

Antarctic Conservation



Seals, whales, fish and seabirds feed on krill, a small shrimp-like animal that is the basis of Antarctica's food chain.

PROTECTING THE FOOD WEB OF ANTARCTICA

Antarctica harbors one of the most extreme yet abundant environments on Earth, home to penguins, seals, whales, fish and seabirds that flourish in its frigid waters and icebound shores. These and dozens of other marine species are sustained by krill, small shrimp-like animals that form the basis of Antarctica's food chain. Without them, this spectacular continent and the oceans around it would be a virtual wasteland.

Until recently, Antarctica's krill were not heavily fished. A growing number of factory trawlers are now taking increasing quantities of krill from Antarctic waters each year to be processed into fish oil and meal for the aquaculture industry as well as for dietary supplements and cosmetics.

It is not only the increasing size of the krill catch that is of concern to marine scientists, but also its geographic distribution. Large quantities of krill are being caught near the rookeries and feeding grounds of penguins, whales, seals, albatross and other species, raising concern that too little food is being left behind to sustain healthy populations of these animals.

The Pew Environment Group is coordinating a coalition of conservation organizations from 15 countries to encourage the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, the international management organization with jurisdiction over the waters of Antarctica, to establish, by the end of 2009, a precautionary

management system that ensures sufficient krill for the continent's other creatures.

This new management regime must include:

- Distribution of catch in ways that do not threaten the availability of this important food source for other marine life;
- Observers on all krill fishing vessels; and
- A Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) that electronically reports the time and location of krill fishing for each boat.

Antarctica is one of the last remaining refuges for ocean wildlife. Our goal is to keep it that way.