



SRT

OFFICIAL
SURVEYOR

Annual Report 2021

Seal Research Trust's Seals SW Annual Report

Funders (P3)

People (P3)

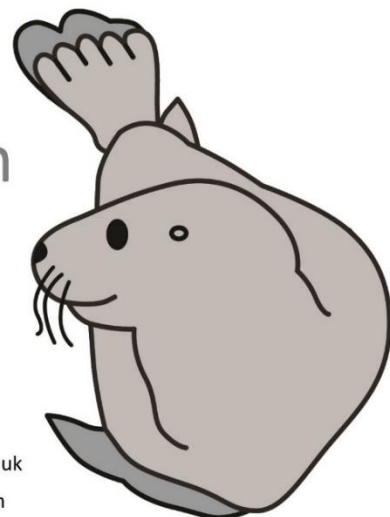
Charity Achievements and Activities (P5)

Feedback about SRT Activities (P11)

Seal Data Outputs (P13)

Policy and Conservation Actions (P18)

Seal
Research
Trust



www.cornwallsealgroup.co.uk
www.sealresearchtrust.com

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Seal Research Trust (est. Cornwall 2000)

At the Seal Research Trust (SRT) we described 2018 as a landmark year, 2019 saw us riding a wave of success, which we sustained in 2020 despite COVID-19 and 2021 proved a legal revolution for seals.

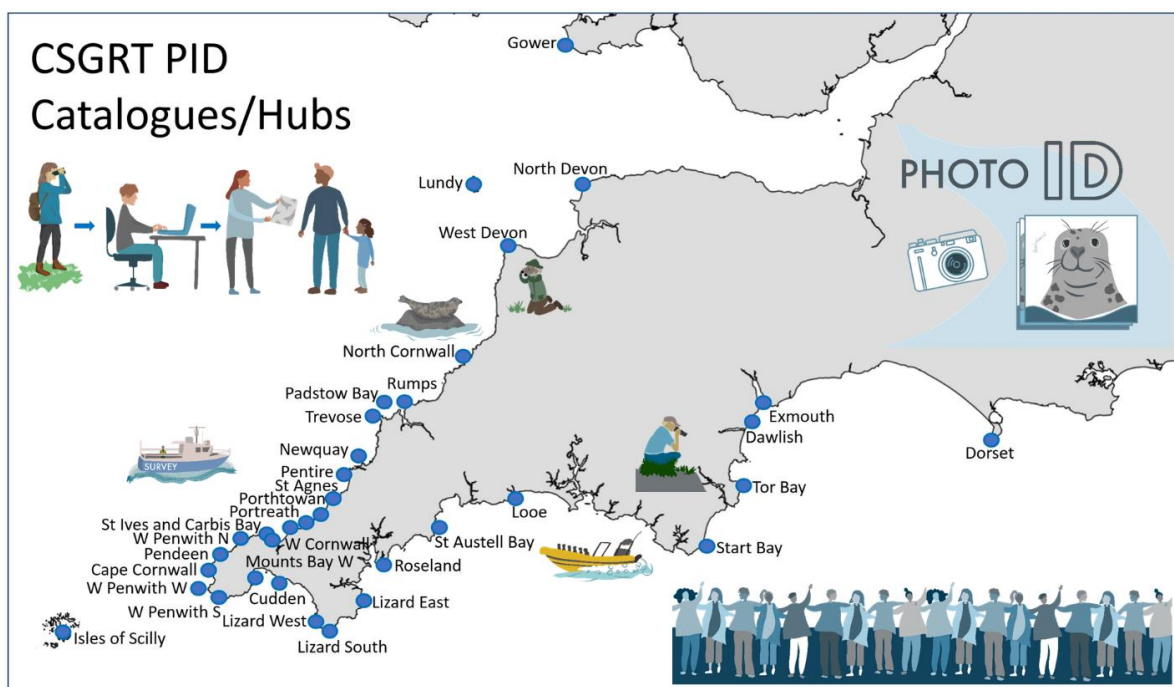
Funders

DEFRA's Green Recovery Challenge Fund (GRCF) administered by the National Lottery Heritage Fund proved to be our largest successful funding bid to date. We are hugely grateful to our GRCF investment manager Kayleigh Luscombe who has supported us throughout our People Protecting Precious Places Project (PPPP) all year. In 2021 our Rangers, resources and activities were also financially supported by **Animal Friends; Aspects Holidays; LUSH Cosmetics; Mungo Lils on the Hill; Natural England; Polzeath Marine Conservation Group; Rows Cornish Bakers; Seal Protection Action Group; Smartie Lids on the Beach; Tesco Bags of Help; The Bowgie Inn; our Online Shop; Wild Seal Supporter and Adoption Scheme** and wonderful volunteer fundraising efforts and donations. Thank you!

People

Hubs

By the end of 2021, SRT had **67 Photo ID Catalogues** across the southwest – the main ones being shown as blue circles on the map below. The catalogues are run by incredibly dedicated volunteers and these volunteer teams do everything from being **eyes/ears for coastal change; surveying; processing photos into survey albums; making or confirming IDs; album checking; digitising data; data entry and analysis; report writing; fundraising** to being **ambassadors and champions for seals**.



Marine Rangers, Science Advisors and Analysts

We started 2021 with **4 part-time paid Marine Rangers** and ended the year with **4**, although in June to August inclusively we maxed out at **7 part-time paid Rangers** in total.

We began with:

- **Amazement and Discovery Ranger** (Marion Beaulieu)
- **Digital Ranger** (Joe Gray)
- **Research Ranger** (Katie Bellman)
- **Sanctuaries at Sea Ranger** (Sarah Millward)

Later in the year, Joe was replaced by two part time **Marine Stories Rangers** (Charlie Gill and Emily Williams). In December Emily went on maternity leave and not long after, Charlie got her dream job working at Wildwood Escot. Both were replaced by Tash Murch.

We are hugely grateful to Joe Gray for his digital expertise creating the Seal Alliance website (www.sealalliance.org), setting us up with efficient social media scheduling software and teaching us how to optimise our online activity for Google's search engine algorithms. We were delighted to hear that Joe had secured his dream job too, as a wildlife film camera man with the Natural History Unit in Bristol – we will be very excited to see where the future takes Joe and wish him all the best.

For our PPPP project, we recruited two temporary and part time **Survey and Data Rangers** (Beth Trevethick and Charlotte Bright) who helped make this project a huge success.

By the end of the year, we had advertised and appointed a brand new, part-time **Activities and Administration Ranger** and in December Lauren McGregor was inducted into this post.

Critical to the success of our GRCF work, we were delighted to welcome Bex Allen to the PPPP team as our **Science Advisor** and Michael Hunt as a **Data Analyst**. Both were superb, enabling us to make the PPPP report the comprehensive and thorough document that it is.

After several wonderful years with us, Katie Bellman finally left her Research Ranger role in December. Heading up our PPPP project surveys and report, Katie recruited and trained survey participants in the rigorous protocols demanded by this research. After completing our PPPP report in December, Katie left us to start a new and exciting Engagement Officer role for the Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Your Shore Project. We are delighted to keep Katie in Marine Conservation work in Cornwall and wish her well in her new and exciting role.

