

The Seahorse Trust

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NATURE

Registered charity no.1086027



NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2013

Welcome to the autumn 2013 newsletter

Welcome to the autumn 2013 newsletter, this has been such a busy period for us that we have had to change the look of our newsletter (just for this edition). Sorry but because of all the news there are very few pictures (except a gorilla !!!) this time but we do have some great images on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/groups/106564446031865/) and our news page on the trusts website (www.theseahorsetrust.org/news.aspx).

Volunteers make a huge difference

Any charity is only as good as its volunteers and here at the trust we are incredibly lucky to have an amazing team of volunteers from all over the world helping us in our work, fund raising, doing seahorses research helping with surveys and spreading the word and we would like to publically thank everyone involved.

The range of volunteers who help out the trust is truly amazing and it would be difficult to name them all but listed below is just a few of them and the projects and events they are doing:-

- Dr Dave Gibson and the team at the National Marine Aquarium who have put on an exhibition about seahorses and seagrass and have raised funds for our work
- Bex and Jenny at the London Sea Life Centre who have put on fun filled educational events (especially an amazing Father's Day event) and collect donations towards our joint work
- Donna and everyone in Malta who have helped us set up the dive surveys which will help to protect seahorses in these amazing islands
- All the volunteers in the Sea Life centres throughout Europe who educate the public about seahorses and conservation and collect much needed funds for our work
- Ben and team from Exeter University are out in Cambodia, undertaking flora and fauna surveys, allowing us to get a better understanding of the amazing islands off the south west of Cambodia
- Ben joins Paul, Zac and the team from Marine Conservation Cambodia (MCC) surveying in Cambodia
- Eva, Paul, John, Kim, Chris (Sea Life), Emily (Sea Life) and the rest of the volunteer team dive surveying in Studland to add to our knowledge on the Spiny Seahorses

- Lucy has been putting on an art exhibition at the Café Parisien in Portsmouth to raise funds for the work of the trust and helps spread the word about the plight of seahorses.
- Tim and Barb at OS Aquatics at Wool in Dorset who have put on a seahorse exhibition to raise awareness and funds for seahorse research and help to educate so many about British and tropical Seahorses
- Our youngest volunteer Lila (aged 9) and her sisters making hammabead bracelets to raise funds for us and who tell all their classmates about seahorses and the problems facing them.
- Our trustees who kindly give up their time to guide the trust in its work
- The East Dorset Open Water Swimming Club held the annual Seahorse Challenge Swim on the 23rd of June at Knoll Beach in Studland Bay who kindly raised £232 towards our research work. There were 165 swimmers completing the 3 kilometre course. This is the third year in a row this fantastic swimming club have volunteered and supported The Seahorse Trust
- Piddle Valley Vets at Puddletown near Dorchester kindly nominated the trust as their charity to raise money for and raised an amazing £174.19 to go towards our work. David Holah, established the surgery in 2011 and has always wanted to support charities especially wildlife ones that work in the local area and his team kindly nominated us.

We would like to thank everyone for their help even if they are not mentioned above (there are so many others who should be mentioned if we had the space), everyone makes a difference and we could not run the trust without you, it truly is a partnership with nature.

Facebook

Spreading the word about Seahorses, the natural world and the work of the trust is very important and we have a website with a news page and also an interactive Facebook page which now has 615 members. Thanks goes to Beccy the marine warden on Lundy who kindly administers this site for us as well as holding down a full time very busy job.

Great Gorilla project

It seems strange to mention Seahorses and Gorillas on the same page but the Great Gorilla project run by Paignton Zoo does just that.

Hippocampus Guttulatus Gorilla (or Hippy Gut for short) has been painted by Deborah Treliving, for the Great Gorilla project. Artists were invited to submit designs for the project, organised by Paignton Zoo to celebrate their 90th birthday in 2013 and provide funds to the Wildlife Conservation Society to support Cross River gorilla research and conservation as well as a local community project in South Devon.

Deborah wanted to make her gorilla relevant to Torbay. Seahorses, like the great gorillas are severely threatened worldwide.

Torbay has a threatened population of two species of seahorses: the Spiny Seahorse and the Short Snouted Seahorse.

