

## WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Gather and share information. Read more on our site [www.sll.fi/ringed-seal](http://www.sll.fi/ringed-seal) and follow our ringed seal conservation work on [www.facebook.com/saimaannorppa](https://www.facebook.com/saimaannorppa).
- Don't use fishing nets. Instead, use a seal-safe fish trap with a special stopper, a wire frame installed in the funnel of the trap.
- Travel cautiously while in ringed seal areas. Avoid traveling in these areas during the winter, so you will not disturb the seals during their breeding season. When the lakes are ice-free, stay far enough away from ringed seals which may be resting on exposed rocks.
- Support our work for the conservation of the ringed seal. Call the number **0600 17110** [5 euros/call], or make a donation to our bank account Danske Bank FI94 8000 1600 0988 50 [message: ringed seal].



## WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN ACHIEVED:

- Due to conservation work, the Saimaa ringed seal population has seen small increases during some years, but this growth is still unstable.
- Due to fishing restrictions and education of the public, the number of fish traps dangerous to the ringed seal has decreased. Deaths of ringed seal pups caused by fishing tackle in the spring have reduced accordingly. However – these deaths have unfortunately shifted to summertime when there are no fishing restrictions.
- Two new national parks have been established at Lake Saimaa, Linnansaari and Kolovesi, as well as other conservation areas to help protect the ringed seal.
- With the help of cooperation, the Saimaa Ringed Seal – LIFE project, and a common conservation plan, the protection of the ringed seal will be further enhanced.

## OUR GOALS:

- Our goal is to multiply the Saimaa ringed seal population from what it is at present. Our intermediate goal is to increase the population to 400 individuals by the year 2025.
- Deaths of ringed seal pups and adults caused by fishing tackle must be eliminated. The number of fish traps that are dangerous to the ringed seal has decreased.
- Disturbances to the ringed seal caused by lakeshore land use, especially during their breeding season, must be prevented. If need be, moving around in the vicinity of their breeding grounds must be restricted.
- Education and communication must be carried out even more effectively. Sufficient resources for research must be guaranteed.

Donation Solicitation license number 2020-2012-4007.

Etelä-Karjalan Osuuskauppa is helping the Saimaa ringed seal in cooperation with the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation.



EERO KORHOLA, ISMO MARTTINEN, TERO SIPILÄ, JUHA TASHKINEN



The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation  
[saimaa@sll.fi](mailto:saimaa@sll.fi) • [www.sll.fi/ringed-seal](http://www.sll.fi/ringed-seal)

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SAIMAA RINGED SEAL

- The Saimaa ringed seal, *Pusa hispida saimensis*, is extremely endangered. There are only about 300 Saimaa ringed seals in the world.
- Ringed seals have no natural enemies other than Humans. The biggest threat to the ringed seal is net fishing.
- The Saimaa ringed seal is a subspecies of the ringed seal. It is bigger than its closest phylogenetic relatives, the Ladoga ringed seal and the Baltic ringed seal. The Saimaa ringed seal is between 130 and 145 centimeters in length and weighs between 50 and 90 kilograms.
- The Saimaa ringed seal is colored dark gray, black or brown. Its coat has distinctive, circular rings.
- Saimaa ringed seals live as small subpopulations in different parts of Lake Saimaa. They breed in the same areas year after year. Young Saimaa ringed seals, however, have a wider range.
- The gray-furred ringed seal pup is born in a sheltered snow cave in February–March. At birth, the ringed seal pup weighs 4 to 5 kilograms. The mother suckles its pup until the ice breaks up on the lake, after which the ringed seal pup learns to catch its own food.
- The Saimaa ringed seal is adapted to life in the water. It spends 60–80% of its life under water. It can remain submerged for up to 20 minutes, but its dives usually last 3–8 minutes.
- The sense of touch through its whiskers is the Saimaa ringed seal's most important sense. The ringed seal uses its whiskers to orient itself and to hunt in the dark waters of Lake Saimaa.
- The Saimaa ringed seal eats small fish such as vendace, smelt, roach and perch.

[www.sll.fi/ringed-seal](http://www.sll.fi/ringed-seal)

# SAIMAA RINGED SEAL

THE MOST ENDANGERED RINGED SEAL IN THE WORLD  
The Saimaa ringed seal lives only in Finland's Lake Saimaa. It is under imminent threat of extinction. If we act now, we can save our wonderful ringed seal!

