog friend of DFP. He continues to mend his own nets and traps and probably knows more about the ocean than any sciencemetician. He can be found in any marina on the west coast or at the pub after 6.

The argument I guess is that we have allowed the seal and sea lion numbers to increase out of control. My response is "We have allowed this?" So we are God now. Mother Nature can no longer balance things out herself - nope. Once again man has got to save the day - change the supernatural forces of the planet. We are so very good at that.

But the seal numbers were in check when we hunted them for food. Now that we have grocery stores nobody hunts them any





more - now there are millions eating up all the fish. Oh yeah that balance thing that relies heavily on human intervention and management. First of all I doubt the seal hunt in these waters were very big in numbers. Secondly I read a Fisheries and Oceans Report a couple of years ago that stated 'the fish taken by the entire seal population represents less than 4% of fish taken commercially'. Yes those little monsters deserve to die - kill'em.

You know I think that we are wanting to shift blame. We over fished the waters, we polluted them and now we are fighting with the fishes only real natural predator so that we can maintain our sport.

As far as us balancing Mother Nature - If we had what it takes to keep things in check we would not have mismanaged our fish populations to the low numbers they are now. "Oh yes but we employ catch and release practices." Right - hook what ever you can, make it struggle for it's life and stress it out, when it gets to the surface suffocate it while you show your buddies, rip the hook out and throw it back in. That's fish management. I fished because I developed an appreciation and respect for the food I caught.

Doesn't matter though, the seals are destroying that huge sport fishing industry that drives our economy, kill'em all. Hey, and how about those whales, they don't take'em off our hooks but they eat fish - lots of fish - a lot more than seals - let's kill them too. And bears, they fish salmon before they even reach the ocean - "Now where did I put my shot gun?"



Tackle shops report a big drop in business due to the seals but I'm hangin my rod up because they have chosen to allow uncontrolled unmonitored culling. Listen guys - consider those pesky seals as just another challenge, it is a sport right? Incidentally I am on the seal's side - better kill me too. ~ DFP

From Vancouver Sun

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The Fisheries Department culled a total of 52 harbour seals in 1997 and 1998 to benefit chinook salmon on the Puntledge River, and is now in discussion with local stakeholders, including sport fishermen and first nations, who are pushing for the controversial management tactic to be repeated.

Bruce Adkins, the department's area chief of oceans habitat enhancement for the south coast, said harbour seals position themselves beneath the bridge over the Courtenay River downstream of the Puntledge and eat juvenile salmon going downriver and adults returning to spawn.

He said returns were improved after the cull a decade ago, but noted the situation is clouded by the fact other rivers in the area that had no seal cull also had good production. He said more research is needed to better assess the potential benefits of another cull.

