

New survey reveals seal numbers in the Thames

August 19 2013



An astounding 708 seals have been spotted in the Thames Estuary in the first ever count by air, land and sea, carried out by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL).

Conservationists and volunteers jumped into boats to help tally the number of grey and harbour seals along the Thames, whilst others took

to the air for a bird's eye view of the coast, or stuck to solid ground to investigate small creeks and rivers.

ZSL's conservation scientist Joanna Barker says: "Recently, we have seen drastic declines in numbers of harbour seals across Scotland, with populations almost disappearing in some areas. Reasons behind the decline are unclear, but other seal populations may also be vulnerable.

"This broad approach will produce the first complete count of harbour seals in the Thames and south-east coast, so that we can accurately monitor the species to better understand and protect them," Joanna added.

The timing of the [survey](#) coincides with the annual seal moult, when harbour seals shuffle onto sandbanks to shed their coat and grow a new layer in time for colder winter months. Seals on land are easier to spot, providing the ideal opportunity to count them. ZSL's interactive Seal Map at zsl.org/sealmap shows the results from this survey and allows people to report their own sightings.

Stephen Mowat, ZSL's Thames Projects Manager says: "The harbour [seal population](#) in south-east England is the least understood in the country. As well as the survey, we are urging members of the public to report sightings of seals and other marine mammals to us."

It is hoped that this public appeal to report marine mammals in the Thames will allow ZSL to learn more about the threats that these charismatic species face in UK waters. Information on [seals](#) and other marine mammals seen in the Thames can be reported at www.zsl.org/inthethames.

Provided by Zoological Society of London

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