



Press release – September 2024

NAWT and Cornish Seal Sanctuary join forces to highlight dangerous dog toys

The National Animal Welfare Trust has joined forces with The Sea Life Trust - Cornish Seal Sanctuary, to encourage animal-loving dog owners to watch out for seals when visiting the beach with their pooch.

The charity recently caught up with their friends at the Sanctuary, who warned about the dangers of ring-style frisbees, and the harm they can cause to wildlife. They also provided NAWT dog re-homers with information and advice on what to do if you ever come across a seal pup whilst out on a walk.

Dog toys aren't fun for all 'pups'

Ring-style frisbee's can cause life-threatening injuries to wildlife if left behind. This often happens when owners throw them into the sea for the dog to chase, and they end up floating away and getting lost. Seals are sadly the most affected as they can become entangled, often being found with them wrapped around their necks, which can ultimately lead to a prolonged and painful death.

The Sanctuary has seen first-hand the consequences that these beautiful creatures face. Last year, rescuers saved the life of a grey seal on the Cornish coastline after it was found with a ring-style frisbee stuck around its neck.

Recognised as a regular summer visitor and known locally as 'Wings', her habituation to humans helped with her capture. Under normal circumstances it can be difficult to help seals entangled like this, as they often haul out in inaccessible locations.

Despite Wings' happy ending, the Seal Sanctuary is now sharing a stark warning as ring-style frisbees are an increasingly serious issue across the country. Although in Wings' case, her spending a lot of time being fed by boats in the harbour saved her life, it is also the cause of her condition. Being so close to humans and the shore, can put seals at greater risk of becoming entangled in the debris left behind.

The National Animal Welfare Trust love dogs and love the beautiful wildlife we're lucky enough to share our beaches with. So, the charity is keen to help the Seal Sanctuary spread the word amongst dog owners about how the local sea life can be better protected so that all animals and people can happily enjoy the UK's beautiful beaches. Seal pup disturbance advice

As we are now in the grey seal pup season (Sept-Mar) seal pup disturbance is always a concern. Tamara Cooper, Curator at the Cornish Seal Sanctuary, has given her advice on how to behave around pups should you ever encounter one.

At this time of year, the Seal Sanctuary advises the public to:

- Keep off any beach where a pup has been found
- Keep dogs on lead
- Keep your distance from the pup and mum
- If you see a pup keep out of sight and remain as quiet as possible to give mum and pup the best chance of remaining together

Seal pups will often be left by their mums safely above the high tide mark, this is to allow the mum to go back into the sea to feed herself. Mum will often be watching the pup from the water. Pups need feeding regularly to ensure their best chance of surviving the critical weaning period. Even just a few missed feeds can be the difference between life and death for a seal pup.

Dog owners are urged to be on the lookout for pups whilst walking their dogs on beaches, especially on those that have more secluded shores and caves, as mother seals and their pups may be present. If you encounter a seal pup alone on a public beach, do not approach or touch it. Ensure your dogs are kept under control and always on a lead.

If you are concerned about a pup, the Cornish Seal Sanctuary and BDMLR can be contacted for advice and assistance on 01326 221361 or 01825 765546 respectively. Both organisations encourage dog owners to read over the [DEFRA Marine Code of Conduct](#), and share with family and friends, especially this time of year. The information provided gives advice on how you can help to minimise disturbance to wildlife when you visit the coast.

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About The National Animal Welfare Trust

Established in the 1970s, the charity takes in homeless and unwanted dogs, cats and small animals, providing care and rehoming services. All animals are provided with veterinary treatment and hands-on care and friendship, while the team assess what sort

of forever home would be best suited. Last year, 1,235 animals were rehomed to loving new owners.

The National Animal Welfare Trust operates five centres across the south of England. For more information please visit www.nawt.org.uk

About the Sea Life Trust – Cornish Seal Sanctuary

The SEA LIFE TRUST Cornish Seal Sanctuary is a charity that rescues and rehabilitates grey seal pups from around the Cornish coastline. Each season (September - March), the Sanctuary rehabilitates more than 70 seal pups that have been rescued for various reasons, from malnourishment to being separated from their mum.

The Sanctuary also provides a permanent home to animals that need special care from their team of marine animal experts, including Common and Grey seals, Icelandic rescue puffins, and beavers.

You can find out more about their mission and vital conservation work, [right here](#).

About the British Divers Marine Life Rescue

British Divers Marine Life Rescue is an international marine animal rescue organisation based in the UK and is a registered charity. The aims of the organisation are to provide a rescue service for marine wildlife, to support existing rehabilitation centres and to develop new methods of rescue, treatment, transport and care. Website www.bdmlr.org.uk.

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