

The Seahorse Trust

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NATURE

Registered charity no.1086027

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2013

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Welcome to the Spring 2013 newsletter

The Trust grows from strength to strength every year and this is due to your amazing support, without you we could not do so much. Again, we have had another very busy period of time since the last newsletter and we have helped and advised more projects around the world than ever before. Below is a short update of some of the amazing things we have done with your help.



Did you Know?

There are two types of seahorse living in British waters, The Spiny and the Short Snouted. Although Seahorses are always thought to live in seagrass meadows; in British waters it is mainly the Spiny Seahorse that lives in them in the warmer months of the year.

Spiny Seahorse showing its fronds which hide it in seagrass

Sea Life Centres Throughout all of the 26 European Sea Life centres, they and their guests have collected a staggering **£17,442.68** which is absolutely amazing. The donations kindly made will help the Trust to carry out its vital research, education and conservation work around the world.

There is a long history of The Seahorse Trust and Sea Life working together. Trust Director, Neil and the Sea Life group have worked together for the last 20 plus years and Neil is frequently contacted by Sea Life aquariums from all around the world for help or advice on seahorse culturing and conservation. Neil also sits on the Sea Life Group's Ethical and Scientific committees and between all of them; they are making a difference to the marine world, making Sea Life more sustainable and educating the world on the importance of the oceans to our lives, even if you live inland.



Sea Life Centre Surveys

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 worldwide knowledge on seahorses.

You can also help, even if you do not dive why not ask local people, fishermen, divers and beach walkers if they have ever seen seahorses in their area. Try to gather as much information as possible such as size of seahorse, colour, shape (does it have spines or not) or better still try and get a photograph (do not use flash as this can kill seahorses) and remember the most important piece of information is a contact e-mail so that we can follow the sighting up with a message to say thank you and sometimes to ask more information.

There is an online reporting form on the Trust's website at www.theseahorsetrust.org/divers.aspx so that sightings can be sent through or just e-mail them to the Trust.

The Seahorse Trust

The Trust's work is quite diverse and spans several continents, with projects all around the British Isles, in Malta, Cambodia and further afield. Even if we are not physically working in a country we often act as advisers to projects and through our 'Compare and Contrast' approach, especially in Europe we are learning so much about seahorses throughout their geographical range.

British Seahorse Survey

The main project that we have undertaken, which is the longest running survey and has the biggest database of its kind in the world, is the British Seahorse Survey, that was set up in 1994 and has in excess of 750 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.



Fal Estuary

In the Fal Estuary in Cornwall, in South West England we are advising on and working closely with others on how to protect the vulnerable site where the seahorses are found from extensive deep dredging work. This dredging work is to allow bigger ships to go up the Fal River but it will destroy fragile habitats for Seahorses and especially the Maerl beds.

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 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.

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).

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.

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 and Chris and Emily from Weymouth Sea Life Centre and many, many others dived this site since 2008 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.

WATERHORSE in Malta

In partnership with WATERHORSE: diver conservation and research group (www.waterhorersearch.co.uk) the Trust has started a project in 2013 as part



of the 'Compare and Contrast' work throughout Europe. The Maltese Archipelago has the same two species as the rest of Europe and we wanted a site that we could use to know more about the European seahorses which was within easy reach and access for divers from around the world. It is now possible for sustainable tourists to get involved with this ground breaking project, which is done under very strict licenses from the competent authority in Malta which is the Malta Environmental and Planning Authority (MEPA).

The Trust will receive a donation for every diver that goes to Malta on the project and the Trust will be analysing the data to compare it all our other data. This will then be used to help and advise the Malta authorities on the best way to keep seahorses around the island for years to come.

Just like the project in Studland we aim to understand more about individual seahorses and we will be doing this in Malta using unique photo identification techniques.

Local partnerships

It is important to work with local people so the project has set up partnerships on the island with local dive centres, individual divers, the university, the nature for Malta and many others, only by working in partnership can we all hope to achieve so much.

