

# The Seahorse Trust

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NATURE

Autum/Winter 2025

## NEWSLETTER



Welcome to our latest newsletter which we hope you will enjoy. We hope you have had a great spring and summer, especially with the amazing heat wave that drove so many people to the coast.

As we turn seasons and head into autumn towards winter it gives us time to reflect on the amazing season we have had and all the positive and exciting things that have been happening.

Check out our newsletter and we hope you enjoy it and love the things [The Seahorse Trust](#) and our incredible team of volunteers and supporters have managed to achieve this year.

Even with a small team we seem to make a difference, but it is you, our amazing supporters that allow us to do this. – THANK YOU.

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**We need your help please.** To manage to do all the conservation, research and advocacy work that we do costs a lot of money and we are totally reliant on donations and grants. If you could make a small donation by using this QR code it will help us to carry on our fight for the natural world and to make sure we have seahorses in the future. **Thank you**

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### Studland Bay Seahorse Project

Well, its official, the ecomoorings, the Marine Conservation Zone and the belief by so many that we needed to conserve Studland Bay has paid off.

Back in 2008 when we started the [Studland Bay Seahorse Project](#) Dr Ken Collins from [Southampton](#)

[University](#) and Neil from [The Seahorse Trust](#) were derided by a few groups for wanting to conserve and preserve this amazing corner of Dorset, this special place, home to seahorses and seagrass and so many more species.

Ken had been working on the seagrass, and Neil had worked with the seahorses after being told by a couple of local divers about the seahorses in the area.

Through a lot of investigation and data collection (with an amazing team of volunteers) we realized that the seagrass meadow was in a bad way and needed preservation; for some years we didn't even see a single seahorse (once for two and a half years in a row). Ken and Neil set about making the bay into a marine conservation Zone, with the express aim of still allowing boats to be able to come into the bay and use it, even though it was their anchors that were causing the problem. We tried three times to make it an MCZ, and it was on the third time after meeting Michael Gove, the then Environmental Minister, we finally achieved it and in 2019 it was official, it was protected, we had our [Marine Conservation Zone](#), but then what?

A chance meeting with Michael Prideaux, the then CEO of [Boatfolk Marinas and boats services](#) changed the course of the project. Neil and Michael walked along South Beach at Studland, and Michael said, "right what can we do?", [Environmental Ecomoorings](#) were the answer and with Michael's dynamic approach to life, we trialed the installation of the first one within the month and a year to the day we installed the first 10 ecomoorings. That started an amazing conversation about conserving the bay and fast forward 4 years we now have 87 ecomoorings in the bay, the seagrass is knitting back together and on almost every dive we see seahorses, with 22 being the most we have seen on one dive.

When the site became a MCZ we co-founded the [Studland Bay Marine Partnership](#) and this group led by David Brown of the [National Trust](#), administered by Sara from [Dorset Coastal Forum](#) and including over 15 organisations is the driving force behind the ecomoorings and conservation of the bay and its amazing natural history.

It is still a bustling place, and boats are always in the bay but the ecomoorings help to stop the damage to the seagrass and yes, we have more work to do but it is making a massive difference and is being used as a model in how to do conservation around the world.

Ken has kindly taken over the seahorse surveys (Neil helps out) and he is continuing with his groundbreaking seagrass studies. We have [Studland Watersports](#) out on the water talking with boat owners and so many people are now involved in this amazing project. Never did we realise in the early days what an incredible result would come out of it. Results such as seeing 'Big Black', a very large (20cm) black Spiny Seahorse for three years in a row and seeing him breeding multiple times during this period.

There is still a lot to do and raising the £100,000 per annum to maintain and repair the ecomoorings is an ongoing worry and we need to get more ecomoorings in for the smaller boats, but we have made a difference, we have changed how conservation is done but most importantly we have more seagrass and more seahorses. I would like to publicly say a massive thank you to everyone involved, especially Ken and Michael, and David and Sara from the SBMP and the incredible team of selfless volunteers (we have almost 150 registered volunteers now at Studland) who have put in so much time to make this project a success, especially Kim, Paul and John, who all came and come week after week to gather



much needed information, even when they didn't see seahorses for almost 2 and a half years.

