

# Crowdsourcing seahorses: New smartphone app offers hope for seahorse science and conservation

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With iSeahorse Explore, anyone, anywhere in the world can become a citizen scientist and contribute to marine conservation with a few taps of their phone. The iPhone app is designed for people to quickly log seahorse sightings whenever they encounter an animal in the wild. Credit: Project Seahorse, UBC.

Marine conservationists from the University of British Columbia, Zoological Society of London (ZSL), and John G. Shedd Aquarium, Chicago today launched a smartphone app that could lead to new discoveries about some of the ocean's most mysterious and threatened animals—seahorses—and pave the way for similar efforts with other difficult-to-study species.

With iSeahorse Explore, anyone, anywhere in the world can become a citizen scientist and contribute to marine conservation with a few taps of their phone. The iPhone [app](#) is designed for people to quickly log [seahorse](#) sightings whenever they encounter an animal in the wild.

"We've made important scientific breakthroughs with seahorses in recent years, but they remain incredibly enigmatic animals," says Amanda Vincent, director of Project Seahorse, UBC and ZSL's joint [marine conservation](#) initiative.

Thanks to their small size and ability to blend into their surroundings, seahorses are difficult to study in the wild. Of the 48 seahorse species listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 26 are considered 'Data Deficient'—meaning that there isn't enough information for us to know whether these species are thriving, disappearing, or something in between.

"We know that seahorses are threatened by overfishing, destructive fishing practices, and habitat loss. Now we need to pinpoint populations and places that most need conservation action," says Heather Koldewey, co-founder of Project Seahorse and Head of Global Conservation Programmes at ZSL. The app and its feature-rich companion website, <http://www.iSeahorse.org>, represent a pilot collaboration with iNaturalist.org, a leading citizen science group.

New features planned for the next phase of the iSeahorse website and

smartphone app include sophisticated population monitoring and advocacy tools as well as a social media component.

"Working together with citizen scientists all over the world, we'll accomplish big things for seahorses and other vulnerable marine [species](#)," adds Vincent.

The iSeahorse iPhone app is available for download at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/iseahorse-explore/id705658119?mt=8>.

Provided by University of British Columbia

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