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Short communication

Assessing conservation priorities in the Benguela ecosystem, South Africa: analysing predation by seals on threatened seabirds

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Abstract

Cape fur seals (*Arctocephalus pusillus pusillus*), a protected species, have become abundant in the Benguela ecosystem off the west coast of southern Africa (present population size about 1.5–2 million animals), and are killing substantial numbers of red data book species of seabirds (African penguin *Spheniscus demersus*, Cape gannet *Morus capensis*, Cape cormorant *Phalacrocorax capensis*, bank cormorant *P. neglectus* and crowned cormorant *P. coronatus*). The decision has been taken to reduce the impact of seal predation by selectively culling seals which are witnessed killing seabirds. Between 1993 and 2001 a total of 153 seals, which were killing fledgling gannet chicks, were culled.

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