

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN THREATS TO THE SAIMAA RINGED SEAL?

### FISHING GEAR

Certain types of fishing gear can be lethal for the Saimaa ringed seal if they become caught up in them. Nets are especially dangerous for seals. Traditional hook and line fishing, lure fishing, and fishing traps that have a narrow opening are safe for seals.



Hanne Kosonen

### WARM WINTERS

Winters have become milder with higher temperatures and less snow than before. This has made it more difficult for seals to breed. Volunteers have helped seals to breed by making man-made snow drifts and artificial nests.



Jari Kijunen

### NOISE AND DISTURBANCE CAUSED BY HUMANS

Saimaa ringed seals are shy animals. They should be allowed to nest and rest on rocks in peace. Unnecessary noise and movement in areas favoured by the Saimaa ringed seal should be avoided, especially with motor vehicles.



Ismo Marttinen

### SMALL AMOUNT OF SEALS

Surprising factors and chance can threaten the Saimaa ringed seal population. For example, contagious diseases pose a threat, because the population is still very small, and is divided into sub-populations living in various parts of Lake Saimaa.



Pekka Sarkanen

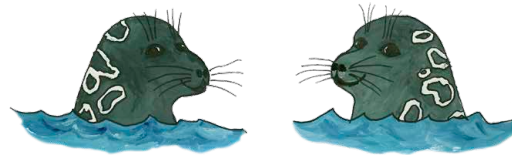
## THE SAIMAA RINGED SEAL – ONE OF THE WORLD'S RAREST SEALS



Eero Korhola

The Saimaa ringed seal is only found at Lake Saimaa, where it was trapped after the Ice Age, when land upheaval cut the connection to the Baltic Sea. The seals are divided into smaller sub-populations in various parts of Lake Saimaa and live in the same area from one year to another.

The Saimaa ringed seal spends most of its life underwater. They can remain submerged for around 20 minutes before having to come to the surface to breathe. Seal pups often also sleep underwater in short bursts.



### DID YOU KNOW?

A close relative of the Saimaa ringed seal, **the Ladoga ringed seal**, lives in Lake Ladoga in Russia. They are slightly smaller than the Saimaa ringed seal. Whilst their population is significantly larger than that of the Saimaa ringed seal, also the Ladoga ringed seal is endangered.

Another close relative, **the Baltic ringed seal**, lives in the Baltic Sea - as the name suggests. It is the world's smallest seal species. The Baltic ringed seal is vulnerable.



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Layout and the Saimaa ringed seal identification drawing: Hanne Kosonen.  
The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, 01/2020.

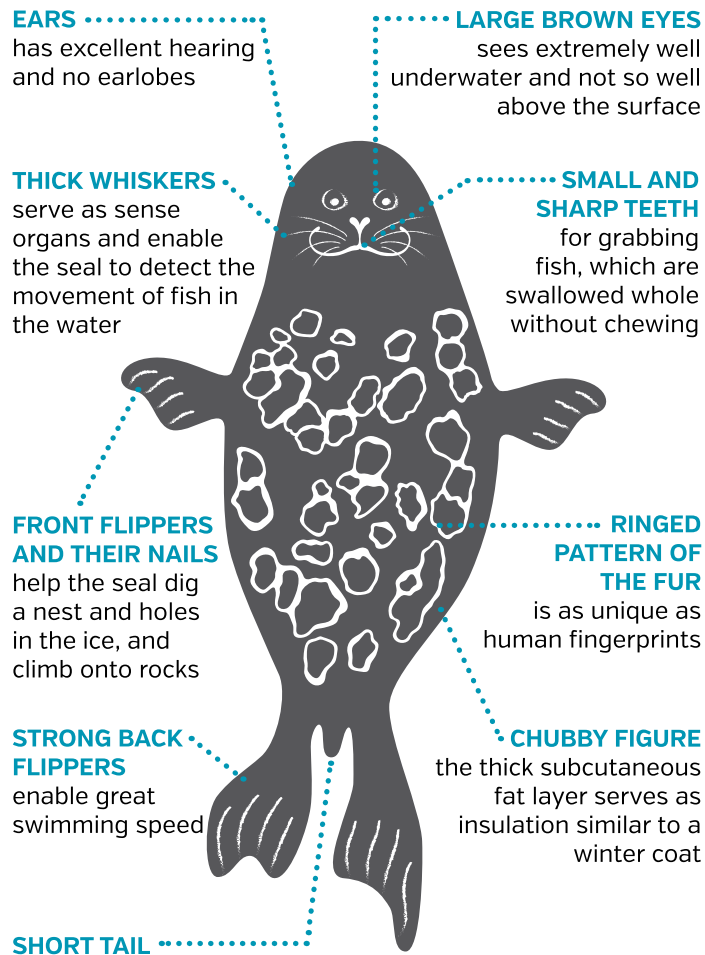
## The endangered SAIMAA RINGED SEAL

Juha Taskinen





## WHAT DOES THE SAIMAA RINGED SEAL LOOK LIKE?



### SAIMAA RINGED SEAL (*Pusa hispida saimensis*) IN FIGURES

- Population roughly **410** individuals (in 2019)
- **113** fertile females (in 2019)
- Lifespan roughly **20** years
- The average length of a mature individual **130–145** cm
- The average weight of a mature individual **50–90** kg
- A new-born seal pup weighs **4–5** kg
- An adult seal eats roughly **1,000** kg of fish a year

## WHAT IS THE AVERAGE YEAR OF THE SAIMAA RINGED SEAL LIKE?

When the autumn comes, seals start eating large amounts of fish in order to thicken their subcutaneous fat layer. They especially like small fish, such as vendace, smelt, perch, roach, and ruffe.