Deborah explained: "This has been a great project giving me scope to do something different from my usual way of working. I have found seahorses fascinating creatures to draw. I hope that Hippocampus Guttulatus Gorilla will help to increase the awareness of Torbay's seahorses".

Further information: www.deborahreliving.co.uk and www.greatgorillas.org.uk



Sea Life Centres

For many years Sea Life Centres have been very supportive of the trust and its work and we would like to say a massive thank you to all the teams throughout Europe (and around the world) who have been raising much needed funds for our research work. All of the 26 European Sea Life centres and their amazing guests have contributed to our work and they have had events as diverse as a great Father's Day event organised by Bex and Jenny and the team in London to a brilliant conservation evening put on by the team at Weymouth Sea Life Centre.

Sea Life staff and their guests have been helping to add to our knowledge about seahorses, by setting up their own surveys in their local area. Although it's early days they have been asking local fishermen about the seahorses in their areas, arranging dives with local divers and helping to build up a greater knowledge on seahorses and have plans to roll this out around the world.

If you have seen a seahorse, wherever in the world there is an online reporting form on the Trust's website at www.theseahorsetrust.org/divers.aspx so that sightings can be sent through to us or just e-mail them to the Trust. Once we receive them we can add them to our database.

Sam from Sea Life also produces a fantastic magazine called Sea Urchins and they have done a seahorse special which the trust has contributed to. Kate Humble, one of our brilliant patrons also did a great interview in the magazine.

If you visit a Sea Life Centre please make a donation in the vortex collection bins and help us, with Sea Life and all our other partners in making a difference to seahorses and their protection around the world.

British Seahorse Survey

We have had some good news and bad news with the British Seahorse Survey, which is the longest running survey and has the biggest database of its kind in the world. It was set up in 1994 by trust founder Neil and has in excess of 800 seahorse sightings from around the UK and Ireland on it; this survey is now recognised as the National Seahorse Database (NSD) for the UK.

Because of the database we now have a greater understanding of the 2 European Seahorses and this knowledge led to both species being protected in 2008 in the UK. Due to the protection, The Seahorse Trust is consulted all the time on its knowledge about seahorses and their habits and within the UK and we are advising several regional areas on what to do to protect their seahorses.

Lucky seahorse released back to the wild

A very lucky seahorse was caught in a water inlet and released to undisclosed site by Jenny Mallinson and Dr Ken Collins. During its brief stay in captivity it was held by Blue Reef Aquarium in Portsmouth to check on its health and then Jenny and Ken, released it back to the wild, into an area with a known seahorse population.

Brighton Marina

The people of Brighton Marina have undertaken a small revolution to try and save the Short Snouted Seahorses in the marina. It is planned to develop part of the marina and despite having seen a short Snouted Seahorse only a couple of months ago in the marina, the authorities have declared after a very short, inadequate survey that there are no seahorses there and have allowed the work to continue. This is ongoing and we are hoping that they see sense soon before yet another seahorse site is ruined.

Sussex Coastline

Off the coast of Sussex we have been advising Natural England on how to protect the habitats from extensive damage from the soon to be built Rampion Wind Farm. This wind farm, probably the largest in southern England (174 turbines) will disturb hundreds of acres of seabed which we have shown to be an important settlement area for young seahorses which have drifted west along from the Hastings region. The trust has been working very closely with E-on, RSK consultants and Natural England to put into place mitigation which will minimise impact on the seahorses of the region.

Torbay

Torbay is home to both species of European Seahorse, the Spiny (*Hippocampus guttulatus*) and the Short Snouted (*Hippocampus hippocampus*) and through the work of the trust funded by Sea Life and many others we have assisted in the advice to make large areas of Torbay a protected Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). We also have volunteer divers in the region monitoring what is happening to the seagrass meadows within the bay.

Natural England

After many years the trust and Natural England are now working closely together to make a difference to seahorse protection. We have now got a Natural England liaison who we are working closely with to rewrite their website and to write guidelines to help conserve seahorses throughout the country. The Seahorse Lady of NE has spent a great deal of time discussing seahorse issues and taking advice from the trust and we hope this is the start of a full working relationship between the two organisations which will lead to greater protection for the seahorses.

