

Government leak reveals destruction of Marine Wildlife

Scotland has failed to meet a ten year old target to prevent damage to marine wildlife in marine protected areas according to a leaked draught by SNH (now NatureScot) and Marine Scotland dated over a year ago.

Argyll looks really bad:-

Extract from "The Ferret" who have seen the leaked report:-

Scottish Marine Region	Habitat (% loss)						Total loss (ha)	Target met
	Blue mussel	Flame shell	Horse mussel	Maerl	Seagrasses	Serpulid aggs		
Forth and Tay	?		?		?		?	?
North East							?	?
Moray Firth	99.5		STABLE		?		217	NO
Orkney Islands		?	?	?	?		?	?
Shetland Isles	?		?	?	?		?	?
North Coast				?			?	?
West Highlands	?	<1	?	?	?	>90	20	NO
Outer Hebrides	?		?	?	27.1		180	NO
Argyll	?	53.3	LOSS	?	LOSS	35.0	>78	NO
Clyde	?	9.1	?	9.9	?		23	NO
Solway	?			?	?		?	?

Summary table from leaked Scottish Government report, showing habitat losses between 2011 and 2019.

The report blames the declines on dredging, trawling, anchoring, overfishing and engineering works. It also fingers climate change, ocean acidification and pollution from fish farms and other sources, as well as diseases and storms.

Losses have been particularly severe in the Argyll marine area. Since 2011 it has lost 53 per cent of its flame shell beds and 35 per cent of its serpulid tubeworm reefs, known as aggregations, as well as unspecified areas of seagrass and horse mussel beds.

The report highlights a "marked deterioration" and "widespread fragmentation" of serpulid reefs in Loch Creran in Argyll. The cause is said to be "uncertain", though there has been damage from fishing and pollution in the past.

According to the leaked report, more than 90 per cent of the serpulid reefs in Loch Teacuis, an arm of Loch Sunart in the West Highlands, have been lost. Virtually all of the blue mussel beds in the Dornoch Firth, part of the Moray Firth marine region, are said to have gone.

Loch Fyne in the Clyde region has lost 10 per cent of its maerl beds and nine per cent of its flame shell beds. The report points out these have been damaged by scallop dredging in the past.

Maybe Argyll looks worse because more data is gathered here. However there is still very little data gathered here or anywhere else, and barely any for the Orkneys or Shetlands. These terrible results for Marine wildlife are especially shocking as they are all based on data from marine protected areas.

“The Scottish Government maintains that 30 per cent of our seas are protected. But this is misleading because many of these supposedly protected areas have no protective measures in place at all.” - Ailsa McLellan

The report’s main conclusion is that the marine habitats in five regions have shrunk between 2011 and 2019. “The target of no loss...has not been achieved in the Moray Firth, West Highlands, Outer Hebrides, Argyll and Clyde regions,” it says.

The Scottish Government’s wildlife agency, NatureScot, confirmed that it had contributed to the leaked report as part of a full assessment of Scotland’s seas. “NatureScot’s assessment is based on data from seabed surveys carried out mainly in marine protected areas between 2011 and 2018,” said a spokesperson for the agency.

Read the full article in The Ferret here:-

https://theferret.scot/marine-wildlife-destruction-government-leak/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=New+Daily+Alerts&utm_content=Government+leak+reveals+destruction+of+marine+wildlife+Daily+Alerts+email+from+The+Ferret+for+TODAY

You can sign this petition to call for better management of the seabed:-

<https://ourseasscotland.eaction.org.uk/bring-back-the-fish>