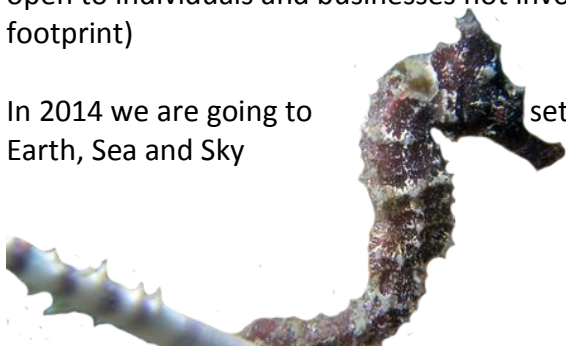
Carbon Offsetting

It is important that our projects add to the environment and do not destroy it, so we are doing a carbon off setting project in Malta where for each pair of divers, a native tree will planted on the island (this project is open to individuals and businesses not involved in the project which want to offset their own carbon footprint)

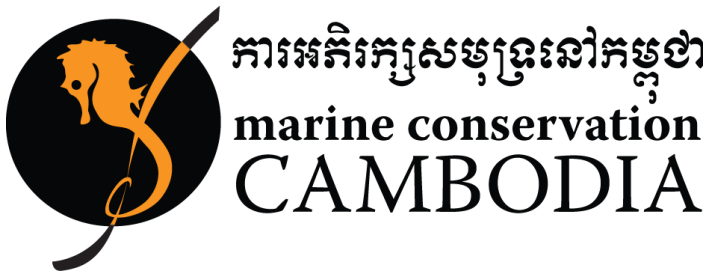
Zakynthos in 2014

In 2014 we are going to Earth, Sea and Sky

set up a similar project in Zakynthos Greece with Yannis at the Turtle project (www.earthseasky.org). By working with Yannis



and his team we hoping to add a third country to the Compare and Contrast project, so that we have a much wider geographical range to look at.



MCC Cambodia The Trust was invited to visit a Seahorse project in Cambodia in the spring of 2012 by Paul Ferber founder and director of Marine Conservation Cambodia (MCC) - www.marineconservationcambodia.org. Paul and his team (especially Zac) have been working hard to study and protect the seahorses in this threatened

area for many years. They have battled illegal and dynamite fishing by working with the local community on Koh Rong Samleom Island, just south of the coastal town of Sihanoukville.

The seahorses behave very differently in this area because their habitat has been so badly damaged, unlike most seahorses that form territories and partnerships, it is thought that the destruction of the seabed has led to more free ranging, non-monogamous lifestyle. The widespread damage has also seen a reduction in species. Pre destruction there was thought to be up to 8 types of seahorse, now only one species dominates.

Through a working partnership made up of the Trust, MCC, Sea Life group, SOS, Projects Abroad (PA) and the Cambodia government we have set up an in-depth study of the site, using volunteers coming from Projects Abroad www.projects-abroad.co.uk. The project is studying the area the seahorses occupy, pair bonding, territories, species and looking into habitat restoration. The partners are also starting a captive breeding project in Sihanoukville, to ensure the local species are secure; it is envisaged that at least 1,000 seahorses will be ready for release for National Fish Day in late 2013.

Because of the success of this project and like the European work we need to know more about how the seahorses behave over a much wider geographical zone so in the autumn of 2013 a second project will be set up Kep Province in the East of the country. This region has had little disturbance and has a massive seagrass meadow in it with Dugong, dolphins and Turtles.

Like Malta and Greece we hope to join Kep province up with Yannis in Zakynthos and Vince at Malta Nature Trust to understand more about Loggerhead Turtles throughout a much wider range.

Save Our Seahorses Campaign

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. With Kealan and SOS and all our other partners we have come up with an invite to the people of China to work with us to make a difference. Sign up to the campaign on the trust's website or on the Save Our Seahorses campaign site.

