



Grey Seals *(Halichoerus Grypus)*

We have grey seals and harbour seals in the village waters and we all know Sammy who lives at Ullapool harbour. We pretty much call every seal we see: Sammy the seal!



This is a picture of Sammy at Ullapool Harbour – he is a Grey seal.

Physical attributes:

Size:

- Males: up to 10ft long and can weigh over 300kg),
- Females: up to 6ft in length and weigh between 150 and 200kg.

Colour: Grey seal have pale bellies and darker grey backs. Males grey seals have darker coats than females.



Lifespan: 25 – 35 years Females usually live longer as the males fight over territory and females quite a lot.

Diet: Fish and squid along with crustaceans and pretty much any other sources of food which are present.



Where they can be found:

- They are found mostly around the north of the British Isles, but they are also distributed throughout Scandinavian and northern European waters. There are other populations in North America and an isolated population is present in the Baltic Sea.



Habitat

Grey seals they are non-migratory animals, but they do travel. They

They live in large groups and can make their home on a variety of different shorelines ranging from sandy beaches and sandbanks to fairly rocky and rugged coasts, but they spend most of their time in

the water. They share their habitat with many other species, including Harbour seals.

What Grey seals and Harbour seals do differently with their pups:

Between September and December is when a grey seal will give birth, and it has a white furry coat, so if you see a seal pup in those months (or just past) that means that will be a Grey seal.

However, the Harbour seal will give birth to its pup in between June and July.

If you see a seal pup between September and December then that is a Grey seal and if it is in between June and July then it is a Harbour seal.

Harbour seal pups can swim from almost day 1 – grey seal pups are white and fluffy when born and can't swim until they lose their white coat – this can take a few weeks – NEVER put a white coat pup into the sea as they will drown. Also, if handled and the mum can smell humans on the pup, they will likely abandon the baby so please don't touch unless required for a rescue!



Other ways to tell the difference between Harbour and Grey Seals:

- Both types of seals have similar heads, but Harbour seals have smaller and more circular heads compared to Grey seals, which have more of an oval shaped head.
- Grey seals nostrils are parallel, rather than V-shaped as in Harbour seals
- Grey seals are generally larger.
- Harbour seals are more spotty, while grey seals are more contrasting with pale bellies and darker grey backs.

Cool Facts about grey seals

- Grey seals can hold their breath for one hour and a half, by slowing down their heart rate to save oxygen.
- Grey seals can swim up to 22mph if it's getting chased, which is quite fast for swimming, but its regular speed is 6mph for getting its meals.
- Grey seal's scientific Latin name is *halichoerus grypus*, meaning 'hooked nosed sea pig.'
- If you cause any sort of harm to a Grey seal it will bite you. It can be as painful as a bear biting you.





- Grey seals sleep on land or in water. When they sleep in the water they bob around in a 'standing up' position. Because they are sleeping and not actively swimming they can stay underwater much longer.



- Seal whiskers help them to navigate by sensing pressure waves from fish and underwater objects
- They share a common ancestor with dogs and bears (you can see that when you look at their skulls.)
- Seals have long necks that they can shoot out quickly to catch fish when fishing

- There are LESS grey seals in the world than there are African Elephants!

Grey seals threats

Lots of things threaten seals:

Pollution, climate change, fish farm Audio Deterrent Devices (or 'seal scarers,') chlorinated compounds such as PCBs, ocean acidification, fishing nets, disturbance by tourists, rising sea temperatures, boat strikes, getting shot by people who think they are a threat to fishing... Also, they have natural predators, like: sharks, sea lions and orca.





What to do if you find a seal (or seal pup) that you think may be injured or otherwise at risk:

- Keep your distance! Remember: they look cute, but they can bite you quite badly.
- Call the experts at BDMLR on **01825 765546** (or you can call Noel Hawkins direct if you live near Ullapool.)
- If you can see a clear injury on the seal from your distance please say so when you are calling.



And please remember:

- If you see a seal on your local beach please if you have a dog keep it on its lead and stay away from the seal and warn other people not to go too close! They are amazing creatures, but they are wild animals and they need their space!!



Thank you! :{)