



# Photographing Seals on Ice

## Background

Climate change is affecting our whole planet. Polar ecosystems are changing much faster than other parts of the planet and we are seeing significant changes in the extent and seasonality of the sea ice. Yet, we still don't understand how Antarctic seals, particularly those that depend on sea ice, are responding to these changing environmental conditions.

Scientists from the University of North Carolina Wilmington, University of Exeter, University of California Santa Cruz, and the British Antarctic Survey are investigating the effects of climate change on the ecology of Antarctic ice seals, particularly crabeater seals. Crabeater seals prey almost exclusively on Antarctic krill, a keystone prey species for predators ranging from fish to large whales. By collecting Antarctic seal sightings, we can better our understanding of how seals are responding to climatic changes such as sea ice extent and krill habitat distribution, and subsequently learn about the health of the entire Antarctic ecosystem. You can help by taking and submitting photos of seals on ice.

## How can you/guests participate?

Wildlife photography is a fun and great way to participate in the science that goes into protecting Antarctica and its inhabitants. Simply by photographing and submitting your photos of seals to our project, our scientists will be able to determine the important habitats used by various Antarctic seal species. These data can then be used to make management decisions regarding areas to protect to ensure thriving Antarctic seal populations.

Travelers can participate throughout their entire trip by photographing any seals they see **hauled out on ice**. When photographing, please note the following:

- Make sure cameras are set to Antarctic local date and time (ship's time) and use the camera's GPS, if available. The project's data analysts will use GPS data either received from the participants online submission form (more info below), directly from the camera, or from the time stamp that is attached in the metadata of each photo to derive location (each IAATO vessel is continuously sending its position, so if the time stamp is correct, we can determine where the photo was taken).
- Using either a phone or camera, photograph the full body of any seals you sight. Be sure to follow responsible marine mammal watching guidelines (do not disturb wildlife to obtain photos).

## How to submit photos

Photos can be submitted on our website: [www.antarctic-seals.com](http://www.antarctic-seals.com). Alternatively, photos can be submitted directly to the project coordinator, Alyssa Scott (see contact info below). When submitting photos online, you will be asked to complete a form asking for the following information:

- Name and contact information (required)
- Date(s) of sighting(s) (required)
- General area of where the sighting occurred (required)
- Latitude / longitude of sighting (optional). Please include the exact coordinates if you have them. If you do not, we may be able to pull this information from other resources as long as we have accurate data & time information which is typically included in all camera photos.
- Additional notes (optional). This can be anything regarding the surrounding environment at the time of the sighting such as weather, animal behavior, other species in the area, etc.
- If you are staff and running this project on board for your guests, make sure they have the information they need to submit the photos, or gather photos on their behalf to submit. Despite best intentions, guests often fail to upload photos after they disembark.

Once you complete and submit the form, you will be automatically directed to our server to upload your photographs!



## Expected results

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The results of this project will be published. All participants will be acknowledged in any papers using their sightings data. Final reports and publications will be shared with participants and IAATO. Follow updates on <https://www.antarctic-seals.com>

## Main contact information

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Project Coordinator: Alyssa Scott // [aas1781@uncw.edu](mailto:aas1781@uncw.edu)

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