

Individual seals have unique fur markings that make them identifiable. Well patterned seals are the easiest to identify. A catalogue of digital ID photos of Cornish seals has been produced and a database of individual seal sightings is kept. This work is being done by the **Cornwall Seal Group**. The agreed aims of the group are to:-

- Reduce disturbance of the seals ensuring the seals' future
- Identify individual seals & learn more about seals around Cornwall
- Tell all interested parties in Cornwall more about the seals
- Collect and centralise resources, information, articles and news about Grey Seals
- Seek and secure funding to support the group's activities.

British Divers Marine Life Rescue is an active international charity of trained volunteer Marine Mammal Medics, on standby to respond immediately to any marine mammal emergency. If you are concerned about an adult seal or pup in Cornwall, ring their national hotline on 01825 765546. BDMLR have trained medics all over Cornwall, ready to help.

The **National Seal Sanctuary** has been using hats to identify the pups they have released. If you spot one of these yellow or pink numbered hats on a seal's head, please record the number, location, date and time and report your sighting by ringing the National Seal Sanctuary on 01326 221361.

Our work has revealed some fascinating information about seal movements. Seals in Cornwall have been linked to Brittany, South Wales and SW Ireland. Cornwall acts like a 'service station' on the 'seal motorway' that links all these places. Our work is beginning to suggest that seal movements may be predictable / seasonal. Please report all dead seals you see to the **CWT Strandings hotline** 0845 2012626!



21 - 'Rush'
Rescued 14/02/04
Released 16/06/04

If you would like more information about the seals in Cornwall or you would like to join any of the Seal groups mentioned, contact :- Sue Sayer on 01736 754562 or visit: www.cornwallsealgroup.co.uk



Please report all seals that you see with a net injury of any kind.

See seals in our seas forever.
Seal our futures together!

Grey Seals in Cornwall

Cornwall is home to a wild population of Grey Seals all year round. We want to ensure that these seals survive for future generations to enjoy.

What do Grey Seals look like?

Two types of seals are found around the UK – Common and Grey Seals. Grey seals can be seen regularly in Cornwall. You can tell the difference by looking at their size, head shape and coat pattern. Grey seals are larger, have longer noses with parallel nostrils and mid to dark grey backs. Males may be dark grey all over with a few or no light markings, whilst females may have white bellies blotched with grey markings. Only 5 Common Seal have been seen in Cornwall.



How do seals dive?

Seals are streamlined for a graceful and agile life in the water. They can dive to a depth of 70m for up to 12 minutes by breathing out, storing oxygen in pigments in their blood and muscles, slowing down their heart rate to 4/5 beats per minute and by shutting down circulation to all but their vital organs.



Why do seals come onto land?

It is perfectly normal for seals to spend time on land to give birth some time between May and December and to moult (the annual renewal of their fur coat) 3 to 4 months later. Healthy seals can be seen hauled out around Cornwall on rock ledges, on or offshore or in coves throughout the year. The reason for this is unclear, but theories range from saving energy to coming ashore to digest their food!



Do seals have pups here? Yes!

Pregnant seals come ashore a day before giving birth. They look for safe, deep and inaccessible caves along the coast of Cornwall. Birth is quick and the mother sniffs her pup to learn its smell then lies on her side, using her fore flippers to encourage her pup to suckle. Suckling is longer at first & 7 times a day, decreasing to 4 times a day for 16 to 21 days. By this time the pup's weight will have trebled, changing from fluffy white fur and bone to a mid grey fat sleek torpedo. Having weaned her pup, the female seal mates then leaves the area and her pup. The breeding cycle remains annual,



so fertilised eggs remain dormant for up to four months – a process called delayed implantation. Pups must learn to feed themselves and have been known to swim to new areas 200+km away. Successful seals will live for up to 30+ years.

What do seals eat?

Recent research suggests that sandeels form an important part of a seal's diet, but other fish, squid, shellfish and crustaceans are eaten too.

Common behaviours for you to look out for:-

- **Bottling** – sleeping vertically in the sea, nose upright.
- **Bananaing** – lifting sensitive rear flippers & head out of cold water
- **Logging** – sleeping in the sea horizontally on their stomachs / sides
- **Lying** – sleeping motionless on land on their sides or backs
- **Growling** – snarling when individual seals get too close
- **Flippering**– with front flippers when individual seals get too close
- **Fanning** – moving their back flippers into a fan to stretch muscles
- **Grooming** – scratching that itch with their front paws
- **Dancing** – males and females circling around each other in the sea
- **Playing** – young males sparring at the water's edge
- **Hauling** – pulling themselves out of the sea and across land
- **Sniffing** – others' noses or behind the ear, to recognise 'friends'
- **Splashing** – diving suddenly if startled
- **Tracking** – surfacing occasionally behind a boat, while following it
- **Sand snuffling** – digging into the sand with their noses
- **Surfing** – riding the waves into the shore.

Remember healthy white coated seal pups will be left alone on a beach, watched by their mothers from the sea. Observe from a safe distance out of sight. If after a full tide cycle, you cannot see the mother, ring the Seal Sanctuary 01326 221361 or BDMLR on 01825 765546.

How can you help?

Grey Seals are able to hear and see you, especially if you, your child or pet are standing on the cliff edge with a bright sky behind you, or if you are making loud or high pitched sounds. As you are an unknown quantity to the wild seals, they are likely to be very wary of you. Disturbed seals may stampede surprisingly quickly for the safety of the sea, damaging their claws and ripping the skin and blubber on their stomachs, as they move over sharp rocks without their usual care.

We can all enjoy watching wild seals for as long as we like, undisturbed in their natural habitat, if we...
...all keep:-

- ...quiet and move slowly
- ...a low profile - lie rather than stand
- ...our distance
 - On land, watch from cliff tops only
 - In the sea, avoid approaching the land
- ...away from the edge
- ...a close eye on children
- ...pets under control

Aim to arrive unseen, watch unseen & leave unseen!