So, 2021 was a year of substantial change for us all as a charity, as we fulfilled our GRCF Project requirements, we anticipated and planned for our longer-term Rangers, Katie and Marion's, departures. Marion left us in February 2022.

Whilst SRT's overheads are minimal and most of our activity is undertaken by volunteers, all these amazing people need recruiting, encouraging, supporting, training and empowering by our Marine Ranger team who, along with our boat survey charter fees, amount to our greatest expenditure. We also need Rangers to fulfil specific aspects of our funded project work. As our volunteers are our charity's most precious asset, they all need looking after. Happy volunteers support seals over the longer term. Together our team helps spread our citizen

science findings to a growing audience in engaging and interesting ways, whilst also developing important skills as conservation leaders of the future.

Volunteers

Our charity can only function effectively thanks to the generous contributions made by multiple hub, administrative and specialist key volunteers. We are hugely grateful to every single one of our amazing volunteers who are too numerous to name individually. Key coordinating or administrative volunteers include:

- **Photo ID coordinator – Kate Williams** organises our Photo ID work and responds to all emails sent into the sightings@cornwallsealgroup.co.uk account. Supremely well organised, Kate collates and manages all public photo submissions to ensure they get processed either by herself, one of our floating volunteers or our catalogue teams.
- **Data Manager and Wild Seal Supporter Scheme Coordinator – Karen Gaudern.** Karen digitises the majority of survey albums generated each month (alongside Kate Williams, Kate Hockley and Jasmina Goodair) and ensures our Wild Seal Supporter and Adoption Scheme runs like clockwork
- **Seal Supporter Coordinator – Hayley Mitchell** who organises our online Jumblebee auctions and supports individual fundraisers. She joined us in 2021.
- **Events Coordinators – Charlotte and Terry Carne in conjunction with Rob Wells** who are arranging and facilitating all our face-to-face events. They took on this role in 2021.
- **Treasurer – Lesley Fitt**, an experienced accounts manager and passionate advocate for marine conservation, Lesley manages our online accounts with efficiency and care.
- **Database Coordinator – Jeff Loveridge** who originally designed our comprehensive seal database back in 2011. Now Jeff manages the database (which contains **46662 surveys** in total) and inputs data from our volunteer citizen scientists and public contacts. In 2021 this averaged 14 surveys every single day of the year. He took on this role in 2021.
- **Catalogue and Hub Coordinators** – Gareth Richards, Kate Williams, Louise Secker, Jules Disbury, Susan Timms, Jenny Simpson, Katie Bellman, Sue Sayer, Andrea Hunt, Marion Beaulieu, Teresa Boulden, Victoria Pombeiro, Amy Fox, Jeremy Gilson, Kerstin Hartmann, Emma Woolfenden, Cliff Davies, Sarah Greenslade and Sarah Hodgson.
- **Routine Surveyors** – SRT can't function without this inspiring team of volunteers too numerous to name individually. We always appreciate how critical your efforts are!

Charity Achievements and Activities

In total our extensive SRT team organised, delivered and participated in 923 activities in 2021 to give seals a voice and share key conservation messages with a wider audience.

Summary

SRT's 2021 activities gained a much greater **reach**. Whilst most events were based in **Cornwall**, we spread our influence further online with 169 events being attended by people across the **UK** and 40 having participants from across the **Globe**!

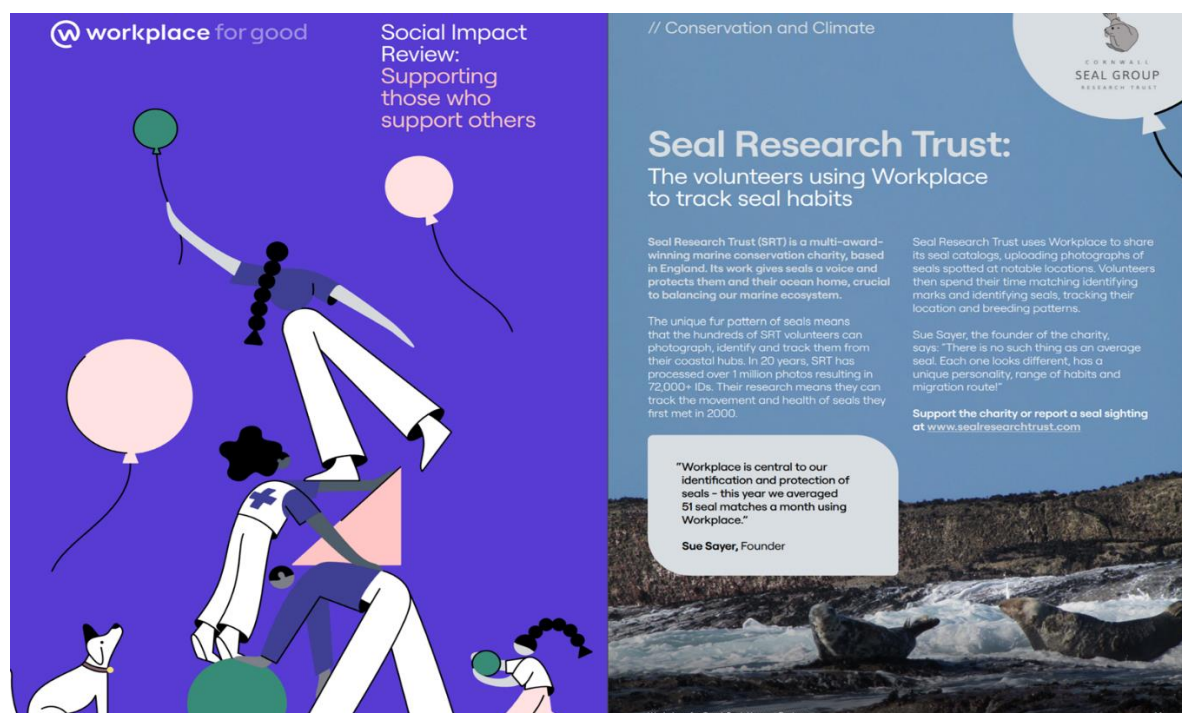
In 2021, our **activity beneficiaries** totalled an impressive 13256 people (including 132 0 to 16 year olds; 375 17 to 24 year olds and 12749 25+ year olds). This is a massive achievement considering the continuation of the global pandemic, during which our charity representatives were all super cautious for everyone's personal safety's sake.

Our **social media** engagement was excellent in 2021 with an average of a post a day:

- **Facebook** 705592 unique users; followers 7647; profile visits 7644; best post 86380 views
- **Instagram** 278108 unique users; followers 5393; profile visits 18815; best post 25341 views
- **Twitter** followers 1386
- **Linkedin** was used by SRT for the first time in 2021, but we don't pay for insights.

Posts travelled the world with most views obviously being in the UK, but we have followers across **Europe** and **Russia**, along with viewers from the other side of the Atlantic in **Canada** and the **USA** and from as far away as **Thailand** and **Australia**.

