

# Endangered Seals Wash Up Dead on Russian Beach

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The latest mass Caspian seal deaths are part of a recent string of marine life deaths and other ecological disasters in Russia that have sparked environmental fears. **Musa Salgereyev / TASS**

A dozen dead endangered seals have been found washed up on the shores of the Caspian Sea in southern Russia.

Footage [shared](#) from the republic of Dagestan last week showed Caspian seal carcasses lying motionless on the beach. Rescuer Ziyavdin Nikamogamedov [said](#) he had encountered at least 17 dead mammals in the dirty waters following torrential rains.

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Environmentalists [told](#) Interfax the seals may have died from tightly meshed poaching nets or raw sewage poisoning.

The Defense Ministry-run Zvezda broadcaster found what it called Chinese-made fishing nets

often used by poachers lying on the sand near the Caspian seal carcasses. Russian Academy of Sciences biologist Magomed-Rasul Magomedov told Zvezda the seals may have died as early as one month ago, but were only washed up by a recent tidal wave.

Regional environmental prosecutors launched an investigation into the animals' deaths, the RIA Dagestan news agency [reported](#) Sunday.

The Caspian seal population has declined from around 1 million to 40,000–60,000 in the past century, zoologist Ilya Gomyranov [told](#) the Dozhd television broadcaster.

Russia [added](#) Caspian seals to its list of endangered species in 2020, one year after Dagestan.

Dagestan adopted a Caspian seal conservation program in 2015.

Researchers previously attributed the deaths of more than 10,000 Caspian seals in 2000 to a viral disease known as [canine distemper](#).

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