



Fish Trap Fishing and the Saimaa Ringed Seal

The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, the Our Saimaa Seal LIFE Project



THE SAIMAA RINGED SEAL AND FISHING



SAIMAA RINGED SEAL

Endangered subspecies of Ringed Seal

- population approx. 430–440 (year 2022)
- amount of fertile females: approx. 122 (year 2021)
- reaches maturity at the age of 4–6 years
- the female gives birth to only one pup at a time



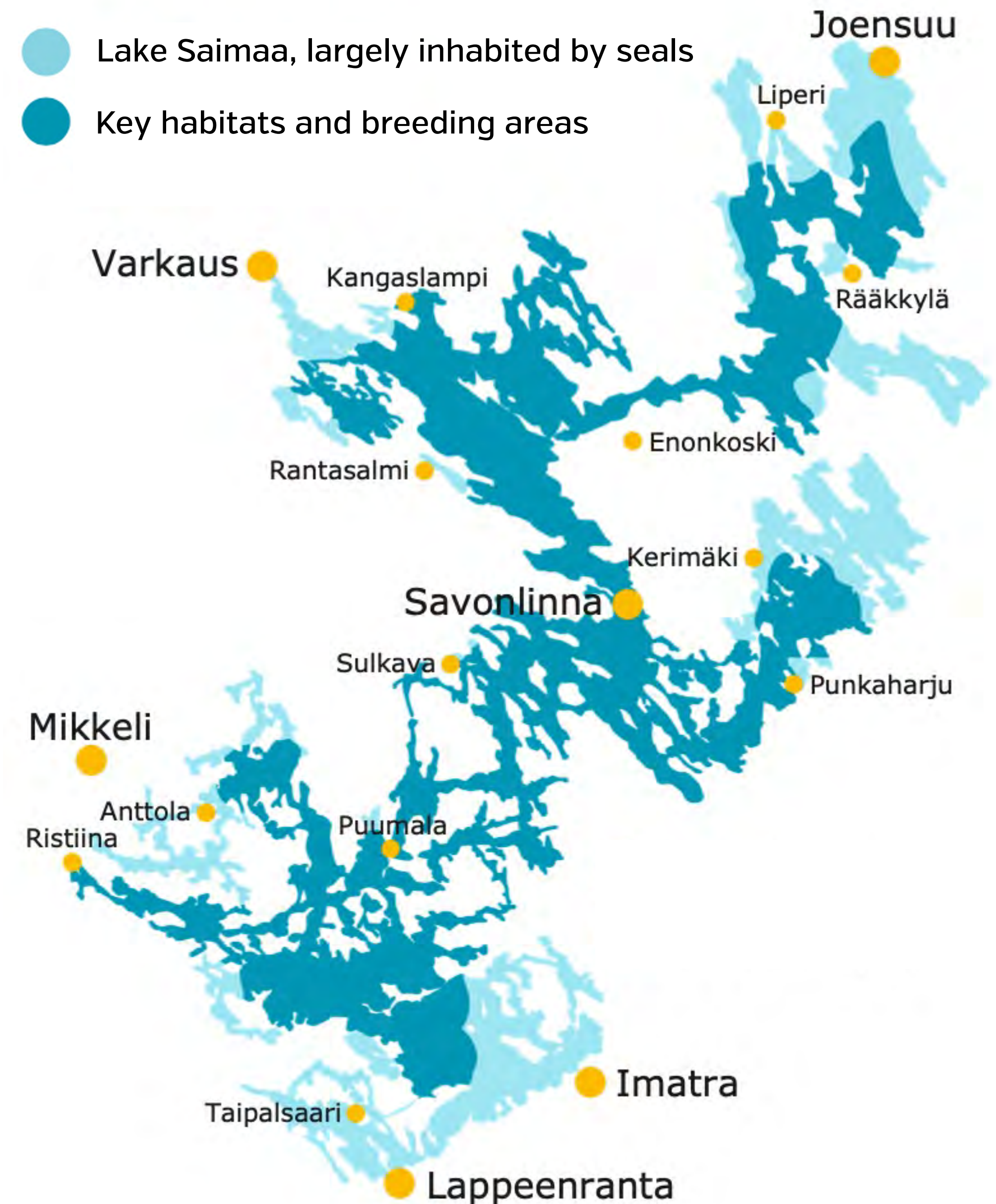
SAIMAA RINGED SEAL

Population shattered around the labyrinthine Lake Saimaa

A resident species

- breeds in the same area year after year
- this leads to diminishing genetic diversity, inbreeding