Autumn is a pleasing time for seals, as traffic on Lake Saimaa slows down and the weather turns cooler.

In winter, seals are rarely seen. They spend most of their time in the water underneath the ice cover. They make holes in the ice for breathing and dig snow caves in snow drifts close to the shore for resting.

Mother seals dig a nest on top of the ice in a snow drift by the rocky shore. There is a hole in the ice at the bottom of the nest for diving into the water.

Mother seals give birth to a seal pup inside the snow nest during February–March. They nurse their pup in the safety of the snow nest. The fluffy light grey fur of the pups protect them against the cold.

The pups grow and gain strength quickly, thanks to the fatty milk produced by their moms. Little by little they learn to swim and fish independently.

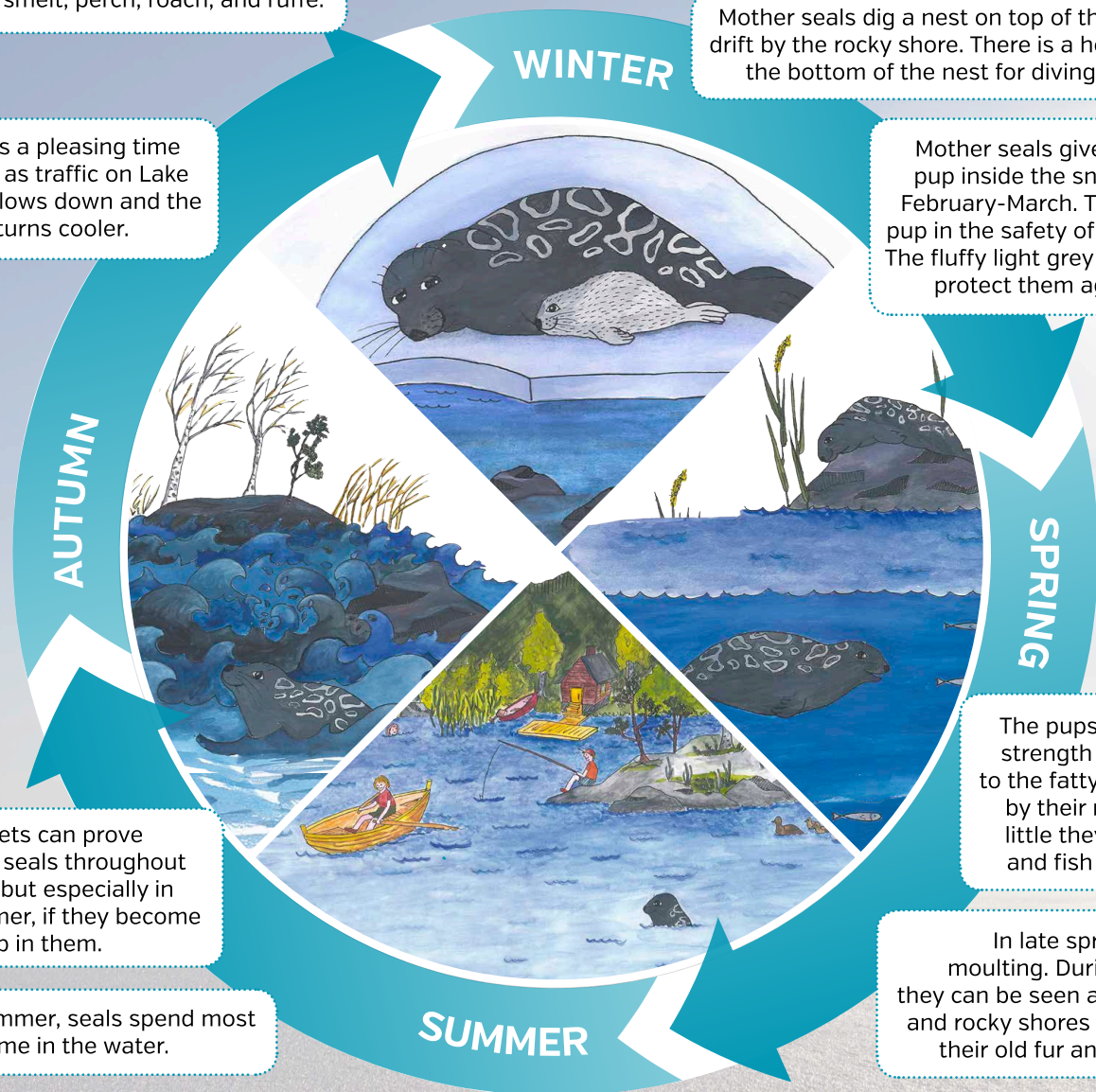
In late spring, seals start moulting. During that period, they can be seen ashore on rocks and rocky shores where they dry their old fur and scratch it off.

In the spring, seals also start fasting, which they continue to do throughout the summer.

When the summer comes, seal pups start their independent life and must cope on their own.

In the summer, seals spend most of their time in the water.

Fishing nets can prove lethal for seals throughout the year, but especially in the summer, if they become caught up in them.



# The Saimaa Ringed Seal

I'm a friend of snow and cold weather



JUHA TASKINEN