In 2021 CSGRT signed up to **Facebook Workplace** (free for charities) as a forum for interconnecting our volunteers to share messaging, IDs and conservation actions. It has been hugely helpful, not least for making individual seal photo ID matches between catalogues and to inform seal conservation. Facebook Workplace were so impressed with us, they included us as one of seven global charities in their **2021 Social Impact Report**. This can be downloaded here <https://www.workplace.com/2021-social-impact-report>.



SRT Activities in 2021 included:

Talks 52

We organised and delivered 52 talks for a wide range of different audiences. We partnered with British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) and the Cornish Seal Sanctuary (CSS) to host, coordinate and deliver the **European Seal Rescue Conference** from Cornwall. We were keynote speakers at high profile events such as the **South West Marine Ecosystems Seal**

Webinar; two major Seal Alliance events (our **Seal Masterclass** and **SharePoint Sessions**); several **Wildlife Safe Scheme Courses** (WISE Standard and Adventure) and we were honoured and proud to present at the 10th Birthday celebrations for **Seachangers**.

- Speakers include Sue Sayer, Kate Williams and Sarah Greenslade
- Book your FREE ticket on [Eventbrite](#)



SOUTH WEST MARINE ECOSYSTEMS WEBINARS:

Seals | Friday 5th February | 13:00 - 14:30 GMT

We provided seal expertise during talks to various statutory agencies including **DEFRA**, the **Marine Mammal Disturbance Partnership**, the **Seal Network UK** and at the **Welsh Rural Crime Police Conference**.



Face-to-face talk at Heligan by Sue and Rob Wells, organised by the Three Bays Wildlife

We partnered with 2 school pupils who successfully completed their **Duke of Edinburgh Volunteer Experience** with us, alongside talks we delivered to Universities and Colleges to share our knowledge of seals with their students from **Bournemouth, Callywith, Cornwall College Newquay, Exeter, Falmouth and Plymouth**.

Community groups enjoyed our seals stories (such as the **Royal Fowey Yacht Club; Carrick and St Austell U3A; Crowlas and Ladock WI**) along with our advice about Watching Seals Well shared with marine focused organisations (**CWT Marine Recorders Evening , Flushing Sailing Club, Royal Fowey Yacht Club, Perranporth Beach Rangers, Three Bays Wildlife, 7 Bays Wildlife, The Seal Project, Wildlife Safety on the Fal Conference**) and other special interest groups (**including Alderney Wildlife Trust, Bristol Natural History Society, Chiswick Pier Trust, Cornwall Science Community, West Oxfordshire Field Society**).

Workshops/Training 26

Workshops mainly focussed on **seal related skill development** particularly our 4 volunteer online photo ID training sessions which saw 48 new volunteers complete the process. In 2021, our volunteering went global as remote digital volunteering took off. We have been delighted to welcome digital volunteers from the **USA, Iceland and Germany** to our team. But SRT have other transferable skill sets, and we were able to share other aspects of our expertise too, for example on **setting up a conservation charity, successful crowdfunding strategies and database management**. SRT have developed activity process documents to enable others to more easily understand and take on key actions and tasks.

Stalls/Events 17

COVID-19 restrictions and our cautious approach meant face-to-face events were limited in 2021. Cornwall College students ran an online quiz to raise funds for us in April and in June we hosted two separate important VIP visits for **George Eustice (Environment Minister)** and **Rebecca Pow (Parliamentary Undersecretary for the Environment)** to the West Cornwall sensitive seal site in conjunction with their parliamentary teams, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the National Trust. We joined **Isaac Nicholson**, our 14-year-old Duke of Edinburgh student at the finish line of his incredible 100km cycle in a day that raised over £500 for our charity. Two events were impromptu and unplanned with substantial gatherings on the clifftop above two separate **seal pup rescues** with partners BDMLR. Rather than let the public leave with their own perceptions of the events they witnessed and to avoid Chinese whispers, we took the opportunity for people to understand what had happened, how and why, as well as taking the opportunity to share our Photo ID research and the contribution it makes to our understanding of the lives of individual seals and the conservation issues they face at sea. The year ended with 9 day-long events at the fabulous joint fundraising **Carbis Bay Hotel Christmas Fayre** celebration organised by Harriet Tatlow.

Other Activities 23

This category of activity mostly consists of our enthusiastic volunteers engaging face-to-face with members of the public in the field during their routine surveys. These provide wonderful opportunities to win hearts and minds over to our shared seal conservation cause. People love hearing about the seals they are watching and celebrity seal stories.

Photo ID Project (PIP) organised surveys 140

122 of these surveys comprised People Protecting Precious Places surveys organised by our Research Ranger Katie (not all could be used). We completed **10 day-long systematic boat-based Photo ID transect surveys** (CASPIP, STAPIP and POLPIP) along a 115km stretch of the north Cornish coast involving a total of 92 volunteers. We also returned to the **Looe Island Photo ID Project (LISPIP)** surveys, completing 8 during the calendar year.



Boat based Photo ID transect volunteer team aboard Newquay Sea Safaris and Fishing

Meetings 585

These multiple and varied meetings involved a huge range of people from all walks of life, from statutory agencies (**Clean Catch UK, Cornwall Council Fisheries Stakeholder, DEFRA, Natural England, Marine Management Organisation, Marine Mammal Disturbance Partnership, Special Committee on Seals, Seal Network UK and South West Coast Path Association**) to school pupils (**Maya Roberts and Isaac Nicholson**) and all partners in between, such as local businesses (**Attic Design and Print, Business Dr John Pomeroy, Cornwall Marine Network, Easy Divers, FlowmoCo, Hannah Stitfall Wildlife, Julie Bignall and the Carbis Bay Hotel**) and artists (**Animal Friends, Chapel Street Gallery, Cornish Jewellery Company, Emily Barker, Lucy Leach, Mungo Lils on the Hill, Rosie Sherwood, Rosalyn Cook, Smartie Lids on the Beach, Tregirls Pottery and Zennor Made**), charitable organisations (**Cornwall, Devon and Dorset Wildlife Trusts, Fathoms Free, the Field Studies Council, Hayle Towans Partnership, Plover Rovers and RSPB**) and students (**Bethany, Charlotte, Emily, Finn, Georgina, Lorraine, Megan, Ollie and Robyn**). Everyone helped us spread the word about our iconic seals.

Reports 21

Our amazing volunteers **Jeremy, Mairi, Martin, Mel, Mike and Ross** compiled data and reports on specific sensitive seal sites or on our census work. 4 student dissertations were

completed along with 8 PIP reports. We were delighted when our SRT team finally got our **'Post release monitoring of rehabilitated gray seal pups over large temporal and spatial scales'** paper published in Marine Mammal Science. A huge achievement on behalf of all our incredible citizen science volunteer efforts along with our partners at BDMLR, CSS and RSPCA West Hatch Wildlife Hospital. We were also pleased to complete our major grant evaluation bid report for the Heritage Emergency Fund.