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ's)

MCZs are a new way to protect large areas of coastline in the UK and the Trust has given its expertise to make this a possibility. Unfortunately the government have only agreed to 31 out of the 127 proposed MCZ's and they have left out the most important site for Spiny Seahorses in the UK at Studland Bay in Dorset, which could lead to the loss of this species in that area. In consultation there is a big chance Studland will now be included into the second tranche and that the seahorses which have plummeted in numbers on the site will finally be afforded the protection they legally have.

Seahorse Tagging project at Studland Bay in Dorset

By far one of our most important projects is the Seahorse Tagging Project at Studland Bay in Dorset in Southern England. We have, with the help many volunteers such as Eva, John, Paul, Kim and Chris and Emily from Weymouth Sea Life Centre and many, many others dived this site since 2008 (almost a 1,000 volunteer dive days) to tag and study individual seahorses and because of this we understand so much more about European seahorses now. Some of the things we have learned are about their territories, partnerships and what they feed on; this greater understanding has meant that we can now confirm so much, that we only surmised before. The confirmation of this knowledge helps us to protect seahorses in the wild and try to secure a long term future for them. Numbers have dramatically dropped from 58 sightings (40 individuals) in 2008 down to 7 sightings (4 individuals in 2013)

Compare and Contrast site gets added to the Seahorse survey work in Dorset

We have added another site to our seahorse survey work. It is very important that we understand what is going on with the seahorses in the UK and a lot can be learnt from one site, such as Studland Bay but species behave differently on different sites and so we have adopted another site in Dorset to act as a 'Compare and Contrast' site to Studland. This site which is to remain undisclosed for now will allow us to understand what is going on in Dorset with its seahorses and divers have already found seahorses on the site, including a very large 18cm bright yellow female.

Leaflet to protect seagrass beds

People power does make a difference and the ongoing lobbying and bringing to public attention of the problems at Studland bay has led to a Leaflet by RYA and BORG on what to do about anchoring on seagrass meadows. We hope this leaflet will make a difference and change boat owner's actions when on sensitive sites like Studland.

Seahorse project in Malta

We have now set up a project in Malta based on the British Seahorse Survey working with the local people. Local partnerships; It is important to work with local people so the project has set up partnerships on the island with local dive centres through the PDSA, individual divers, the university, Malta Aquarium, the Nature Trust for Malta and many others. Our work is being conducted under license from MEPA and has already produced some interesting sightings, including repeat sightings of a couple of seahorses; the male has already got pregnant and given birth several times.

Save Our Seahorses Ireland

Our colleagues at SOS (Ireland) have been really busy promoting seahorse conservation through a series of documentaries and TV programmes. Recent research by our colleagues at Save Our Seahorses (SOS) in Ireland has shown that the situation with seahorses being used for the Traditional Medicine Trade (TMT) is considerably worse than we ever thought. We had always thought the numbers used each year were about 20 to 60 million which is bad enough but Kealan Doyle founder and director of SOS went undercover to discover the true extent of numbers and his conservative estimate is approximately 150 million per year. This is just not sustainable and seahorses could be functionally extinct in so many parts of the world in the next 20 to 30 years, unless we all do something about it.



We would like to thank the Dalkey ladies rowing team for wearing SOS T-shirts in one of their recent races to promote the project. Thank you to them all.



MCC Cambodia



The islands and waters of Cambodia have some amazing species in them and the trust has organised for a terrestrial survey to be undertaken alongside the seahorse survey MCC have been undertaking for several years now. Ben Toulson and the volunteer team from Exeter Universities Expedition Society are in Koh Rong Samleom in Cambodia undertaking a flora and fauna survey of this amazing area. Ben put together a Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/expeditioncambodia> that keeps everyone up to date with events

The team from Exeter University are working with MCC and sharing knowledge with the local University in Phnom Penh sharing survey techniques and knowledge.

News in Brief

- It is with great sadness to announce the death of a colleague of ours from Save Our Seahorses in Malaysia. Choo Chee Kuang the founder and Team Leader of SOS was an inspiration to all and our thoughts are with his family and friends. We often shared ideas and thoughts with Choo and he was always inspirational and his enthusiasm will be missed.

