

Harbor seal decline linked to sea lions

by UPI

JUNEAU, Alaska - A marked fall in the number of harbor seals in Alaska's Glacier Bay National Park may be due to the predatory actions of area sea lions, a report said.

The Anchorage (Ala.) Daily News reported Monday documented attacks on harbor seals by sea lions have increased dramatically since 1995 in the Southern Alaskan park and may be behind the recent population decrease.

Area experts said the sea lions typically catch a harbor seal cub with their sharp teeth and repeatedly shake it to death.

Estimations of the impact of such attacks on the park's population of harbor seals have shown in some areas, more than half of the cub population is decimated by the predatory sea lions.

Yet area seal hunter Raymond Sensmeier dispelled the link, saying that he had never witnessed such an attack and regional marine transportation was likely the cause for the harbor seal decline.

"It's cruise ships along with sightseeing charter boats and catamarans," he told the Daily News.

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