Media Coverage 59

SRT had some extremely high-profile coverage on mainstream TV programmes on **Autumnwatch** and **Countryfile** as well as in the press (**National Geographic, Telegraph, Guardian and Observer**). SRT's seals featured in the **Global Ghost Gear Initiative, Pinniped Entanglement Group and Facebook Workplace Social Good** global annual reports. We featured in articles and blogs for private companies (**Aspects Holidays**), national charities (**RNLI, RSPCA**) and governing bodies (**British Canoeing, SUP Mag and SUP Boarder**) as well as multiple local newsletters (**Scilly Now and Then, Clean Ocean Sailing, Wild Cornwall, Devon Mammal Group**). Septimus (our legendary seal skeleton) appeared in the seal chapter in **Mary Colwell's book 'Beak, tooth and claw'**. Sue Sayer appeared in the **Cornwall Climate Care film 'Under the surface'** and **Off the Fence's 'Underwater Underdogs'** and SRT team members and volunteers featured in interviews on **BBC Radio Cornwall, BBC South East, Times Radio, BBC Breakfast TV, Radio 4, Radio 5, BBC News Channel, BBC Radio Wales, Dogdesk Radio, Charitable Radio and City News**. SRT's Seals SW Newsletter circulation grew from 474 at the start of the year to 762 by December.

PPPP Outputs - events and interpretation materials

110 two-hour 2021 **Seal and Human Interaction Surveys** could be compared to the 80 pilot surveys in 2019. The **Seal Alliance** had a total of 15 meetings in 2021 (including our international Masterclass which had up to 297 views and our members SharePoint Session which has had 131 views). A **Seal Alliance website** was created with 5 blogs and 16 blogs/news stories were posted on our Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust website. **10 Seals SW Newsletters were issued in 2021 along with 5 exclusive Wild Seal Supporter Updates** being sent out to seal adoptees. **64,000 leaflets and 106 signs** were sent to places north of John o'Groats and south of Land's End. They were translated into **French** and we have had requests from people wanting to translate them into **Dutch and Welsh**. We freely shared printable artwork so people and organisations could print, erect or distribute themselves.

PPPP Stakeholder Groups 3

St Ives Bay Stakeholder Group: 4 meetings completed with 2 WISE Courses for boat operators. The Seal Alliance leaflets were distributed and a watercraft sticker designed with 400 printed. Sticker feedback has informed a national watercraft and car sticker design. Best practice guidelines were agreed for an offshore sensitive seal site; 2 boat operators signed up for Seal of Approval trial scheme 2022/23. **St Austell Bay Stakeholder Group:** 3 meetings and 1 face-to-face talk were held and ambitious headland rewilding began. Seal Alliance signs put up and a green, living fence was planted to screen the seal haul out to reduce seal disturbance.

Looe Stakeholder Group: 1 meeting complete with plans to introduce a best practice graphic and mooring buoys around an offshore sensitive seal haul out site.

PPPP Report

SRT's Final PPPP Report was launched to **government, statutory agencies and press** on 06/02/22. The report contained 4 main sections: **2013 - 2021 Cornwall-wide data** (33797 surveys); **2019 -2021 systematic surveys at 4 sensitive seal sites in Cornwall** (190 in total); **St Ives Bay Stakeholder Group** and **Recommendations**.

Wildlife Safe (WISE) Courses

SRT's Sue Sayer helped to deliver the seal input during several WISE online courses in 2021. **SW Standard Boat** online course completed 17/03/21 with 14 attendees. The **WISE Adventure Course** ran online over 4 evenings from the 22/03/21 and had 84 participants nationally. **WISE SW Standard Boat** online was completed on 11/12/21 and 12/12/21 attended by 18 and WISE delivered a bespoke online course for the **University of Exeter** on 22/11/21 attended by 40 students. Sue and Dan from SRT's steering group are now key members of the **WISE Steering Group** going forward.

Feedback about SRT Activities

All our activities aimed to promote peoples' understanding and learning about our heritage seals and their precious marine habitat. Throughout our PPPP work, SRT encouraged participants to complete feedback about their experience on Survey Monkey. We need feedback to help us improve. It remains a challenge to get people to do this, but in total **451 participants** completed surveys across a range of very varied activities.

Not all surveys covered all aspects of our work (to avoid the questionnaires becoming too lengthy), but responses have been collated and from our analysis of where these questions were asked, we have discovered:

- Before SRT's engagement activity 52% of 354 participants knew Little or Nothing about seals and after the engagement this metric dropped to 1%.
- Before SRT's engagement activity 62% of 235 participants knew Little or Nothing about SRT and after the engagement this metric dropped to 4%.
- Of 330 respondents, 38% had not followed any of CSGRT's online platforms previously.
- Of 355 responses to the question about how informative the engagement had been or how much they had learned, 96% said that that had found it Very or Quite informative and had learned from the experience.
- From SRT's practical experiences by 43 respondents, 93% reported learning new skills.

The key questionnaire for us was completed about our brand-new talk 'Watching Seals Well' aimed at helping people to 'think seal' and enabling them to understand disturbance from a seal's perspective. Out of 152 responses:

- 9% knew A lot/45% A little about seals before the talk. After the talk 69% knew A lot/1% knew A little about seals
- 13% knew a lot/65% knew a little or nothing about SRT before the talk. After the talk 58% knew a lot/3% knew a little or nothing about SRT
- 94% of respondents thought the talk was very informative
- 89% thought disturbance is a problem for wildlife in their local area
- 97% thought the talk would help reduce disturbance to seals/wildlife
- 95% enjoyed the talk A lot
- 96% thought the talk had Inspired them to do something to help
- 53% were Inspired A lot (23% Quite a bit more) by the talk to spend more time in nature
- 63% felt their Compassion for, or Connection with nature, was enhanced by the talk a lot (27% a moderate amount)
- 100% of participants thought the talk was a Good event for us to deliver again.

In terms of changing behaviour, PPPP completed surveys reported that:

- 95% of 315 respondents have been Inspired to take action to do something to help seals
- 74% of 179 respondents have been Inspired to spend more time in nature
- 86% of 179 respondents felt their Compassion and Connection with nature had been enhanced
- 96% of 23 respondents who took part in our outdoor seal Census surveys said they had had a Very positive or Quite positive effect on their physical or mental health and wellbeing.

Respondent comments included (we have hundreds of these, but here are just a few):

- We will share the information with family & friends
- Anytime I go out I'll make sure that I educate anyone disturbing wildlife, additionally help with petitions to get animals more protection
- Talk to more people about the issue in my role at a coastal visitor centre
- I am a member of the Ilfracombe & North Devon Sub Aqua Club and whilst we do follow the Lundy seal code of conduct, I will be able to explain why it is so important especially to pregnant female seals
- Continue to volunteer and ensure the public are spoken to in an appropriate way
- It's always good to hear methods used by other rescue/responder groups and especially interesting to hear about work in other countries from our own
- Talking with people about seals and their habitats, doing more beach/street cleans, donations, choosing to not eat farmed fish and encourage others to do the same
- I have already applied to volunteer in your Photo ID program, and now the talk has inspired me to print the leaflets and distribute them around the seal watching sites around the country. I'm also thinking about how to apply the knowledge I'm gaining from the UK to improve local awareness and take actions and talks like this are helping a lot!
- I will share the seal group's information as much as possible and I hope to possibly volunteer with them in the future! I would love to help with community engagement and get the important messages across!

