



# Sussex Seals

Sussex Dolphin Project & Sussex Seal Project

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# Sussex Dolphin Project - Who are we

Set up in 2018 as a project of the World Cetacean Alliance to study and conserve the Cetaceans off the Sussex Coast.

We have 3 main projects:

**Research** - Conducting citizen science and landwatch surveys.

**Awareness** - Working with the media to raise awareness of issues facing the marine mammals in Sussex

**Education** - Running talks and workshops with local schools, youth groups and adults.



# Introduction to seals

- Seals are in a group of marine mammals called pinnipeds.
- Closest living relatives are bears, racoons and otters.
- 3 groups around the world
- Eared seals (Otariidae) such as Sea-lions and Fur seals
- Earless or “true” seals (Phocidae) such as Grey seals and Monk seals
- Walruses (Odobenidae)



# Common/Harbour seal

The Common/Harbour seal is the smaller of the two seals we get in Sussex.

Identified by:

- Sandy colouration with speckles
- Cute, cat-like face with v shaped nostrils
- Smaller than the Grey seals
- Often seen in harbours, bays and inlets hence the name



# Grey seal

The Grey seal is the larger of the two seals we get in Sussex.

Identified by:

- Grey colouring with dark patches
- Dog-like face with more parallel nostrils, males have a 'roman nose'
- Much larger and bulkier than the Common/Harbour seals (up to 2.6m)
- It's latin name means "Hook-nosed sea pig", a very apt description!



# What to they eat?

All seals have a very varied diet, mostly eating sandeels, whiting and other small fish. Grey seals will often target larger fish such as pollock and even the occasional seabird!

Sussex seals are also often seen eating flatfish and the occasional eel.



Image credit: Ellie Cross

# Where do they live?

There is a mixed seal colony at Chichester harbour with around 46 individuals. These seals hunt along the South coast, though mostly to the West.

We have several transient seals in Sussex who may have come over from the other side of the Channel.



Image credit: Chichester harbour water tours

# Sovereign Harbour seals

The seals in the harbour spend a lot of time hauled out on beaches. These are not a colony but individual seals, some of which travel over from Europe.

A couple of behaviours you may see:

Banana pose:

Bottling:



Most of the seals in the inner harbour are Common/Harbour seals however some greys do visit the outer harbour, usually juveniles.

Most seals feed outside the harbour at high tide although there is a good source of bass and mullet inside the marina.

# Sovereign Harbour seals - disturbance

Hauling out on beaches is an important part of seal behaviour. People often mistake a seal on a beach for a seal needing help and try to flush them back into the sea.

The seals in Eastbourne harbour are particularly at risk of disturbance by:

Dogs - Can scare the seals and pass on diseases like Canine Distemper.

Humans - Disturbing the seals can lead to increased vigilance, negatively impacting their health. Disturbed behaviour can range from something as simple as the seal turning its head, or panicked rush into the water.

Drones & cameras - Drones are a new threat to the seals with unknown impacts.

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ity Centre



Thai Marina  
Thai restaurant

mier Sovereign  
our Marina &...



Martello Tower  
Number 66



Sovereign Park  
East Car Park



Pew

# How you can help

We are working with the Sussex Seal Project to document the seals in Sovereign harbour to assess the importance of the area.

We are looking for people to help us in our research into the seals by:

Taking good quality photographs of the seals from a distance

Talking to members of the public who may be seen disturbing the seals.

Send sightings to [seawatch17@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:seawatch17@yahoo.co.uk) or via the Sussex Dolphin Project website.

**Thank you!**

**Please feel free to ask any questions,**

If anyone would like to contact me please email me at

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or check out our website [sussexdolphinsproject.org](http://sussexdolphinsproject.org)