

CURIOUS freshwater seal



Parcs
Nunavik
Parks

Parc national Tursujuq protects the critical habitat of the Lacs des Loups Marins subspecies of harbor seal (*Phoca vitulina mellomae*). This freshwater seal lives up to 250 km inland, in the park's vast network of lakes and rivers. Over time and following the slow retreat of the ice cap and the subsequent rebound of the land mass, the seal was cut off from Hudson Bay and evolved in an entirely freshwater environment.

This subspecies is on the federal endangered species list due to its small numbers and limited range.

The seal has long been known to the Cree and Inuit peoples. Although mentioned in Hudson's Bay Company expedition reports dating back to the 1800s, the seal did not attract the attention of Western science until the 1930s.

A closer look at the traditional toponymy of the park's various bodies of water, which can be found on the base map of the SIKU application, reveals names of lakes, bays and arms of lakes derived from the word *qasigiaq* (iu) or *nuuchimii-achikw* (cr), showing the importance of this territory to the Inuit and Cree, as well as their knowledge of the freshwater seal.

Nuuchimii-achikw means forest seal in Cree language, while *qasigiaq* is the general Inuktitut name for harbour seal.

“ Andrew Kawapit recounts the day when some members of his people, the Eeyou, killed a lot of seal. “They burned some of the parts they couldn't take with them, like some of the fat and other parts of the seal. This was during fall, when the seals were fattest.” Later, the hunters conducted a *kusapichikin* (shaking tent) to ask for more seals. The seal spirit reminded them of the time they had burned the seal fat instead of preserving it, telling them he was not happy about the waste. The spirit wouldn't release any more seals because its flesh had been blackened by the fire (*kawayipiyasusuyan*). ”



DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS
OR COMMENTS?

Contact the Nunavik Parks team at:
conservation.education@krg.ca
www.nunavikparks.ca

REPORT your OBSERVATIONS of freshwater seal



We ask paddlers and other visitors to report any sightings of freshwater seal to the Nunavik Parks team.

They have been observed in the Nastapoka River and in the lakes Lacs des Loups Marins, Bourdel, and Wiyâshâkimî.

INFORMATION TO REPORT

Date	Time	Latitude	Longitude	Number of individuals	Other information

Send us your comments to:
conservation.education@krg.ca

TAKE PICTURES!



And enjoy this exceptional moment in the company of a unique and rare animal. Seals are curious animals, but as with other wild animals you must keep your distance and make sure there is no change in the behavior of the animal you are observing.



Did you know that your wildlife observations can also be recorded using the **SIKU** application, the Indigenous Knowledge Social Network.

Download the app and create a profile to upload your observations. In your post preferences or profile, tag our organization (Parcs Nunavik Parks) or become a member of the project *Suivi de la faune de Parcs Nunavik Parks Wildlife Monitoring*.

Thank you for your help and participation in the conservation efforts of Nunavik's national parks.



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