- I will make family and friends aware of the problems that seals face and give them information and email details about CSGRT. I intend to look into reducing my output of microplastics and harmful chemicals in our waste water
- Just making sure I follow and appreciate signs at locations telling people to keep a respectful distance from wildlife
- Has changed the way I'll take pictures of seals and raised my awareness for photographing wildlife in general
- Next time I'm on the coast, now that I know what the signs of disturbance are, if I see folks causing disturbance, I will feel confident to explain what the signs and consequences of disturbance are. I'm also going to share what I've learnt from this talk with my friends and family
- Educate others to live in a more environmentally friendly way such as alternatives to putting bleach down the toilet.

Seal Data Outputs [\(reports included above\)](#)

Surveys and Volunteers

In 2021, we received records from **331 different volunteers**, from which we were able to process **5235 discrete surveys** (an average of **14 site specific surveys each and every day**) from **330 different locations**. Our Sanctuaries at Seas Ranger, Sarah, reorganised our coordination of our **quarterly SW Seal Census** of which all four were completed in January, April, July and October, including **10 boat based systematic Photo ID Project (PIP) surveys** – CASPIP, STAPIP and POLPIP. We were delighted to **restart our Looe Island Photo ID Project** and we were able to complete 8 of these monthly holistic seal, bird and butterfly surveys.

Age and Sex Classes

On average, 9.5 seals were recorded across our 5235 surveys, ranging from a minimum of no seals observed to a maximum of 557 seals counted in a single survey. Of seals that we were able to classify according to their age, **65% were adults and 35% juveniles, moulted pups or white coated pups**. Only adults can be reliably sexed, so of all adults that we could confidently sex, **56% were males and 44% females** which is almost identical to 2020.

Grey Seal Pups

White coated maternally dependent grey seal pups were recorded on **605 occasions at 36 different locations** around the southwest. They represented just over **1% of all seals** observed. The maximum number of white coated pups recorded at a single site was 8 at West Cornwall East. 5 or more seal pups were recorded 24 times at 5 different pupping sites at **West Cornwall East** and at 3 sites in the **North Cornwall complex**. We alerted our partners BDMLR about numerous pups and assisted in two rope-based rescues of white coats at West Cornwall. LP316 Lucky bunting a seal rescued in 2016 had her second pup, this time at a safe and remote site away from human activity. Our world record breaking seal mum S112 Ghost had her 18th pup in 19 years but breached her site fidelity tradition as this happened on

Cornwall's south coast leaving her Beachmaster partner, DP2 White Back C, without her on the north coast. More **south coast pups** were recorded than previously!



S112 Ghost and her 18th new-born pup on the south coast of Cornwall

Common Seals and Common Seal Pups

Our observations included **85 common seal sightings** – most were single individuals up to a maximum of 4 individuals seen on the 14/01/21 and 15/01/21 in south Devon. Common seals were recorded right around the southwest coast **at 10 different locations** from north Devon, at one site on the north Cornish coast, to the Isles of Scilly and then at 6 south coast locations as well as in south Devon. Most notable in 2021 was the exciting record of Cornwall's **first witnessed common seal pup observed with its mother**. SRT worked closely with local operators to avoid anything being posted about this historic pup online. This avoided any potential disturbance and ensured the pup thrived and was successfully weaned. We cannot be more grateful to everyone who saw this pup and avoided posted their exciting news online. **This is the first surviving wild common seal pup we have recorded since 2000.**

Photos, Albums and Identifications

Our PID Hubs continue to be highly productive, processing an incredible **123311 photos** (103467 taken in 2021 and 19844 taken in previous years) in 2021 into **3213 survey albums** (2284 from 2021 and 929 from previous years). This enabled SRT to generate a total of **13542 seal identifications** (up from 12162 seal identifications in 2020) of which **87% were re-identifications** (compared to 86% in 2020). This included our new maximum of **142 different individual seal identifications in a single survey** (20 more than our previous total in 2020) that were confirmed by two experienced volunteers. Over 100 different seals were identified on 7 separate surveys all at the West Cornwall site. Of all the seals re-identified, **7 were seals we first added to our catalogues back in 2000** (4 males and 3 females) and **4 were seals that were first identified in 2001 (all females)** including S49 Pliers shown below.

S49 Pliers



S49	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Jan								2						1	1				1			5
Feb			1		1	1	2	1	1					2				1	2			10
Mar					1		3	1				1	1	1							1	8
Apr				2		2	2		1													7
May																						2
Jun		1		2			1															4
Jul	1												2									3
Aug		2	1	2									2							1		7
Sep		1																	1	1	1	2
Oct		1	3		1			1	2									1	2			11
Nov								1	1		2					1	1	1				9
Dec			2								1					1		1	3			6

Trevose
Pentire
Porthtowan
Porthreath
West Cornwall
Skomer

In total, **57 seals from 5 sites were identified 20 or more times** and most of these were from the Lizard and the Roseland as a reflection of the extremely frequent survey effort at both sites (Lizard daily and Roseland multiple days every week). The oldest seals from each of the five sites identified 30+ times were BRX139 (1st ID 2020 and ID'd 114 times since at various Torbay sites), LIZ5 (1st ID 2014 and ID'd 281 times in total all on the Lizard), MPF6 (1st ID 2009 and ID'd 522 times since all at North Devon), ROC13 (1st ID 2009 and ID'd 221 times since at 9 different sites from Looe to the Roseland) and S161 (1st ID 2003 and ID'd 264 times since at 11 different sites from Trevose to the west of St Ives Bay).

S161 Cross comb

S161's ID calendar created from sightings by 27 different volunteers

Trevose
West Cornwall
St Ives & St Ives Bay

S161	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Jan					1	1		1	1				3							17
Feb		1	2				6	1			1		1		1	2	1	3	1	21
Mar				1	1												1	1		4
Apr						1	1							1	1				2	7
May	1		8	2	1	1		3	1	1		1	1	2	4	2	3	2		33
Jun	1		3	3	1	2				1	2	2	1	1	2	4	1	3	7	35
Jul						2	1		3		3	2	1	4	1	3	7	5		
Aug	1	1	3	1		1	1	1	4	1	1	2	2	2	4	4	4	7	1	41
Sep						2	2				2	3				1				11
Oct		2				4								2	3	1	2		2	16
Nov													2	1						5
Dec								1				1	1		2	1	1	3		10
	3	4	20	8	10	15	4	6	9	4	10	16	6	19	23	18	31	14	1	236

Photo ID Catalogue photo



Seals from Cornwall have now been linked to the Isle of Man (**450km away**), Northwest Wales, Southeast Ireland, Southwest and South Wales, the Isles of Scilly, Northwest France, Northern France, North and South Devon, Dorset, Belgium and Holland (**650km away**).



