FACTFILE

Number Living in the Wild: Between 350-450 adults
IUCN Status: Endangered
Scientific Name: Monachus monachus
Weight: Around 300 kg
Size: Around 2.4 m long
Life Span: Between 20-30 years in the wild
Habitat: Marine habitats
Diet: Carnivore

Where Do They Live?
There used to be large populations of Mediterranean monk seal in the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and in North Atlantic waters. Now they only live in the Mediterranean Sea, along the coasts of Greece, Cyprus and western and southern Turkey.

Key
- Oceans and Seas
- Land
- Monk Seal Habitats

MEDITERRANEAN MONK SEAL

WHY ARE THEY IN DANGER?

For hundreds of years, Mediterranean monk seals have been hunted for their furs and meat. Now the species is threatened because their marine habitats are being damaged and destroyed. Mediterranean monk seals used to raise and give birth to their young on open stretches of beach. However, because of urban development, they can no longer use these and have been forced to give birth in caves where they are safe from humans. More than half of seal pups don’t live longer than two months because they are washed away or drowned when storms hit their cave.

In 1997, it was thought that a fatal virus was responsible for the deaths of over two thirds of the largest surviving monk seal population at Cabo Blanco off the coastline of Western Sahara, Africa.

How Are They Being Protected?
Conservation action has focused on protecting breeding caves, stopping damaging fishing methods and protecting beach habitats. Government funding from different countries has also been used to study the current population and to educate people on the importance of conserving the seals. Conservation efforts over the last 30 years have led to a small increase in the monk seal population. Further conservation steps need to be taken in order to save the Mediterranean monk seal from extinction.

The Mediterranean Monk Seal is one of the most endangered seal species on the planet.