Presentation
King's Lynn & West Norfolk Environment & Community Panel
Tuesday December 3rd 2019

Friends of Horsey Seals





The Seals – Greys and Harbour

What's the difference?





GREYS

Males – Bulls

Darker
Bigger
2.3 – 3.3 meters long
Weigh up to 300kg
Live for about 25 years



Females - Cows

Slender, paler
smaller
1.6 – 2 meters long
100-150kgs in weight.
Live for 35 years



Main Seal Colonies – East Coast

The Wash
The biggest Harbour
Seal colony in Europe

Blakeney
Harbour +
Grey Seals – 2,000 pups

Grey Seals 120,000 Harbour Seals 33 – 50,000

Horsey
2014/5 1,000 pups
2018/19 2,000+ pups

Donna Nook
Lincolnshire
Grey Seals – 2,000 pups

Seal Facts

- Rookery or Nursery
- On land see well in bright light reduces in low light
- Adult greys eat flatfish, octopus, mackerel, herring – sea birds

- Close ear openings for diving
- Hearing + whiskers sensitive help detect prey
- Young greys and harbour seals eat small fish, shell fish

Life Cycle - Pupping



Harbour Seals

Summer June – July

Born ready to swim quickly

Grey Seals

Winter November - January

Born with white coat – not fully waterproof



Seals are protected by law

1970 Conservation of Seals Act

All seals Protected Norfolk Lincolnshire all year by Conservation of Seals (England) Order 1999

Threats to seals

- Disturbance by humans + dogs



- Entanglement in human-made debris



- Extreme Weather Events

- Pollutants – heavy metals + PCBs

ENTANGLEMENT

- Nets, ropes, ‘ghost netting’, line
- Plastic litter especially ring items





‘Psylla’ 50th seal treated by RSPCA East Winch neck injury since 2008

2019

Friends of Horsey Seals

- 103 call outs 48 Grey Seals 55 Harbour
- 33 for neck injuries by plastic objects / netting
- 10 seals taken to RSPCA East Winch Hospital
  2 seals to Sealife Centre Hunstanton

‘Keeping Seals Safe from flying rings’ Awareness Campaign

‘Pinkafo’ rescued December 2018



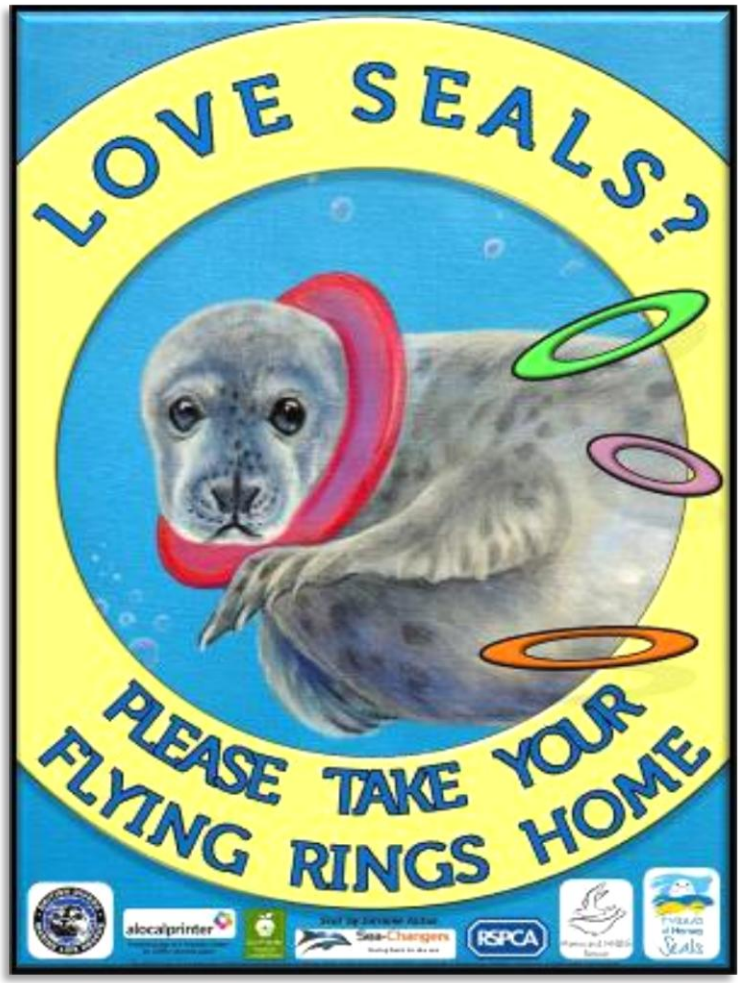
Sparked off the campaign

POSTER

Friendly

Positive

‘How to Help’



Messages

Friends of Horsey Seals (RCN 1169539) a charity run by volunteers, aims to reduce disturbance to seals and other wild animals, and takes part in rescues of seals that are injured or orphaned.
To become a Friend of Horsey Seals, or find out about wardening opportunities, visit:
www.friendsofhorseyseals.co.uk

If you see a seal or any wild animal that is sick or injured, please contact:
RSPCA 24 hour helpline 0300 1234 999
or
British Divers Marine Life Rescue:
01825 765546 (9-5 Mon-Fri)
07787 433412 (out of hours)

LOVE SEALS?