First seal links

Ex rescued, Rehabilitated and Released Seals

SRT 2021 data included **980 sightings of 192 different rear flipper tagged, rehabilitated seals** (around **2% of all seals observed**) from right around our southwest coast. Most would have been released in north Devon or from the north/south Cornish coast. A maximum of **18 different ex rehabilitated** seals were recorded on one survey on 17/01/21 at West Cornwall by Andrea Hunt. In 2021, 18 ex rehabilitated seals were recorded on more than 9 occasions – all at West Cornwall. 9 ex rehabilitated seals were identified 20 or more times (LIZ4 Archer lady, LIZ30 Hufflepuff aka Brush, LP228 Orion, ROS908 Pangolin, ROS971 Hungry caterpillar, MPF256 Slipper, ROM104 Snail, ROS1127 Calimero and S16 Rabbit f).

Paul Oaten from **RSPCA West Hatch Wildlife Hospital** created a Google Sheet for sharing confidential data with SRT. In December, we were delighted that Emma O'Neill from **CSS** restarted regular input at our monthly Seals SW Sessions. The most notable event for our rehabilitated seals was the publication in Marine Mammal Science of our 'Post release monitoring of rehabilitated gray seal pups over larger temporal and spatial scales' on 23/08/21. As partners in 2021, led by Dan Jarvis from BDMLR, SRT and the CSS hosted the **European Seal Rescue Conference** in Cornwall in 2021.



Jenga (right) ex rehabilitated seal from 2007/2008 Beachmastering and protecting his female

Entangled Seals

To balance our resightings of rescued, rehabilitated and released seals, which reflect a positive intervention by people, were our observations of seals that have experienced entanglement at some point in their lives. SRT record entangled seals as currently entangled or as ex entangled – the latter based on evidence of a healed wound and no visible entangling material. This can be harder to judge than might be imagined. Seals having experienced or still experiencing entanglement were recorded **811 times on 357 surveys up to a maximum of 18 different individuals in a single survey** – this was recorded on 13/12/21 at West Cornwall by Sue Sayer and Kate Hockley. **More than 10 different entangled seals were recorded 12 times all at West Cornwall** during the year. **18 unique entangled individuals seen in a single survey**, this is the fourth highest number of entangled seals since our records began. In total **134 different entangled seals were identified** from our catalogues. Of these, **4 were identified more than 30 times in 2021** (BRX139 Easter bunny, MPF256 Slipper, S524 Legs and LP379 Long mono).

A new entanglement issue emerged in 2021, that of seals being caught up in flying rings/dog toys used around the coast for exercise. **A male (LP566 Joy Division) and Female (LP666 Splits)** were both recorded with **flying rings around their necks in March 2021**. Both have since been freed. This will become one of SRT's key campaigns in 2022.

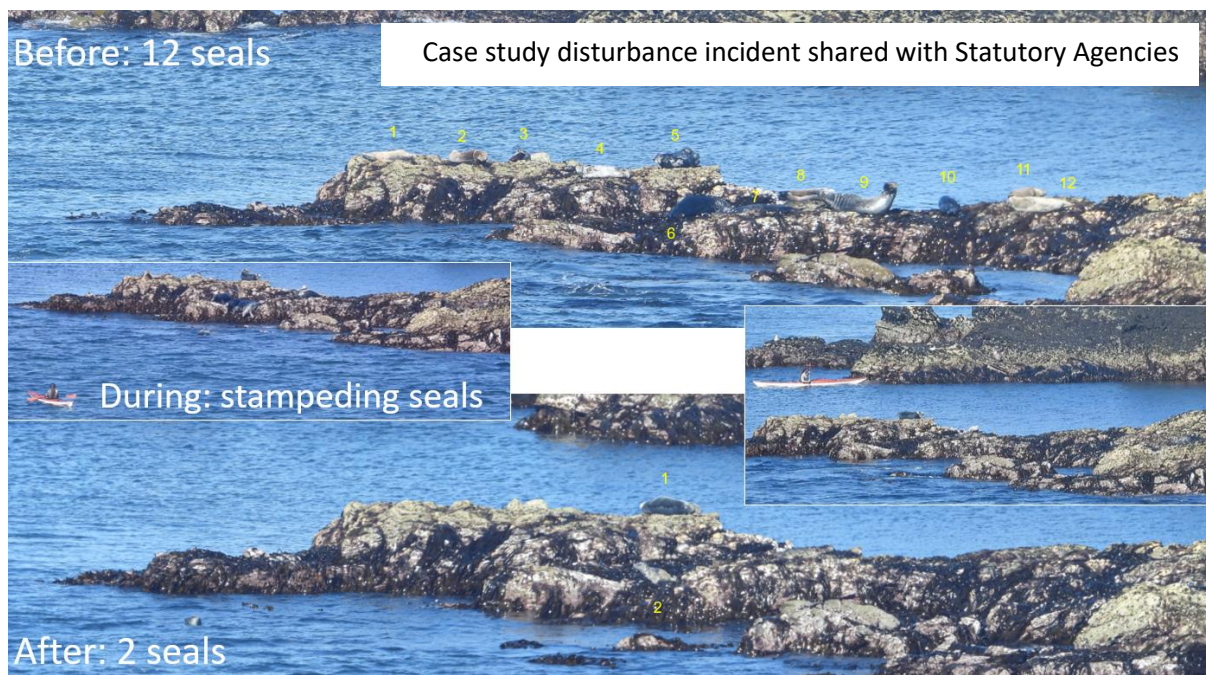


SRT are now able to share data and entangled seal experiences as members of the **Clean Catch UK National Steering Group** of which Sue Sayer is a member.

Disturbance

From our routine data (not effort corrected) serious level 3 disturbance (seals leaving the land by tombstoning or in a stampede and entering the sea, crash diving at sea, displacement from sea areas where humans were present or seals being fed) were recorded on **241 occasions as 282 incidents** (on some surveys multiple disturbance incidents were observed). In total, **level 3 disturbance affected a shocking total of 1487 seals in 2021** from a minimum of 1 seal in an incident to maximum of 79 in a single incident at West Cornwall. **Over 20 seals were seriously disturbed stampeding into the sea on 17 different occasions at 6 different sensitive seals**

sites from multiple North Cornwall sites to Looe in south Cornwall. At the North Cornwall sites up to 70 seals were recorded stampeding on 23/11/21 by Carolyn Bloomfield and Malcolm Baker. Where possible, disturbance incidents are now routinely followed up by members of our newly formed **Conservation Team**. In 2021, SRT and the **Cornwall Marine and Coastal Code Group** aligned their databases and the data from SRT is shared with CMCCG each month. Case studies of disturbance and data are also shared with the newly formed **Marine Mammal Disturbance Partnership**, set up in 2021 and led by **Natural England**, of whom SRT are key participants. Sue Sayer was also invited to present information about seal disturbance at the **Welsh Coastal Wildlife and Rural Affairs Crime Conference** organised by Rob Taylor.