01/2015

JUHA TASHKINEN

JUHA TASHKINEN

Suomen  luonnonsuojeluliitto

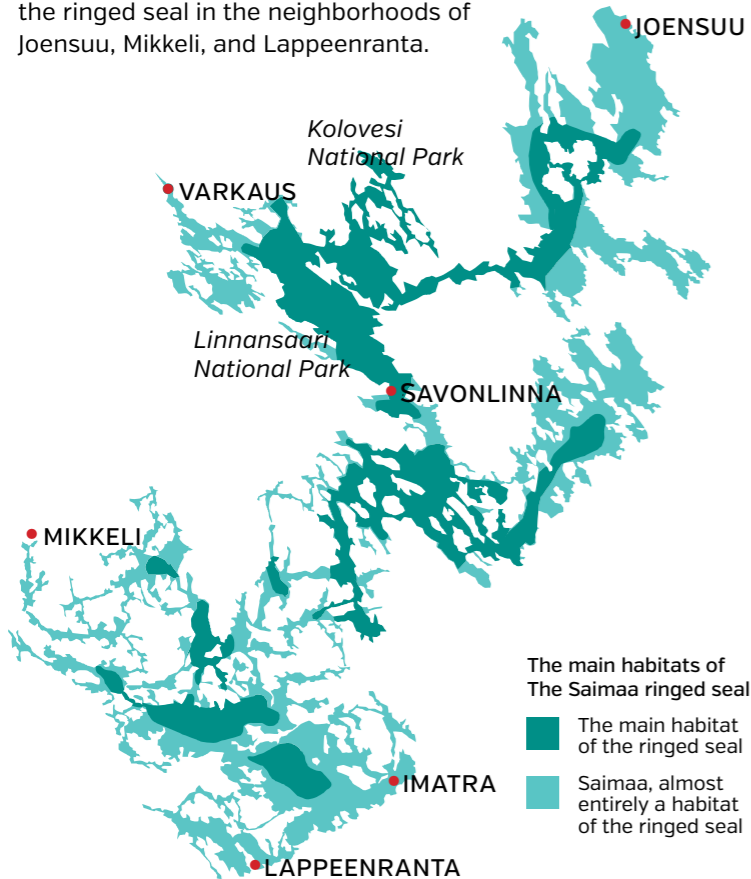
The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation

## HOW TO SAVE THE SAIMAA RINGED SEAL

If there is common will, the conservation of the Saimaa ringed seal is simple. The only natural enemy of the ringed seal is Humans. If we can cooperate as conservationists, recreational fishermen and cottagers of the Lake Saimaa district, fishery collectives, researchers, state officials and decision-makers, we will be able to save our ringed seal.

## AREA OF DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAIMAA RINGED SEAL

Saimaa ringed seals are distributed throughout different parts of Lake Saimaa. As its population increases, it is hoped that the ringed seal's range will expand, and it will return to other areas which it formerly occupied. Then, you could see the ringed seal in the neighborhoods of Joensuu, Mikkeli, and Lappeenranta.



## FUTURE THREATS AND SOLUTIONS



### Fishing restrictions protect the ringed seal

Due to our campaigning for fishing regulations, springtime deaths of ringed seal pups from entanglement in fishing tackle have decreased, but deaths have increased during the summer when there are no fishing restrictions. Net fishing is still the biggest threat to the ringed seals. We give people advice on fishing, and provide fishermen with fish traps so that they will voluntarily stop using fishnets. We also aim for additional fishing restrictions to protect the ringed seal.



### A special stopper protects ringed seal pups

In addition to fishing nets, fish traps can be dangerous to ringed seals. A special stopper installed in the funnel of the trap prevents the funnel from expanding, so the ringed seal pup cannot enter the fish trap and die. We use donations to purchase these stoppers and educate people on how to use them.



### The ringed seal needs peace

The ringed seal needs to remain undisturbed during its breeding season (between December and April). The sound of people moving around on the icy surface of the lake may cause the ringed seal mother to flee her nest which can potentially result in the pup freezing to death. Undisrupted breeding is especially important to the ringed seal during difficult, warm winters when there is little snow.



### Warm winters make breeding difficult

When there's not enough snow or the temperature is too warm, the ringed seal cannot make its winter nest, or the nest may collapse too early. We are actively working to prevent climate change to secure the future of the ringed seal. We participate in new forms of conservation work, for example by plowing additional snowbanks to create seal nesting areas during winters when there's not enough snow.



### Lakeshore building narrows territories

The increase of lakeshore building and the number of vacation homes in the Lake Saimaa district add to the disturbances and traffic within the breeding grounds of the ringed seal. We help the ringed seal by defending and protecting its habitat by, for example, influencing planning.



### The future of Lake Saimaa and ringed seal is our common concern

Many threats to the ringed seal stem from ignorance or indifference. We advise and guide people in many ways. We visit schools, public events and summer happenings in the Lake Saimaa district to provide information about the ringed seal and its conservation. A substantial part of our work for enlightenment and environmental education is conducted within the project Saimaa Ringed Seal - LIFE.



### Lack of scientific information still a problem

To facilitate the conservation of the ringed seal, it is important to have information about its population, its distribution, and to understand how climate change may affect it. Much scientific information is yet-unknown. We still know relatively little about the life of the ringed seal under water. We work in close cooperation with researchers.



### Chance can sink the Saimaa ringed seal

There are so few Saimaa ringed seals left that the species could become extinct due to, for example, an unexpected disease epidemic. If unsuccessful breeding were to combine with numerous deaths by fishing nets in a single year, this also could cause their extinction. Therefore, it is important to increase the population of ringed seals.

SUPPORT THE CONSERVATION  
OF THE RINGED SEAL  
BY CALLING

**0600 17110**  
[5 EUROS/CALL].

READ MORE ON:  
[www.sll.fi/ringed-seal](http://www.sll.fi/ringed-seal)