Young seals tend to travel longer distances



Map: Marjaana Kovanen



SAIMAA RINGED SEAL

DIET

- vendace, roach, perch, ruffe, sparring and such small fish in schools
- approx. 1000 kg of fish per year
- does not chew but swallows the fish whole



SAIMAA RINGED SEAL

FISH TRAP DEATHS

- among the most significant threats
- seals get caught and slowly suffocated in fishing nets
- restrictions on net fishing in seal breeding areas in spring, 15 April–30 June
 - restriction on vendace nets ends earlier, 20 June, in spite of the threat they are posing to seals
 - both the area and the time span of fishing restrictions are inadequate

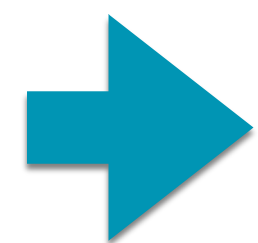


ADVANCING SEAL-SAFE FISHING



FANC OBJECTIVES

- **Stopping seal deaths in fish traps and helping seal population resspreading into initial habitats all over the Lake Saimaa**
 - year-round ban of dangerous fish trap types in entire habitat
 - furthering development and use of seal-safe fish trap types
 - spreading information, intensifying fisheries control and tightening up sanctions
- **In addition:** defending snowy winters, providing peace for breeding and moulting, raising population growth objective to at least 5–6 per cent per year



Multiplying seal population

It is estimated that thousands of ringed seals have initially lived at lake Saimaa

EU Nature Directive:
favourable conservation status as an objective



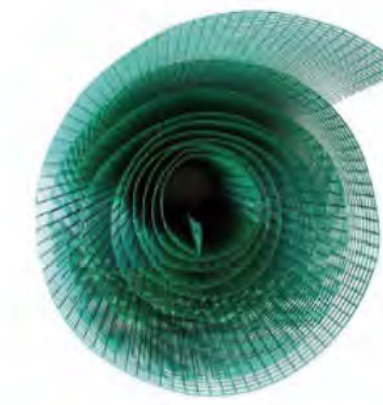
SAIMAA FISH TRAP

- based on an old fish trap type, further developed by professional fisher Markku Kettunen
- Good Fish Trap Campaign by Juha Taskinen and Kari "Hissu" Hietalahti
 - [YouTube video](#) (in Finnish)
- Benefits of the Saimaa fish trap
 - seal-safe
 - simple release of fish from trap
 - lightweight and easy to handle
 - affordable
 - easy to construct
 - also helps protect the endangered salmonids at the Lake Saimaa

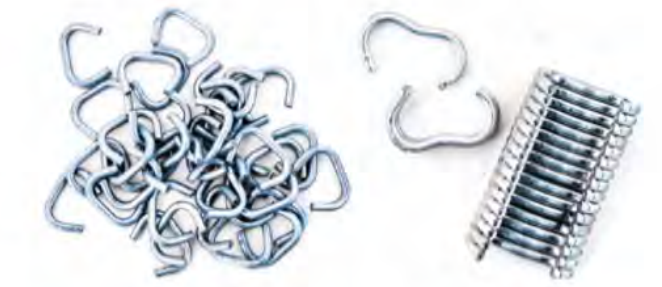


WHAT YOU NEED FOR A SAIMAA FISH TRAP

- Tools available from DIY or hardware stores
- Mesh and C rings need to be ordered online
- At FANC workshops, tools and supplies are provided
- [Instructions](#) for building the "Saimaa" fish trap



PVC COATED MESH [3 meters]
Cavatorta Esaplax
Light Mesh;
height one meter;
mesh size 19x19 mm



C HOG RINGS (300 pcs)
+a few larger rings



HOG RING PLIERS



WIRE CUTTERS
for cutting
the mesh



[POWER PLIERS]
if you should
need to cut
hog rings



TWO BUNGEE CORDS
one of normal size
for fish door
and another
smaller one
for bird door



CORD
[a good metre long]
for lifting loop



FISH TRAP WORKSHOPS



Fishing communities



School groups



Public



Other groups



FISH TRAP EVENTS

”REPLACE FISHING NETS WITH FIS TRAPS” EVENTS

- seal-safe Saimaa fish traps are handed gratis to recreational fishers
- in return, the fishers pledge to refrain from net fishing on the Lake Saimaa

