



WILDLIFE INTERACTIONS

- Like any farming operations Huon works hard to keep both our fish as well as the local wildlife safe. We believe the solution to this is good barrier technology and our industry-leading Fortress Pens and nets protect seals and birds by restricting access to the pens above and below the water line.
- Seals are one of the oceans natural inhabitants and we have a responsibility to minimise any impact we have on them. The best way to protect them and keep them safe is by preventing them from entering our pens in the first place. Seals are very intelligent and naturally curious. Before the Fortress Pens were implemented, the seals could see the fish through the net so it was commonplace for seals to climb up the above-water pen wall to gain entry. They were also known to ram the nets in an attempt to create a hole to swim through (and bearing in mind that male seals can weigh upwards of 500kg they can create big holes!).
- We report all wildlife and predator interactions to relevant authorities and release regular updates via our [Sustainability Dashboard](#)
- Huon has a dedicated Wildlife team who actively work to minimise animal interactions on our farms. This team spend a lot of time checking equipment and pens making sure everything is maintained to a high standard.
- Huon also works closely with the RSPCA in relation to protecting the welfare of both the stock and native wildlife. This relationship was instrumental in Huon ceasing to use some types of seal deterrents (bean bags and scare caps).
- Huon staff participate in the annual Gull Count, undertaken by Birdlife Tasmania which brings together like-minded bird enthusiasts and industries to monitor the populations and habitat of Tasmania's three gull species, Silver Gull, Pacific Gull and Kelp Gull.

SEALS

Thirty-five species of seals inhabit the world's oceans, of which, two breed in Tasmanian waters—the Australian fur seal and Long-nosed fur seal. Other seals that may occasionally be seen in Tasmania's waters include the Southern elephant seal, Leopard seal, Sub-Antarctic fur seal and 'true' seals. Commercial harvesting of seals was commonplace in Tasmania from 1798-1830's which drove seals to the brink. Banning of this practice has allowed the seal population to naturally increase.

Seals are a natural marine predator, and as we share our waterways with them we are mindful of their safety as well as the safety of our fish and staff. Our patented Fortress Pens (Huon has so far invested around \$100M) aim to prevent seals from entering our pens to eat or attack the salmon, which means that less chance of them becoming trapped. The nets are made from Dyneema, the same material used in bullet-proof vests, and are the strongest developed and used in fish farming worldwide. The pen design hinders easy access by seals to the walkways, reducing the likelihood of aggressive seals interacting with employees.

One of the key features of the Fortress Pens is a patented, wide-style stanchion with flexible seal fence posts in an angled socket to allow an outer predator net to be set around the inner net while keeping a two



metre and seven metre separation between the nets. This outer predator net is connected directly to the sinker tube to reduce rigging and keep it tensioned at all times and in all weather; in essence it provides a barrier to keep predators away from the fish.

Our Fortress Pens were instrumental in Huon being able to cease relocating seals in August 2016, more than a year before the State Government banned the practice (September 2017).

An updated Seal Management Framework was rolled out in 2018 which outlines the approved measures to manage seal interactions and sets out standards for wildlife exclusion from fish pens. This framework was a collaboration between the Tasmanian Government and industry. The framework can be found [here](#)

The Framework outlines the approved deterrents – Seal Control Units (Crackers): explosive charges that are thrown into the water to detonate under the surface; Beanbags: lead-filled projectiles, capable of being fired from a choke-less 12-gauge shot gun and Seal Scare Caps: blunt pre-stressed darts fired from a DPIPWE-approved firearm, which detonate on impact with the target.

Huon has not used any scare caps or bean bags since August 2018. Our use of crackers has increased as a result of our expansion into off-shore waters in Storm Bay; additional fish in the water equals more seals! The crackers used by Huon are made of cardboard, so there is no plastic debris entering the water.

Very occasionally seals are sedated to enable removal from the pen or net (in accordance with protocols outlined in the Seal Management Framework). This is a last resort practice (inherent risk for both staff and seal) and the practice is only used after multiple attempts to remove the seal from within the pen or net. Staff undertaking sedations require a DPIPWE issued permit for sedation (which includes training) and Huon's sedation team always includes a veterinary delegate. These seals can only be released within the marine lease. In 2018 and 2019, two seals were sedated each year, and in 2020 just one seal was sedated.

BIRDS

In the minds of sea and coastal birds, salmon farms are an attractive place to perch and source food—both the fish and the fish-feed. The birds commonly found at our farms include cormorants (black-faced, great and pied), seagulls (Pacific, silver and kelp), eagles (mostly sea but occasionally wedge-tailed), and the occasional penguin, petrel and short-tailed shearwater.

It should be noted that short-tailed shearwaters are migratory birds that spend the winter months at sea in the northern Pacific, notably off the coasts of Japan, Siberia and Alaska. They return to Australia to breed over the warmer months at colonies like those on Bruny Island. Some Tasmanian colonies (and those on nearby islands) are believed to consist of over 16 million adults. Like with other migratory species, it is not unusual to not see this bird throughout the cooler months.

Preventing birds from becoming entangled or drowning inside our pens is a high priority for Huon. In fact, preventing bird interactions was a driver in the development of our Fortress Pens. Designed in-house by Huon staff, the pens have customised nets and barriers developed to avoid bird entries and entanglement. The Fortress Pen net designs include higher, more taught nets, differing mesh sizes and net weights (depending on where the net is located on the pen), and diamond shaped net holes (to increase stress capability). All these features are designed to prevent net holes and bird entries/entanglements while staying well above the water to ensure birds cannot access the water through the nets.

By denying birds the opportunity to perch and access to both fish and feed, they are discouraged from viewing our pens as a place to rest and as a source of food. Additionally, limiting the bird interactions at our Fortress Pens has further safeguarded the health and wellbeing of our fish, ensuring they don't get stressed, or worse, killed.

In the unlikely event a bird enters a Fortress Pen, we have installed custom-designed escape hatches to ensure birds are not trapped. The innovative escape hatches feature a perching bar (to attract birds) and a one-way bird-sized hatch that guarantees a bird cannot re-enter once it has gone through the gridded hatch.



WHALES

In over 35 years of operating, Huon has not had a negative interaction with whales and our marine operations. On occasion, whales do approach our leases, especially in Storm Bay, which is why Huon has a *Migratory Whale Interaction Management Plan* for this farm site. This document details guidelines around vessel use when whales are in the area, avoidance strategies to reduce the potential for entanglement as well as setting out a clear process for reporting sightings. In addition to this plan, each Huon vessel has a designated person on the lookout for wildlife (including whales). In the event that a whale is spotted in the area, the skipper will then undertake measures in line with government guidelines including cutting the engines and not approaching the animal.

In the event of a whale stranding, like the recent mass stranding in Macquarie Harbour (October 2020), Huon employees may be called upon to offer assistance. Whales beach themselves so prolifically in Tasmania that our state has a higher level of training and specialised equipment available for response.

