



## **Advice for encounters with Seals at sea (Useful for divers, snorkelers & swimmers)**

Always let seals make the first move, leaving them to approach you. Sit back, wait and observe.

Let curiosity be the only reason for the seals to visit you, never feed wild seals\*.

Seals will explore you with their fore flippers, whiskers and mouths. Remember that seals have strong claws and sharp interlocking teeth.

Seals are the largest land breeding mammal in the UK and can be very intimidating underwater. Aim to stay calm, quiet and move slowly to avoid spooking the seal and provoking an aggressive response. Be confident that seals are generally gentle creatures unless they feel threatened. Seals are most likely to be aggressive if you come between:-

- Them and their escape route to safety – the open sea
- The seal and its next meal
- A mother and her pup
- Two males challenging for a female

So aim to avoid these situations. With very large males that come really close, it may help to avoid eye contact by lowering your head and keeping still.

\*Feeding wild seals creates really big problems for seals and humans. Seals are quick learners and just one feed can develop habituated behaviour. In their minds, food becomes linked with humans and boats. This reduces their natural fear of humans and brings them into conflict with the fishing industry with expensive consequences for both, in terms of life threatening net entanglement and loss of income.

The aim is to regularly review and update this advice in the light of experience. Comments are welcome to [sue@cornwallsealgroup.co.uk](mailto:sue@cornwallsealgroup.co.uk)