RESCUES OF SEALS CAUGHT IN PLASTIC FLYING RINGS

Volunteers from Friends of Horsey Seals take part in seal rescues with other local organisations, including Marine and Wildlife Rescue. Co-ordinated and trained by RSPCA (East Winch) they attend callouts and consult with RSPCA vets on the best course of action for the injured animal.

At her rescue in September 2017, 'Frisbee' (overleaf) was very thin as she couldn't catch fish any more, she was nursed back to health by the RSPCA and released in February 2018.

'Pinkafo' (right and overleaf) named after the pink plastic ring embedded in her neck was rescued in December 2018. She was close to death but was nursed back to health at East Winch and was fit for release in May 2019.

'Sir David' (overleaf) was rescued in March 2019. He was monitored for several weeks before rescuers were able to catch him while he was asleep and away from his group.

WHY FOCUS ON FLYING RINGS?

While playing with flying rings is fun and involves healthy outdoor exercise, the problems they cause when found by young seals are not widely known.

Most people would not intentionally harm a seal or any wildlife, but might not know about potential injuries to seals from plastic flying rings.

Your awareness of this problem will help to save lives and unnecessary suffering.


After months of treatment Pinkafo returns to her natural environment

Photo: Chris Godfrey

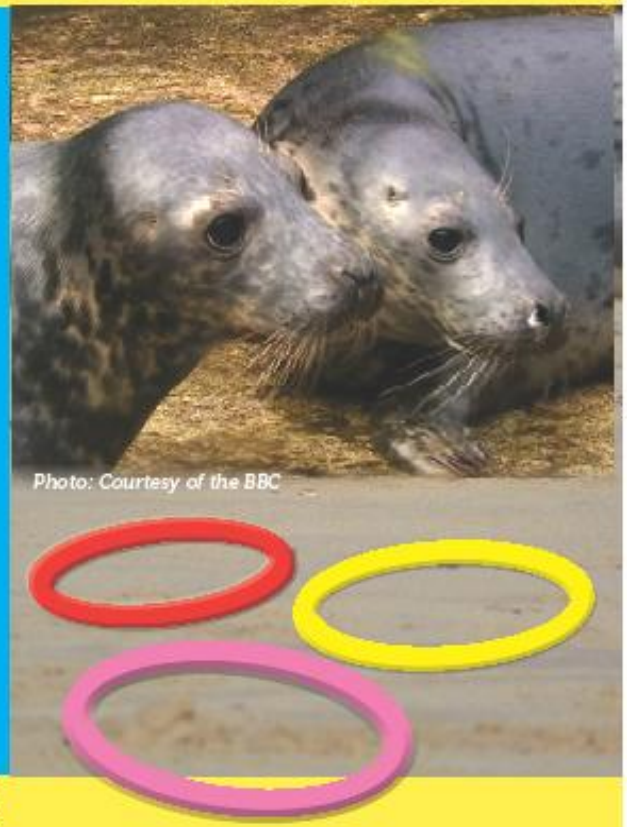


Photo: Courtesy of the BBC

alocalprinter Printed using eco-friendly toners on 100% recycled paper

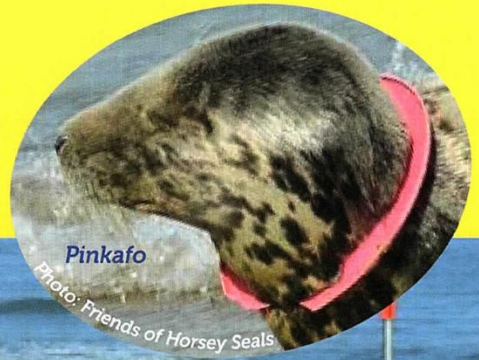
Friends of Horsey Seals gratefully acknowledge the financial support of Sea Changers for this campaign and thank all the individuals and groups who have given their support.

The RSPCA logo is a trademark of RSPCA used by Friends of Horsey Seals under licence from RSPCA, registered in England and Wales, charity no. 219099
www.rspca.org.uk

Please take your flying rings home

ENJOY FLYING RINGS ON LAND NOT SEA!

Seals are curious, playful animals. They are a joy to watch with their spotted coats and varied colours: sleeping, making 'banana' shapes and pupping in season. In the sea they are graceful, agile and fast, they have to be to catch fish! As fellow mammals we feel a special connection to them. We also know they are wild animals who are wary of us; if we disturb them they will flee. If we get too close they will bite!



Pinkafo
Photo: Friends of Horsey Seals



WHAT PROBLEM DO SEALS HAVE WITH FLYING RINGS?