Sign up at www.saveourseahorses.org/home.php



E-bay

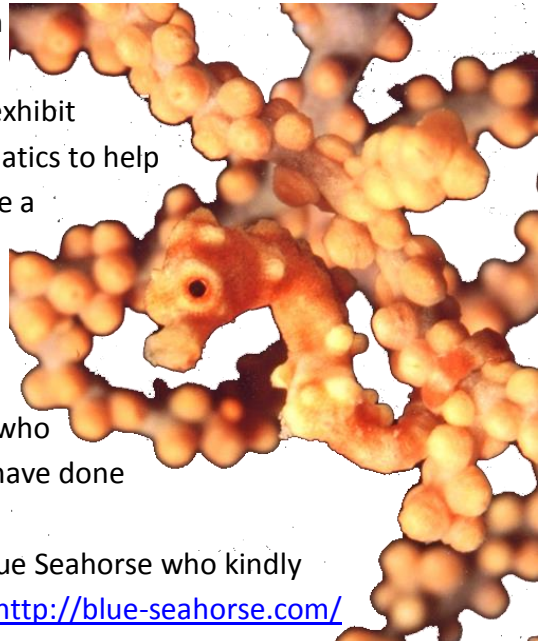


After an approach from The Seahorse Trust, following requests from Trust members, E-bay has brought their European and US websites in line with international Laws and trade regulations and banned the sale of

real seahorses. 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.

News in Brief

- Professor Jack Cohen opened a seahorse exhibit in Wool in Dorset at OS Aquatics. Jack is a patron of the Trust and a scientific advisor to author Terry Pratchett. The Seahorse exhibit has been put together by Tim and Barb, owners of OS Aquatics to help educate others about the plight of seahorses and they have a collection box for the Trust for donations to our work. Thank you to them all.
- Paul and Zac have succeeded in their seahorse breeding in Cambodia, although in small numbers it is a big start. Thank you to the National Marine Aquarium 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.
- A massive thanks goes to Karen Carruthers of Blue Seahorse who kindly designed the logo for WATERHORSE, she can be found on <http://blue-seahorse.com/>
- GAC logistics have kindly made another donation towards our work, this money was generated over Christmas by not sending out bottles of wine to their customers. Instead they kindly made a donation to us for each bottle they would have sent out. GAC have been great supporters of us in the past and once again a massive thank you to them. <http://www.gacworld.com/uklogistics>
- On the 26th November, despite the awful weather and flooded roads, over 40 people attended a talk by Lauren Timson on behalf of the Trust. Lauren had lots of Exeter University and Falmouth Marine School students as well as members of the public attend and it was a great turn out. Many thanks to Lauren for her hard work.
- We would like to thank Blue Planet Aquarium in Cheshire for the kind donation of £405.50 which the staff and guests raised in aid of the Trust's work. Everyone at the aquarium worked hard to generate these much needed funds and so a massive thank you to them all. www.blueplanetaquarium.co.uk
- **The 4th Studland Bay Conservation and Recreational Activity Working Group Meeting.** The Seahorse Trust attended the 4th Studland Bay Conservation and Recreational Activity Working Group Meeting on Monday in Poole, Dorset, to discuss the Draft MAIA Seagrass report. [MAIA means Marine Protected Areas in the Atlantic Arc) which was put together by Dr Emma Jackson and Dr Ken Collins. It is a 261 page comprehensive report on seagrass habitats and the effects on them and highlights Studland bay as an example. It was a well-attended meeting but sadly disrupted by some very rowdy boat owners who do not want Studland protected.
- **Terrestrial survey set to go ahead in 2013 in Cambodia.** Ben Toulson and the team from Exeter Universities Expedition Society are planning a terrestrial survey of Koh Rong Samelon in Cambodia



as part of the widening overall survey and conservation of this amazing area. Ben has put together a Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/expeditioncambodia> that gives others the chance to get involved with this incredible work. There is still the possibility to also get involved with the marine seahorse survey and research as well, by going to Projects Abroad website at www.projects-abroad.co.uk/volunteer-projects/conservation-and-environment/cambodia/

Website

As part of the ongoing developments of the website, Gavin from GL Solutions has been 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 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/>

Facebook

Fantastic news - we now have over 538 members on the Facebook page, Beccy our educational/diver volunteer who set up the Facebook page for the Trust keeps it updated for us, so a big thank you to her for all her help with this.

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=107757299258869&ref=ss#!/group.php?gid=106564446031865&ref=ts>

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.

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 guests 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 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.

Fund raising

- 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 summer period why not 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 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.
- If you have an event to raise funds for The Seahorse Trust, please contact us, without your help we could not do the work we do.

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 Summer

The Seahorse Trust

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