

Life above the ice in the Weddell Sea

Activity for KS3:

The Weddell seal lives farther south than any other mammal. They are impressive divers, and can reach 600m depth and spend as long as 82 minutes underwater.

We want to count how many Weddell seals there are in the Ross Sea area of Antarctica. Only then can we tell if they are being adversely affected by human fishing for toothfish, or by the ice melting away beneath them due to climate change. But it is really hard to count seals – they live in very remote hard-to-reach locations where weather conditions are extreme, and they spend a lot of their time in the water. But during the summer they haul out onto the ice for some time each day. If we can count them then, and also understand the typical pattern of numbers out on the ice, then perhaps we can make reasonable estimates of the population.



Are Antarctic Weddell seals threatened by fishing? By climate change? Help us find out.

Using the website: <https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/slg0808/weddell-seal-count>

In the photograph there are mothers and pups, seals and pups.

Your task is to classify the seals.

Before you begin, read through the tutorial. The project aims to measure the variation in the number of seals on the ice throughout the daily cycle. So we need good counts.

Place a green spot over a mother with her pup beside her, a blue spot over a pup on its own, and a red spot on all the other seals. When in doubt if it's a pup, use the red spot. Include seals at the edge of the image. Do not count dead seals.

Teachers:

For further information visit <https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/slg0808/weddell-seal-count/about/research>