

How can we care for the seadragon's lair?

Weedy seadragons are only found in southern Australian waters. They live in seagrass and kelp beds, reefs and structures colonised by seaweed. They are not good swimmers, and so have a relatively small home range, relying on their amazing camouflage for their survival. This makes them very vulnerable to any problems they may encounter...

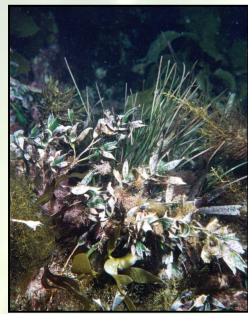


The problems...

Disappearing home



Hot house: Kelp seaweeds (*Macrocystis pyrifera*, *Ecklonia radiata*) are declining, mainly due to rising sea temperatures (~1.5°C off eastern Tasmania since 1960), and by changes to the balance of sea-life caused by overfishing.

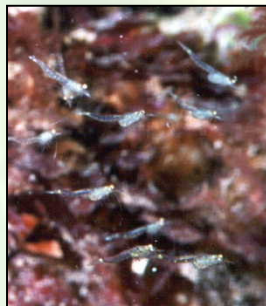


Block out: Seagrass beds (*Heterozostera tasmanica*) are the southern Australian habitat most threatened by human activity. Nutrients from sewage and fertiliser run-off cause algae to grow so much they block out the light, destroying seagrass beds. Light can also be blocked out by sediment being churned up by boats and swimmers.

Polluted home



Slick act: Road runoff can contain oil, poisonous chemicals, sediment and nutrients (e.g. from dog faeces) and plastic rubbish. Together these threaten seadragons, their habitat and food.



Favourite food: seadragons eat mysid shrimps, which are vulnerable to pollution.

Hazardous home



Deadly tangle: discarded nets can ensnare seadragons and other fish.



Loved to death: seadragons have little chance of survival once flushed from their homes - only around one in 600 make it to adulthood.



The solutions...

Clean up your act!

Be aware of what ends up in your local stormwater drain. Prevent fertilisers being washed off your garden, keep your car serviced, reduce your use of detergents and waxes and dispose of waste engine oil in designated facilities. Recycle or dispose of plastic bags thoughtfully and pick up any rubbish you find in or by the sea. And clean up after your dog!

Reduce sediment entering the sea from your garden and driveway. Take care when boating or swimming so as to minimise disturbance to sea-floor sediment. Tell the Council about sediment from roads, building sites or agricultural or forestry land entering the sea.

Encourage your Council to upgrade sewage treatment plants or to relocate outlets if necessary.

Look but don't touch!

Observe seadragons from a respectful distance according to the *Diving with Dragons Code of Conduct*, which can be viewed at <http://www.dragonsearch.asn.au>.

Be greenhouse-aware!

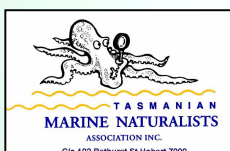
Reduce your impact on climate change by, for example, reducing car use, insulating your home and upgrading to more efficient appliances. For more ideas, see www.greenhouse.gov.au.

Get involved!

Report seadragon sightings (alive or beached) to the Tasmanian Marine Naturalists Association (www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/tasmarine), Coastcare (www.ea.gov.au/coasts/coastcare) or on <http://www.dragonsearch.asn.au>. Better still, join up.

Talk to friends and family about the plight of the seadragons and how we can all help them to survive.

Watch the TMNA video *Seadragon's Lair: Threats to Fish Habitat*. Tel. 6265 5724 to order your copy (\$15).



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