Macquarie Island, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (since 1997), lies in the southwest Pacific Ocean, about halfway between New Zealand and Antarctica, at 54°30’S, 158°57’E. Regionally part of Oceania and politically a part of Tasmania, Australia, since 1900, it became a Tasmanian State Reserve in 1978. Macquarie Island is a site of high diversity for marine mammals with the following marine mammal species breeding there: southern elephant seals (McMahon et al. 2005) and (Goldsworthy et al. 1999; 2009) and Antarctic, Subantarctic and New Zealand fur seals. The fur seal community at Macquarie Island is the only sub-Antarctic island where all three sympatric fur-seal species are known to reside (Goldsworthy et al. 1999; 2009, Lancaster et al., 2006; 2007). Southern elephant seals have a nearly circumpolar distribution in the Southern Ocean with most haul-out sites occurring on sub-Antarctic and
Antarctic islands (Ling, J. K., and M. M. Bryden. 1992. Mirounga leonina. Mammalian Species 391:1-8.). Four distinct stocks are recognised, centred on South Georgia, Kerguelen, and Macquarie Islands (Laws 1960). There is little interchange between these groups and there are phenotypic differences in size, growth, and onset of maturity (Laws 1979; Ling & Bryden 1981). The Macquarie Island stock includes 99% of the southern elephant seal population in the South Pacific sector of the Southern Ocean, the remaining 1% comprising the small populations breeding at Campbell and Antipodes Islands (Taylor & Taylor 1989). The Macquarie Island population has been continuously decreasing for the past seven decades at 1.2 % per annum (McMahon et al. 2005; Hindell et al. 2017).

Leopard seals are vagrant visitors to the island. Stays usually last from one to two days but may extend for over three months (Rounseveld and Eberhard 1980). Occurrences of killer whales (Orcinus orca) in the waters surrounding Sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island have been recorded since the 1820s (Travers et al. 2018). Killer whales are regular seasonal visitors to Macquarie Island where they are known to feed on southern elephant seals, fur seals and penguins; sightings peak from October to December (Travers et al. 2018). Many other cetacean species have been described from Macquarie Island (Clarke et al. 2017) including long-finned pilot whales (Globicephala melas), southern right whale dolphins (Lissodelphis peronii) and sperm whales (Physeter macrocephalus). Baleen whales such as southern right whales (Eubalaena australis) and humpback whales (Megaptera novaeangliae) also strand on occasion (Clarke et al. 2017). Five species of beaked whales have also been documented from strandings records (Clarke et al. 2017).

Though Subantarctic fur seals are nationally listed as Endangered in Australia, as are Southern elephant seals (Threatened Species Scientific Committee (2016a & b) the wider species population, to which these animals belong remain as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List (Hofmeyr
2015).