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Galapagos sea lions head for warm Peru waters

By Dan Collyns
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Galapagos sea lions are unique to the archipelago

A colony of sea lions endemic to the Galapagos Islands have moved 1,500km away, a Peru-based organisation which monitors the aquatic mammals has said.

The Organisation for Research and Conservation of Aquatic Animals says the sea lions have swum to northern Peru because of rising temperatures.

They says the temperature rise was caused by climate change.

Experts say it is the first time that Galapagos sea lions have set up a colony outside the islands.

The monitors say the water temperature in Piura, off the coast of northern Peru, has risen from 17C to 23C over the last 10 years.

The temperature is much closer to the sea temperature around the Galapagos Islands, which averages about 25C.

Now that the conditions of the sea around northern Peru are so similar to the Galapagos, they say, even more sea lions and other new marine species could start arriving.

Like so many native species in the Galapagos Islands, the sea lions are unique to the archipelago, located about 600 miles west of continental Ecuador.

Ever since the English naturalist, Charles Darwin, first visited the islands more than 150 years ago, they have become known as a living museum of evolution.

Now, thanks to global warming, that unique ecosystem could face unprecedented changes.