Policy and Conservation Actions

Consultations 31

SRT used data from our amazing volunteer citizen science network to submit evidence to 31 policy and planning consultations. These varied hugely from issue based requests for information (**Climate Change, Wildlife Crime, Marine Disturbance, Non Licensable Activities**) to species input (**Sandeels and Norway Pout** and **The Joint Nature Conservation Committee 7th Quinquennial Review**), as well as activity based evidence (**Energy generation, Drones, Fixed and Drift Net Byelaws and Personal/Recreational Watercraft**) and developments near seal sites in the UK and beyond (**Via Ferrata, Charity Buildings, Holiday Park and Hotel Plans**), not to mention multiple requests for identifying marine priorities (**Cornwall and Devon Wildlife Trust, DEFRA, Global Ghost Gear Initiative, Cornwall Biodiversity and for ABPmer**).

Legislation

In March 2021 the amended **Conservation of Seals Act** finally came into force, better protecting seals by making shooting an offence in addition to injuring and taking seals. This involved the important removal of the Netsman's Defence. At the end of November 2021, DEFRA issued notification that all **wild capture fisheries were now legally required to report incidental bycatch of marine mammals**. These events should be reported to the Marine Management Organisation within 48 hours of the end of the fishing trip.

Campaigns

SRT's key issue focus in 2021 was that of **seal disturbance**. In a concerted campaign with the **Seal Alliance** the following key actions were taken to make **seal disturbance illegal** as it is with whales and dolphins. SRT and the Seal Alliance began by raising awareness with national **Give Seals Space signs** and **Watching Seals Well leaflets**. In June, SRT hosted site visits for **Environmental Minister George Eustice** and **Parliamentary Undersecretary for the Environment Rebecca Pow**, along with partners **BDMLR** and the **National Trust (NT)**. In July we hosted another visit from **DEFRA's Seals and Seabird's Policy Advisor Vicky Bendall**.



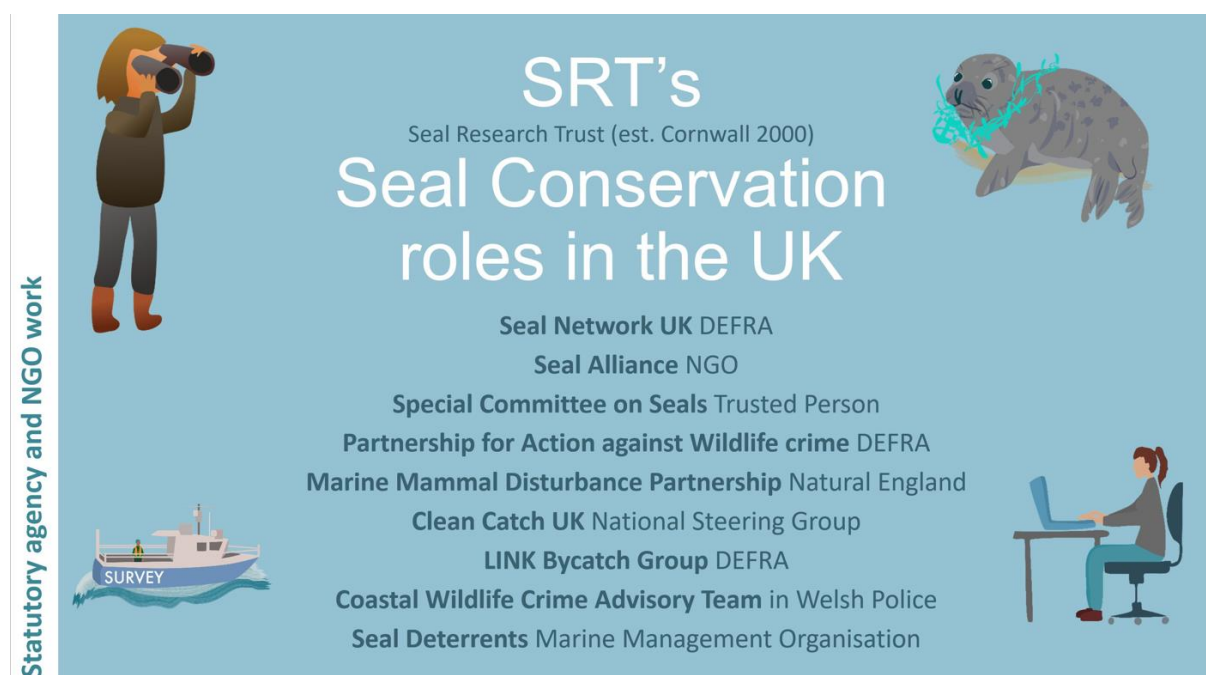
Left to right: Richard Bellamy (National Lottery Heritage Fund), George Eustice, Dan Jarvis (BDMLR), Sue Sayer (SRT), Steve Sudworth (NT) and Geoff Penhaligon (George Eustice's team)

Kick started by the euthanasia of the seal 'Freddie Mercury' after a dog attack on the banks of the Thames, Mary Tester from her newly formed **Thames Seal Watch**, set up a **UK Parliamentary Petition** to raise public awareness of the issue. By the time this closed the petition had **26306 signatures from every single UK constituency**. Mary also collaborated with SRT on an **Early Day Motion** aimed at raising MP awareness of the issue. Mary wrote to every single MP gaining considerably more support than the number of MPs who signed up (as many MPs choose not to sign EDMs full stop.) Something must have worked as SRT were delighted to discover that when the **JNCC's 7th Quinquennial Review** was announced, they suggested that both **native and vagrant seal species be added to the Wildlife and Countryside Act**, which would effectively make seal disturbance illegal. Obviously SRT encouraged as many organisations and individuals to support these suggestions during the **JNCC's public consultation**. The Seal Alliance's next step was to send an **Open Letter** to Boris

Johnson requesting government support for these amendments, which was sent with a **Press Release** including our **PPPP Report launch**, as evidence supporting the needs for this legislative change. To follow, Sue Sayer, Mary Tester and MP Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) drafted a **10 Minute Rule Bill entitled the Seal (Protection) Bill**, which was read in **Westminster** on 06/02/22. Watch this space. None of this would have been possible without our decades of seal data on disturbance (by people and dogs), so **each and every one of our volunteers can take some credit in the success of this campaign.**

In 2021 Sue Sayer was added to the list of 'Trusted people' contributing to the question drafting by DEFRA to be posed to the **Special Committee on Seals** (government advisors on the species.) SRT were also invited to join the **Partnership Against Wildlife Crime by DEFRA** and the **Marine Mammal Disturbance Partnership** led by Natural England's Ophelie Humphrey and Claire Ludgate. As seal experts, **Wildlife and Countryside LINK** invited SRT to join the **LINK Bycatch and Marine Mammal Groups** and the national **Welsh Police Coordinator for Wildlife and Rural Crime, Rob Taylor**, added Sue to his strategy team.