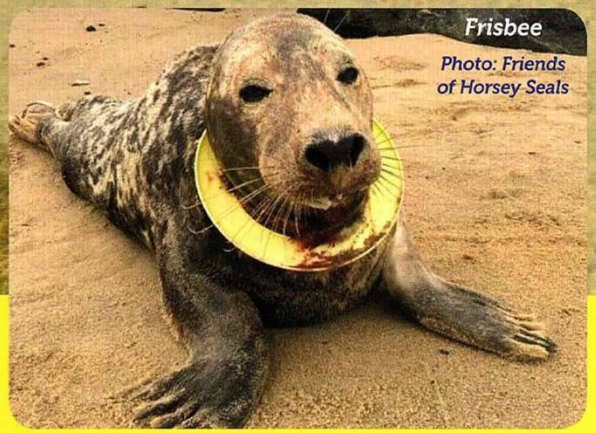
Seals are being spotted with flying rings stuck around their necks.

It seems that younger seals find these flying rings in the sea where they have been thrown or lost and, being inquisitive animals, they play with them and put their heads through the hole.

The seals can't get the flying ring off as they have flippers rather than arms like ours.

As the young seals grow the rings dig into their flesh causing painful wounds that can be fatal.

Seals and other wildlife can get caught in all sorts of plastic litter. Ropes, netting and ringed items are especially dangerous.



Frisbee
Photo: Friends of Horsey Seals

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Please throw your flying ring, discs and dog rings well up on the beach where they can't get lost.
- Please don't throw them in the sea!
- Join a beach clean, or do your own litter collecting – take a bag, pop it in and put it in a litter bin – you'll feel great! (www.mcsuk.org/beachwatch)
- Tell your family and friends - once they know they'll want to join in!



Sir David
Photo: David Vyse

Love seals? Then please take your flying ring and all plastic litter off the beach

Launch July 24th 2019



Peter Ansell, chairman of the Friends of Horsey Seals, with a cuddly seal at the launch of a campaign raising awareness of seals and plastic flying rings
Picture: LIZ COATES



Pictured is one of three seals along the Norfolk coast with their heads stuck in a plastic ring which have yet to be caught
Picture: FOHS

Save the seals! Campaign to rid coast of hollow frisbees launched

Cheap and fun to play with - but seals are dying in agony because of plastic flying rings.

LIZ COATES
Liz.Coates@archant.co.uk

That was the stark message being delivered to visitors to one of Norfolk's most popular beaches this week as they were urged to take care over hollow frisbees seals could slip into.

Thousands of leaflets are being handed to shops and seaside cafes from Great Yarmouth to Hunstanton in a bid to rid the coast of the plastic toys, popular with dog walkers, that are inflicting shocking wounds.

And as families frolicked on the sands and seals bobbed about in the water at Winterton the campaign was officially launched to prevent the needless suffering of seals, which are such a draw for trippers.

It comes as wildlife watchers identified yet another animal "necklaced" by a white plastic plaything digging deep into its flesh, the equivalent of "a slow garotting."

Peter Ansell, chairman of Friends of Horsey seals, said flying rings needed to be kept away from the shore.

And while they were fine for the garden or the park they posed such a cruel hazard to seals that anyone using them needed to stay away from the waves.

Albert Ward, group secretary, said: "The interest so far has all been about the injuries – the result of the problem rather than the cause.



"Today's campaign launch is to do with making people aware of what happens if people are not very careful with the discs and they happen to go straight in the sea.

"The results could be that animals are harmed. The cuts are absolutely horrendous.

"As a toy they are cheap and simple and they encourage people

So Far...

- 5,000+ leaflets + 500 posters distributed + social media
- Blakeney Harbour
- Featured in media, TV
- Seal Trip Operators spreading message
- Sea life centre ‘seal talks’
- Spa Dersingham, K.Hardware Cromer, Yacht shop & Rock shop Gorleston
- NWT & RSPB

- 25 Primary 10 Secondary Schools - 122 children involved project work
- NNDC - Country Parks - Lifeguard Service
- Cromer Town Council
- Hunstanton Environment Working Party
- NNDC Coastal Forum Meeting
- Parish Councillors
- 10 ‘Ambassadors’ named

Response: overwhelming shock, concern & sympathy





Your child would like to help Friends of Horsey Seals by designing a poster! The aim is to teach people about the dangers of flying rings for seals as well as other plastic products. Please return to Mrs. Pell by Monday July 22nd. Thank you!

Catfield Primary 4/4 5-6


2018/10/13
0451 glenn


StevenHill




John Alford








John Alford



Keep Seals Safe from flying rings longer term solutions

'Beach shops shouldn't sell flying rings..ban them from the beach...' ***(quote from general public)***

- **Supply of (cheap) flying rings**
- **Public use on Norfolk beaches**

- **Refresh people's awareness**
- **School Engagement**
- **Shops, Trade Groups**
- **Distributers, Importers, Manufacturers**
- **Help from Councils and Councillors**
- **Public Space Protection Orders Signage**
- **NWT, NT, Holkham, Landowners**



Pinkafo – Horsey Beach

Thank you!