I have posted below the obituary to Choo posted on the Save Our Seahorses website. <http://www.sosmalaysia.org/home.html>

Sunday, 9 Jun 2013, Save Our Seahorses Malaysia bade farewell to its Founder and Team Leader, Choo Chee Kuang after a long but incredibly brave struggle with cancer. Chee Kuang will fondly be remembered for his pioneering work on seahorses and the conservation of their precious seagrass home in Sungai Pulai, Johor.

Chee Kuang touched the lives of many who came in contact with him, and inspired many to engage in marine conservation. He will be dearly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him intimately.

Thank you for the wonderful years for the seahorses and all those around it. Rest in peace our dear ecowarrior, may you bask in the warmth of Sungai Pulai's tropical sun forever.

- People power definitely works and a shop in Brixham called Driftwood Designs Ltd has stopped selling illegal seahorse products. One of our volunteers approached the shop to point out the legal situation and after a conversation between one of the shop owners and trust director Neil; they agreed to stop selling illegal seahorse products. They have also agreed to not buy in any more Sea fan products once theirs have been sold and we hope that they will set a standard in Brixham.

Fund raising

- National Marine Aquarium has been raising funds for the trust from its seahorse and seagrass exhibit. Thank you to the NMA in Plymouth, who have a collection bin in the aquarium on our behalf, They have done really well for us this last couple of years and without their and others fund raising and all our volunteers we could not make a difference.
- Nicola Dennis has put on a painting exhibition in Town Mill in Lyme Regis, one of her paintings is a seahorse is set to raise funds for us when it is auctioned later this year. Nicola has kindly donated the painting to help us and thank you to her
- Lucy McCloud has put on an art exhibition at the Parisien Café in Portsmouth to raise funds for us. Lucy met trust director Neil at Sparsholt College where he was giving a lecture on Seahorses and conservation and she felt so moved that she has organised this event.
- Piddle Valley Vets in Dorset nominated the trust as their charity to raise funds and Surgery owner David Holah and his staff raised £174.19 towards our work. Thank you to them all.
- One of our youngest volunteers Lila (aged 9) and her friends and sister have made Hammabeed bracelets in support of the trust. Lila has also done some blogs on our Facebook page. Thank you so much to her and her great team (and thanks Mum and Dad).
- The Sea Life Centres throughout Europe have been great they help us in so many ways and we would like to thank them all, with a special mention for the German and French centres for their regular support. All the Sea Life Centres have been spreading the word about the plight of seahorses and educating their guests as to what they can do and how to help.
- Bex and Jenny at the London Sea Life Centre who have put on events and collect donations towards our joint work especially an amazing Father's Day event which raised an amazing £442 pounds.
- Weymouth Sea Life Centre held its first Conservation evening at Weymouth Sea Life Park this summer, which was attended by several wildlife charities and gave the trust a chance to show case its work to the centres guests. Despite it being a very, very wet night it was well attended and we are looking forward to next year's event. Thank you to the Weymouth team for putting on this event.
- Trust volunteer and all round super woman Dr Eva Durant kindly represented the trust at the annual Seahorse Challenge Swim held by the East Dorset Open Water Swimming Club on the 23rd of June at Knoll Beach in Studland Bay. There were 165 swimmers completing the 3 kilometre course and only a small handful retired from the race. This is the third time this fantastic swimming club have supported The Seahorse Trust and they kindly raised £232 towards our research work which was amazing and we would like to thank them so much for supporting us again. From everyone's comments the race was well organised and a lot of fun despite the weather. As well as our representative Eva, Vince Classen the British Long Distance Swimming Association President presented the awards and his wife Jacky has vowed to join the fun next year. Thank you so much to Bob, the club and the team for putting on this amazing event and thank you so much for supporting the trust.
- Tim and Barb at OSA Aquatics in Wool, Dorset raise funds for the trust from their seahorse exhibit and held an event at the beginning of September in aid of the trust. It was a glorious evening in Wool! Their Seahorse Display Centre welcomed members from the Cerne Valley Sheep Group who came for a small talk the current plight of Seahorses, both here and abroad. Due to limited space,

the 14 members were split into two. Owner Barbara, with her usual aplomb entertained a group with tea and biscuits at OS Aquatics aquatic store, which has displays of Native Freshwater and Native Marine Species. Partner Tim presented a small film about Studland Seahorses, and The Chinese Seahorse Medicine Trade. Whilst the group was small, their generosity was huge. Firstly, after the meeting, Tim and Barbara were invited to join the group for an evening meal in a local pub. Secondly, the donations made by the group to The Seahorse Trust came to a massive £99. Thank you to them all for their generosity.