All the extensive data evidence our volunteers collect, collate and present can be shared in these important **policy, planning and legislative** networks to **make a difference for seals.**



Thanks to SRT evidence, there are three Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Cornwall where it is already a criminal offence to disturb seals, protecting them at key haul out sites across Cornwall's north coast: **Aire Point to Carrick Du; Godrevy to St Agnes and Boscastle to Widemouth Bay** SSSIs. In making this happen, it became obvious that to add a single species to an SSSI, the site had to begin a complete redesignation, so we have been supporting **Natural England to mount a case for reviewing the SSSI review process** itself potentially with Cornwall and the Thames as case studies.

Practical Conservation Actions

We worked with a range of partners to make the southwest a better place for seals. We:

- Provided evidence to Natural England to support **enforcement letters** when seal disturbance has occurred in an SSSI
- Worked with landowners the National Trust to plan their **extensive soft landscaping activities around the West Cornwall site** to protect seals from disturbance, as well as improve habitat for other species
- Supported the National Trust, Cornwall College Newquay and the Pentire Hub to set up **trail cams to monitor** mainland haul outs and disturbance events
- Consulted with Natural England and the Southwest Coast Path team to devise **wildlife best practice key messaging for waymarker posts**
- Worked extensively with statutory agencies to support our key partner BDMLR when a **vagrant visitor - a walrus** - appeared on Cornwall's north coast and then spent weeks in St Mary's harbour on the Isles of Scilly. He was at considerable risk and required onsite monitoring by BDMLR's Lizzi Larbalestier who Sue personally supported almost daily. Sue contacted Alaskan Walrus expert Lori Quakenbush for **key behavioural and conservation advice** as well as helping to produce **shared press statements and public posters** with Lizzi and the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust



The walrus in his original pontoon built by Lizzi Larbalestier from BDMLR

- Raised awareness with the Cornwall Council Fisheries Stakeholder Group and Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority about the **changing phenology of grey seals in St Ives Bay**. It turns out the **phenology of the mackerel fishery had also changed creating spatial overlap between the two, resulting in numerous fish and line hooked seals** since October
- Joined Devon and Cornwall Police's Rural Advisory Group with other partners BDMLR and the Cornwall Wildlife Trust to **plan, monitor, advise and deliver a marine mammal safe G7 summit** at the Carbis Bay Hotel. SRT, BDMLR and CWT Seaquest SW coordinated **49 volunteers who monitored marine activity for 365 hours** to provide daily marine disturbance mitigation advice for the security services to action. This created a **model for organisational collaboration for all other major marine events across the UK**
- Created an **Eco film for the G7 Cornwall Schools Eco Conference** in Falmouth

- Collaborated with Colin Trundle at Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority to create two **SSSI signs for fishers outlining their legal responsibilities around seals in the Godrevy to St Agnes and Boscastle to Widemouth Bay SSSIs**



- Shared our **new online and public photo policy** that sees us role model best seal photo practice. We no longer share photos of seals looking at the camera (as they have most likely been disturbed), photos with large numbers of seals (to avoid people asking and being told the specific location) and only share generic site names publicly. We always want people to see and enjoy seals, but not in a way that simply drives up disturbance, negating our conservation efforts.
- Supported volunteers to **remove risky lost fishing gear** from sites occupied by seals.
- Devised a new system of **risk assessing for seals** to detail disturbance events.
- Created **Best Practice Guidelines and a Seal of Approval Scheme** for operators around one offshore sensitive seal site with the St Ives Bay Stakeholder Group
- Trialled a new **Watercraft Sticker** about marine wildlife best practice with the St Ives Bay Stakeholder Group. This idea is now being developed into a national version
- Submitted data on three sensitive seal sites to Cornwall Wildlife Trust for their submission to government on **High Level Marine Protected Areas**
- Helped to **design coastal signs for playful juvenile seals and mums and pups** around the coast at their time of need. These were designed to appeal to coastal users' better natures, encouraging them to put seals first and give them plenty of space.
- Actioned Natural England's request to **monitor the Aire Point to Carrick Du SSSI at West Penwith North** for disturbance using trail cameras they supplied in 2021. Huge thanks to volunteer Jeff Loveridge for devising appropriate survey protocols and data analysis for NE and landowners the National Trust.

What a year of major actions and achievements on top of all our routine surveys! Thanks to all our amazing and inspiring volunteers, core team, partners and funders we know we made a positive difference for our iconic and enigmatic seals in 2021! Great team effort!

Profit and Loss

Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust For the year ended 31 March 2022

2022

Turnover

Activity generated income - Fundraising income	92.95
Activity generated income - Talks and Training fee income and expenses claimed	2,763.00
Activity generated Income- Merchandise sales	7,859.93
Adoptions - Private WSS	4,560.44
Donations - Boat	3,055.20
Donations - Corporate (inc' Corporate Sponsorship)	4,905.47
Donations - Private	24,430.44
Grant Income	37,850.00
Online Fundraising - Amazon Smile income	161.12
Online Fundraising - Crowd Funder	801.00
Online Fundraising - Facebook income	2,730.00
Online fundraising PayPal Giving Fund income	413.92
Other Revenue	466.10
Total Turnover	90,089.57

Cost of Sales

Merchandise Purchases	1,732.75
Shopify costs	227.32
Total Cost of Sales	1,960.07

Gross Profit **88,129.50**

Administrative Costs

Boat charter	6,600.00
IT, hardware and software	1,670.49
Marketing & Promotional Resources	1,352.82
Office supplies	189.10
Other Miscellaneous costs	112.90
Paypal fees	180.48
Printing	2,828.35
Professional fees - Consulting	5,895.00
Professional fees - Insurance.	803.88
Ranger - Activities & Admin' Lauren McGregor	1,656.62
Ranger - Amazement & Discovery (Marion Beaulieu)	15,042.30
Ranger - Bethany Trevethick	774.25
Ranger - C J Bright	649.20
Ranger - Marine stories - Emily Williams	2,063.87
Ranger - Marine stories - Tash Murch	1,415.50
Ranger - Marine Stories- Charlotte Gill	2,188.00
Ranger - Research (Katie Bellman)	9,525.60
Ranger - Retail (Joseph Gray)	1,236.00
Ranger - Sanctuaries at Sea (Sarah Millward)	16,731.25

2022

Survey equipment	6,621.53
Training costs for Rangers and Volunteers	161.25
Travel and expenses	2,478.40
Total Administrative Costs	80,176.79
Operating Profit	7,952.71
Other Income	
Gift Aid income	2,873.57
Total Other Income	2,873.57
Profit on Ordinary Activities Before Taxation	10,826.28
Profit after Taxation	10,826.28



Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Charity Name

Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust

**On accounts for the year
ended**

31st March 2022

**Charity no
(if any)**

1162936

Set out on pages

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

**Respective
responsibilities of
trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent
examiner's statement**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act have not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date:

26/10/22

Name:

Mr J K Shepherd

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

FCCA, CTA

Address:

11A Kimberley Park Road

Falmouth, Cornwall

TR11 2DA

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material problems.

**Give here brief details of
any items that the
examiner wishes to
disclose.**