



Under the sea

As most of us live along the coast, we are fortunate to gaze across the ocean and admire the blue tranquillity lying before us. Although the ocean offers us a place to go to when we want to relax and take a swim, it is also a major source of food, not only for us, but for many other life forms. Due to over fishing in our oceans many species of fish are endangered and close to extinction. When reading this, we instinctively think about the lack of fish we will be able to choose from when next we go to a restaurant or supermarket, but what we do not think about is this: if humans are running out of fish to eat, how will the other life forms that eat only fish, survive?

Why should we care?

There are countless life forms in the ocean which are struggling to survive due to lack of food and having their habitats destroyed. We may think, 'What difference will it make if one species of fish becomes extinct?' The answer: we may not notice the difference now, but the food chain within the ocean will be affected and this could change the fragile balance that exists. One example of human intrusion impacting on a species is the jellyfish. Due to climate change, warming waters, over fishing and pollution in the oceans, jellyfish are flourishing and they have a negative effect both for humans and other fish life. Besides for jellyfish stinging us in the sea, it is their food source that is the bigger concern. They live off fish eggs and larvae, zooplankton and small fish. This increase in the jellyfish population means less fish eggs, and therefore less fish for everyone. And so the food pyramid is gradually affected.



Be part of the SOS Festival

Many seabirds, such as the albatross species, are threatened as well as the African penguin which is now on the endangered species list. BirdLife South Africa will hold the SOS Festival to raise awareness about broad marine conservation issues. The 'Save Our Seabirds Festival' is a National Marine Week initiative from BirdLife South Africa's Seabird Division, in partnership with the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Iziko Museums and runs from 8 October 2012 till 14 October 2012. Visit: www.sosfestival.co.za and look under events for a line-up of fun and interesting activities during this period.

Your choice

The SASSI pocket guide lists all the species of fish that are good to buy and those which are endangered and being over fished. Print this guide and keep it in your wallet or purse to refer to whenever fish is on the menu. Know that the choice you make will be sending a direct message to the fisheries - if you refuse to choose fish from the orange and red list, you are stating that these fish are not to be caught. If we stop the demand, then the fisheries will no longer fish for these species and we will stand a chance of saving them. Make your stand.

Visit www.wwfsassi.co.za for a printable pdf version of the SASSI Consumer Seafood Pocket Guide.



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