[Studland Bay Marine Partnership](#)

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[EBAY](#) has been hard at work over the summer removing illegal seahorse items for sale. We have built a great relationship with [eBay](#) and have a dedicated agent who kindly looks into any sales we report, she is also kindly constantly searching for items that break eBay's terms and conditions.

The system is run, using AI and logarithms to identify items that should not be for sale, but some slip through. If you see any seahorse items for sale on eBay, please use their dedicated reporting system and let us know, so we can monitor this trade.

If for some reason they say the item does not break terms and conditions, please let us know and we will contact the agent and ask her to investigate it. We cannot name her for obvious reasons, (as we cannot name our amazing team,) but she has worked really hard to try and break this horrendous trade on [eBay](#) and a massive thank you to her for all her hard work and our amazing volunteers T & K for keeping on the case.

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## Thames Seahorses

The last few years have been quite interesting for seahorses living in the River Thames as we have had periods of mass strandings, usually following the first storms of the autumn.

It surprises a lot of people that the two native seahorses here in the UK can go up into and live in rivers; usually as high up as where saltwater meets freshwater; the brackish area.



Seahorses are usually considered a saltwater species but all around the world they can, and are living in brackish areas, there was even the possibility of a freshwater seahorse living up the Mekong River. Despite rumours, it has never been found but the close relatives of seahorses, pipefish, some do indeed live in freshwater and up the Mekong and other parts of Asia as well, so who knows the mystery might be true.

They are obviously breeding in brackish areas in the Thames (and other river systems here in the UK) as most of the strandings have been of individuals less than a year old (some only months old and in at least one case about 6 weeks old). What is the most curious thing about these strandings is its mainly juvenile, female, Short Snouted Seahorses (*Hippocampus hippocampus*) that are being found. Very rarely a male and almost never a Spiny Seahorse (*Hippocampus guttulatus*), this far up the river.

All of this asks the question why? and we think we have part of the answer. The seahorses are breeding over the summer months, when rainfall is low, saltwater is further up the river, and the river has a lower water level and a slower flow than that during the winter. If, as in 2025 it was a very long hot period, this provides the perfect conditions for the seahorses to breed (more food, benign



conditions etc.), and there will be a number of this year's juveniles in the river.

Then the problem comes that if there are suddenly heavy and persistent periods of rain, this puts the river in full spate and allows a lot of freshwater to flood down through the river over a short period of time.

This influx of freshwater forces the seahorses to abandon their breeding area and head down the river, in doing this they get caught in the strong flow of water, with larger numbers than normal being washed up onto the shoreline. Almost all of the seahorses washed up are small, not many bigger than 4 to 5 cm from the top of the coronet to the end of the tail and except for 1 or 2, they are almost always female, as such they are not strong enough to hold on in the river and are washed downstream.

Work by [The Seahorse Trust](#) has shown that male seahorses grow faster and larger than the females in the first few months of their lives. It is expected that the females do not have the strength to hang on in these flood periods and must be washed down the river, with some ending up on the riverbanks.

We have most of these sightings, thanks to a very dedicated team called Mudlarkers. These licensed individuals are out every day searching the banks of the River Thames, looking for and monitoring everything from historic items to unusual wildlife and they are an incredible source of information for us and other naturalists.

They kindly report in sightings and details and very often send us the dead bodies vital for our research and I would like to give a massive shout out thank you to them all for their dedication and hard work.

