



Grey Seal

Halichoerus grypus

Quick facts

Order Carnivora

Conservation status
Global *Least concern*

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Global trend *Increasing*

Size Males 207 cm, females 180 cm

Weight Males 233 kg, females 155 kg

Life span Males 20 years, females > 30 years

The grey seal has grey and brown, sometimes dappled, fur. Its long muzzle gives its head a flat or convex profile. In Great Britain, it is found mainly along exposed rocky northern and western coasts, also occurring along the south-west and east coasts.

Habitat

Cold-temperate to sub-arctic waters in the North Atlantic over the continental shelf.

Behaviour

Hauls out on land to rest, moult, and breed, but can spend up to 30 days on foraging trips at sea.

Diet & Feeding

Opportunistic, taking whichever fish are most abundant; sandeels, flatfish and the cod family probably particularly important. Forages in the open ocean usually within 100 km of a haul-out site.

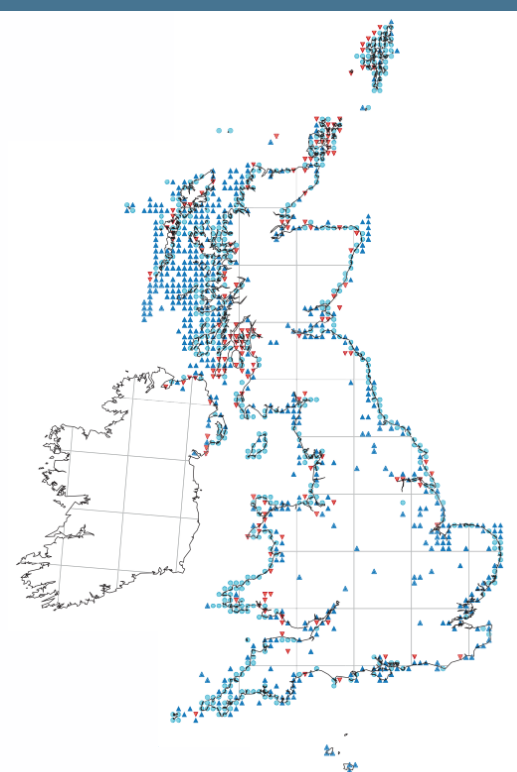
Reproduction

Hauls out on land for long periods during the breeding season August - December when a single white-coated pup is born, Approximately 38% of the global grey seal population breeds in the UK, and 88% of these breed in Scotland (mainly Orkney and the Outer Hebrides).

Conservation & Threats

Hunted throughout its range, sometimes unsustainably (such as in Baltics in early 20th century). Other threats include entanglement in fishing gear and agricultural pollutants. Although they are known carriers of phocine distemper virus, deaths are rare, in contrast to harbour seals. In the UK it is an offence to kill, injure or take a seal.

Range



▼ 1960-1992
● 1960-1992 & 2000-2016
▲ 2000-2016



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