- Please give a massive push to the Trust wherever you can - more so now than ever before because of the amount of work we are doing and because of how desperate the situation has become in protecting seahorses worldwide.
- During the long winter you can still help the trust by putting on an event to raise funds for us, why not get involved and fundraise for the Trust to help support our joint work, use one of the websites below (especially Virgin Giving) for a secure way for donators to give to the project.
- Become a member of the Trust or adopt a seahorse and know that you are directly making a difference to the conservation of seahorses.

Don't forget to Gift Aid any donation you make; we can claim 25p for every pound you donate from the Inland Revenue as long as you are a UK tax payer, and the great news is, it does not cost you a penny more. Contact us for more information on Gift Aiding.

Adoption and membership schemes (UK only)

The Trust has an adoption and membership scheme so why not support the work of the Trust and get your friends to adopt one of our British seahorses, for as little as £4 per month, or they could become a member of the Trust for a minimum donation of £25 per year. The money we raise from the adoptions and memberships goes directly to the work of the Trust. Your adoption will help to secure a future for seahorses here in the UK and in other countries through our research and partnership work.

You can pay a one off donation for the year, so why not make it a gift for a friend or member of your family, this year we have had people adopting seahorses in people's memory when they have sadly passed away, as gifts for birthdays and Christmas and was wedding gifts.

E-bay

After an approach from The Seahorse Trust, following requests from Trust members, E-bay has brought their European and US websites in line with international Laws and trade regulations and banned the sale of real seahorses (in whole or as parts). The Trust estimated that up to 500,000 seahorses were sold on E-bay throughout the EU and the USA each year, these ranged from live seahorses to dead, real seahorses in paper weights.

It is now against their regulations to sell live or dead seahorses, in any form, so this will stop sales to the aquarium, curio and medicine trades. E-bay have been true to their word and thank you to the trust members and supporters, very few seahorses are sold on E-bay now. When they are spotted E-bay react very quickly by blocking them and taking them off line, so please keep an eye out for them.



Website

As part of the ongoing developments of the website, Gavin from GL Solutions is still really busy updating the Trust website so that it is more useful and more informative. The site is often used as a research source, for general information and to report seahorse sightings; we have an online reporting form, for seahorses from all around the world, not just the UK and Malta. We try to keep the information as updated as possible and we pride ourselves that the website is used by schools and researchers the world over as a

source of information. We would like to say a special thank you to Gavin who often does work for us for free and without his input we would not have such a great website. Here at the Trust we highly recommend him and he can be found on his website at <http://www.gslsolutions.co.uk/>

Patrons/Trustees /Volunteers

The Seahorse Trust has had fantastic support from its patrons, trustees and volunteers this year and we would like to thank one and all for their amazing help in promoting the conservation of seahorses around the world.

Patrons

Kate Humble	www.katehumble.com	Ellie Harrison	www.ellie-harrison.com
Chris Packham	www.chrispackham.co.uk	Kirsty Jones	www.kirstyjones.com
Mark Carwardine	www.markcarwardine.com	Monty Halls	www.montyhalls.co.uk
Prof Jack Cohen			

The Trust is only as strong as its volunteers and its partners and we would like to say a massive thank you to them all for their hard work and dedication.

If you want to support the Trust by raising funds there are so many ways of getting people to donate their sponsorship monies securely and safely such as this listed below.

VIRGIN GIVING	www.uk.virginmoneygiving.com/giving/
E-BAY	www.ebay.co.uk
BIG GIVE	www.thebiggive.org.uk
EVERYCLICK	www.everyclick.com/theseahorsetrust/search
DONATIONS	www.theseahorsetrust.org
THROUGH OUR WEBSITE	www.theseahorsetrust.org

We are a registered charitable trust with the Charity Commissioners of England and Wales, our charity number is 1086027.

Thank you to all and have a great winter

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