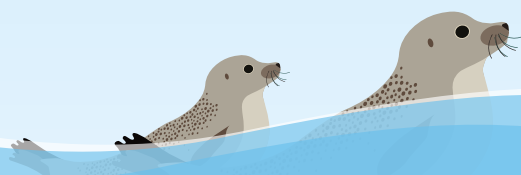


# Save our seals!



The UK is home to over a third of the world's grey seal population. A globally rare species resident in the UK, **grey seals are the equivalent of an African elephant**. What's more, harbour seals are in alarming decline.



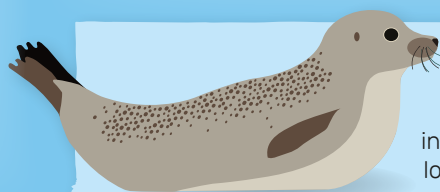
## Seal behaviour

Seals can be curious animals, but are also easily frightened, and they are at their most vulnerable when on land. Getting out of the water takes a lot of energy, and it is important for their survival that they can rest.

For seals, being vigilant due to the presence of people has a metabolic cost, reducing energy and increasing stress levels. **Seals only spend 20% of their lives on land**, so seeing them out of the sea is a privilege. Seals can be picky about the sites they use, which is already limited due to development and the presence of people visiting the coast.

## What does disturbance look like?

Seals may appear in control of encounters and they may be very curious about you but avoid staying in their company for too long as you may distract them from their feeding, digesting, sleeping or traveling routine.



### Happy seal

Signs of a happy seal include sleeping and not looking in your direction.

## SEAL DISTURBANCE CAN KILL

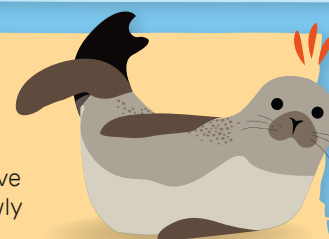
Seals only come onto land to breed, rest and digest their food. Flushing them back into the water reduces their ability to gain energy from their food and uses energy to return to the sea.



Repeated disturbance can seriously affect a seal's energy, and a seal may have many encounters with several people over one day. When seals are flushed into the sea, they may be injured from stampeding, gashing their bellies on sharp rocks, tearing skin on sand or ripping out claws.

### Worried seal

If a seal raises its head and repeatedly looks at you, you're too close and you have disturbed it. Back away slowly and quietly, out of sight.



### Disturbed seal

If seals in the sea are agitated, they may dive, making a significant splash at the surface, or just disappear, having been displaced by you.



### DID YOU KNOW?

It is unusual to encounter more than 10 seals in the sea. They may have already seen you and, as a result, been flushed out to sea.

## LEARN MORE

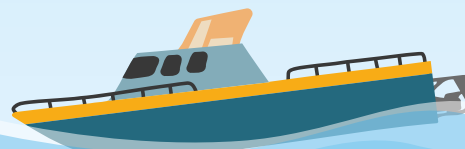
Find out more about how to watch seals safely and report disturbance by scanning the QR code



# Help us help seals!



If you are inspired by these amazing animals and want to help us lookout for wildlife, you can **join us as a member**, **donate**, take one of our **walking tours** or **purchase a seal adoption pack**.



## Advice for boats and watercraft operators

### Before you set out

- Ensure any guests have binoculars or cameras with a zoom lens.

### Before you approach

- Stop far from outside the 'observation zone' to check for the position of seals.

### Approaching seals

- Travel at no wake speed within 200m of seal sites.
- Stop out of sight, as seals have excellent hearing.
- Approach slowly, steadily, side on and with a low engine sound.

### Watching seals

- Never try to feed or follow them.
- Use silent signals to point out seals to guests and ask them to be still and quiet.
- If large numbers of seals are present, stay further away than you would normally.
- Do not view seals for more than 15 minutes.

### Other watercraft

- If other watercraft are present, you must wait and take it in turns to view the seals.

### Manoeuvres

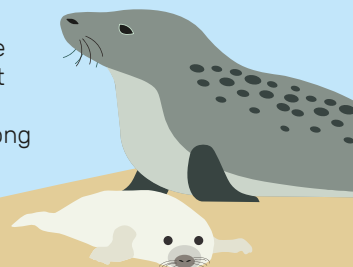
- Carry out manoeuvres at least 100m away from the seals or beyond the point at which the first seal becomes alert, whichever is farther away.
- Leave the site a slowly and quietly as you arrived.

## Pupping Season

In Kent, grey seals pup over winter and harbour seals pup in early summer.

If disturbed a pregnant seal may be unable to store enough fat to feed her pup or a seal that has recently given birth may abandon her young. In both instances it is likely the pup will die.

If a white-coated or small-moulted pup is spotted, be aware that its mother may be nearby in the sea with a sightline to her pup. She could stay underwater for around 12 minutes, so she should be visible within 30. She will not return to feed her pup if she sees people or there is a strong scent of humans.



### What to do if you see a seal in distress

Should you have any concerns about a seal, please ring British Divers Marine Life Rescue on **01825 765546**



## LEARN MORE

Find out more about how to watch seals safely and report disturbance by scanning the QR code

