

ECOLOGICAL DYNAMICS OF ANTARCTIC SEALS AND WHALES  
(ABSTRACT)

R. M. LAWS

*British Antarctic Survey, Natural Environmental Research Council,  
Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0ET, England*

The Southern Ocean constitutes one tenth of the world ocean and in contrast to the Arctic is characterised by an assemblage of seal and whale species which are less diverse than their Arctic counterparts and in which individuals are larger. The reasons for these differences will be explored.

Factors promoting ecological separation will be discussed, including habitat preferences, distribution and migration; food preferences and feeding behaviour, growth patterns, reproduction cycles and behaviour, and population dynamics. The extreme perturbation of the ecosystem by man, through exploitation of key components, the seals and whales, will be described and the ecological interactions and consequences of these impacts will be discussed, both in relation to their direct effects on a series of exploited species and on related species that have not yet been significantly exploited.