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### **On the extinction of the Southern Dutch harbour seal population**

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#### **Abstract**

The harbour seal population in the southern part of the Netherlands, the Delta area, has decreased sharply since about 1953. Causes for the observed decrease, such as hunting pressure, habitat limitation through construction works, disturbance and water pollution, are discussed. As in the Wadden Sea, where the seal population has been studied more intensively, the initial sharpest decrease was caused by overhunting, probably followed by the impact of pollution. Construction works have had a secondary effect, as by the time these began, numbers were already very much reduced.