

Both **Common and Grey Seals** do not leave any distinctive field signs in the wild. Therefore, any recordings of common and grey seals will be from observing the mammals themselves.

Without key field signs, it is therefore important to be able to distinguish between the common seal and the grey seal. Initially, it is beneficial to have an clear idea of the habitat types that seals are likely to be found. Seals can be found in both coastal and estuarine habitats, but can also appear upstream in major river, such at the Thames. The best place to observe seals is on sandbars at low tide.

Common seal has a blunt muzzle, with an obvious forehead and a puppy-like face. They have V-shaped nostrils that almost touch. By comparison, grey seals have a long straight muzzle, nostrils that are almost parallel and set further apart than on the common seal.



Grey seal: (foreground) long, straight muzzle. Few, large spots

Common seal: (background) short, rounded muzzle. Often seen in 'tail-up' position. Many small spots all over



Longer body than common seal (grey seal: 2.7m, common seal: 1.8m)

Long, straight muzzle, nostrils almost parallel and further apart than common seal (common seal: blunt muzzle, obvious forehead, puppy-like face. V-shaped nostrils that almost touch)

Grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*)



Blunt muzzle, obvious forehead, puppy-like face. V-shaped nostrils that almost touch (Grey seal: long straight muzzle, nostrils set far apart, almost parallel)

Shorter body than grey seal (Common seal: 1.8m, grey seal: 2.7m)

Common seal (*Phoca vitulina*)