SHOWCASING FISH TRAPS IN PUBLIC EVENTS

- demo on making a fish trap
- information about seal-safe fishing



Replace fishing nets with a fish trap,
Lappeenranta, 18.6.2022

Kangaslampi Village Fair, 3.7.2021

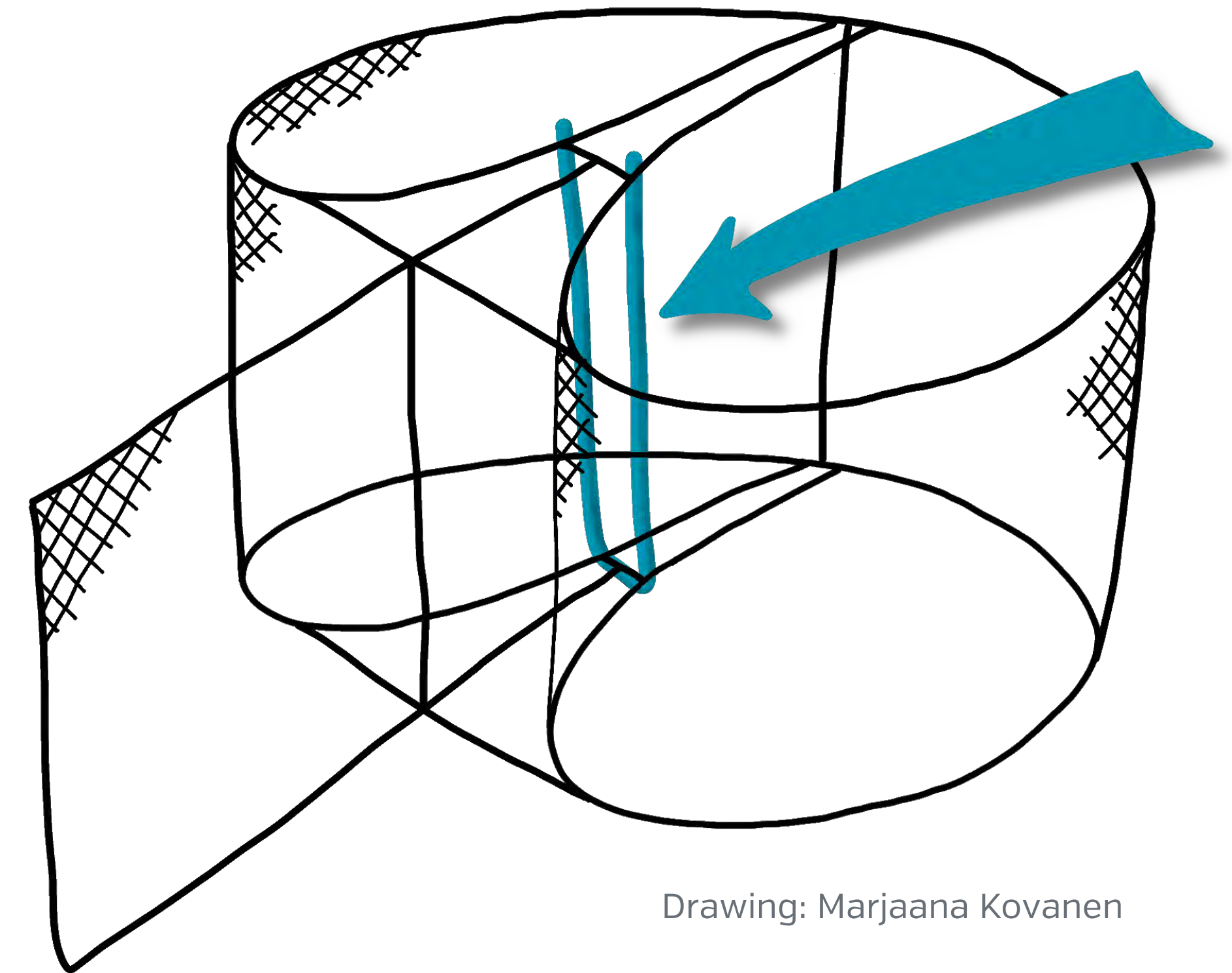


FISHING WITH FISH TRAP



SEAL-SAFE FISH TRAP

- In the Saimaa ringed seal's key habitats, it is **forbidden to use a fish trap with a funnel that is or opens wider than 15 cm**
- Make a wide-funneled fish trap seal-safe by attaching some cable ties crosswise in the funnel or inserting a restrainer made of rebar
- Fishing restrictions area:
kalastusrajoitus.fi



Drawing: Marjaana Kovanen





RESTRAINER

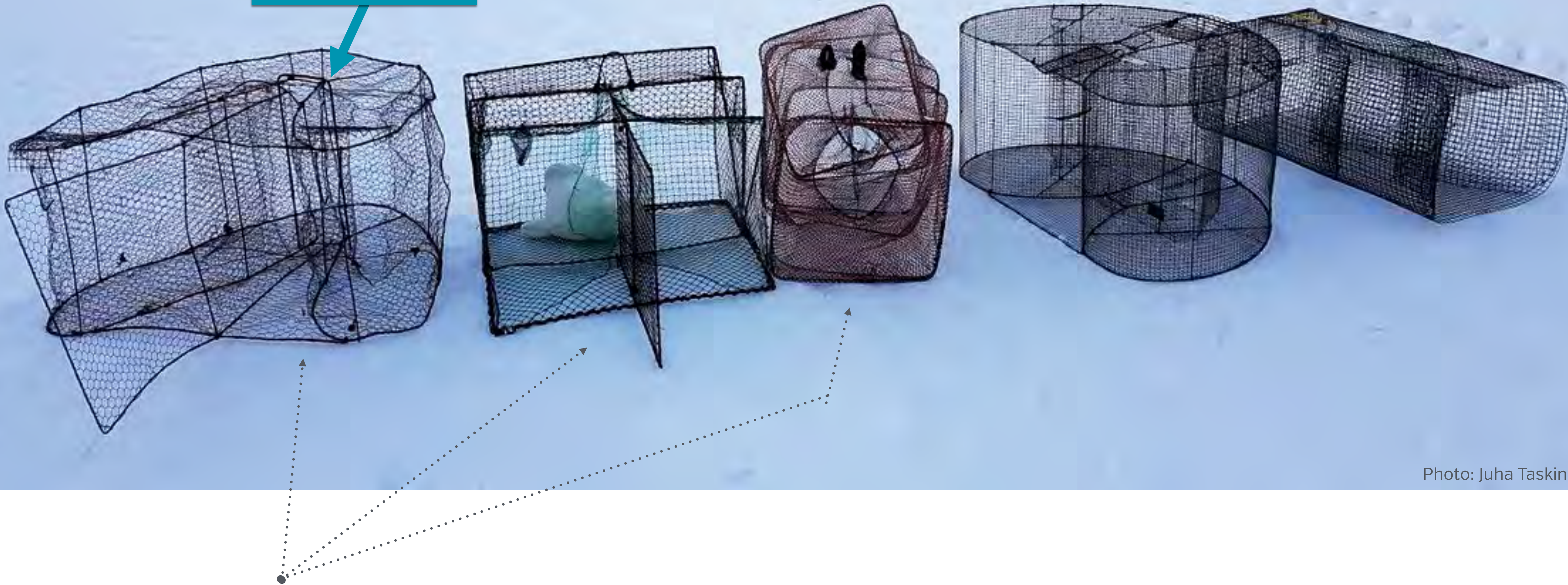


Photo: Juha Taskinen

FISH TRAPS WITH LOOSE OR BROAD FUNNELS

- width of funnel more than 15 cm
- dangerous to seals

TAKE CARE OF PERMITS AND MARKINGS

- For fishing with a fish trap, **you need a permit from the fishery owner**
- If you are between 18 and 64 years of age, you need to **pay the state fisheries management fee**
- **Your fish trap has to be clearly marked, according to the Fisheries Law**
- **Attach your name and contact details to your fish trap**

Permits are available on the Eräluvat.fi website or at R-Kioski.



HOW TO FISH WITH A FISH TRAP

- Lowering your fish trap in the water, make sure it is entirely submerged
- Close any part of the funnel left above the water surface
- Sprigs or baits can be used to lure fish into the fish trap
- Attach several fish traps together in order to increase catch potential
- Close the funnel when your fish trap is out of water



Photo: Juha Taskinen



WHAT TO FISH WITH A FISH TRAP

- **PERCH AND CYPRINIDS** can be caught in coastal waters among lake bed vegetation and near shoals
- **PIKE** can be caught on verges of reed areas, for instance
- **BURBOT** can be caught in their traditional breeding grounds in winter



RESPONSIBLE FISHING WITH FISH TRAP

- Check your fish trap at least once a day
- Always release undersized fish back into water
- Only take as much fish as you can use
- Handle your catch appropriately
[stunning, bleeding, gutting, rinsing, refrigeration]
- The Animal Protection Law also applies to treatment of fish!



Photo: Markku Tissarinen





A safety wire across the funnel has stopped a seal from entering the fish trap.



Our Saimaa Seal LIFE Project (LIFE19 NAT/FI/000832)

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