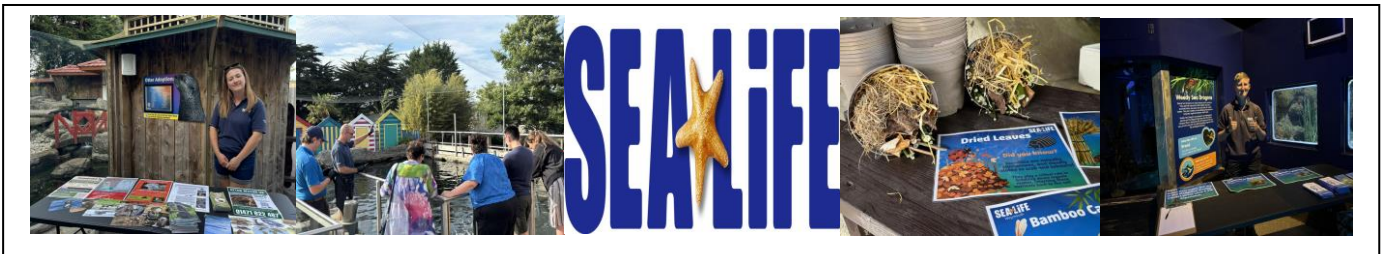
The attached pictures are from some of the amazing Mudlarkers, Thank you one and all.



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## Weymouth Sea Life Conservation evening

[Weymouth Sea Life Centre](#) had its annual conservation evening and kindly raised £311 towards the Work of the Seahorse Trust. Every year they put on this exciting evening and work tirelessly to promote conservation organisations and project, here in the UK and further afield. Thank you to everyone involved for doing this, it makes a massive difference to our work. THANK YOU





### CONSTANT WONDER PODCAST

We were very pleased to take part in the [Constant Wonder Podcast](#), entitled Get curious about seahorses. This indepth interview for kids explores about Seahorses and what they are and how they fit into the natural world.

The producers and interviewers were a fantastic team and made it easy to chat with them about seahorses.

CLICK ON THE PICTURE TO THE LEFT TO HEAR THE PODCAST.

[Salcombe Brewery](#) kindly made a donation in September from the sale of their Seahorse ale. This year they raised an amazing £2,311.55 for our conservation work. Click on the images below to go to their website and check out the Seahorse Ale and find out more.



Almost all of our office research is done on our trusty PC but occasionally it goes wrong which is a disaster for us. Luckily, we back up everything on a remote hard drive. Just occasionally though our PC needs to go off to be repaired and [Titan Computers](#) in Exeter are amazing at getting us out of a problem. They are reliable, incredibly knowledgeable and Trustworthy. Click on their logo to go to their website

### Adoption and membership scheme online

Don't forget we run an adoption and membership scheme to help raise funds for our seahorse research, education, and conservation work. It is simple to do and can be set up online in minutes. Once you have set it up, we then send out your information pack and send you newsletters electronically a couple of times a year.

Sadly, due to costs we can no longer send out the newsletter by post.

<https://www.theseahorsetrust.org/adopt-a-seahorse-4/>





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## Seahorses Environmental Communications

For all press and media enquiries please contact Matt at [Seahorse Environmental Communications](mailto:info@seahorseenvironmental.co.uk) on [info@seahorseenvironmental.co.uk](mailto:info@seahorseenvironmental.co.uk)  
Matt, Isobella and the team have been amazing over the years in their incredible support for our work.  
A massive thank you to them all.



find us on  
**Facebook**



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## QR Code

Thanks to Ellen at [Seahorse Environmental](http://Seahorse Environmental), we now have a QR code if you want to donate to our work. Just point your camera at the code on the QR code to the right and click the web link and it takes you to our [PayPal site](https://www.paypal.com), where you can donate. You don't have to have a PayPal account as you can make the donation by debit or credit card.

As a very busy charity making a massive difference to the marine environment, we are reliant on the generosity of others to be able to keep all our projects going.

If you love what we do and love seahorses like we do, please donate.

THANK YOU.



Fancy a making a donation? Why not give up a coffee a day and donate that money to The Seahorses trust through our [Ko-fi app](https://www.ko-fi.com/seahorsetrust). Click on the logo to the left and you can donate the equivalent of a coffee to our work.

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## Your privacy

If you have received this newsletter and do not want to be on our e-mail list anymore, we are sorry to see you go. Please let us know at [theseahorsetrust@gmail.com](mailto:theseahorsetrust@gmail.com) and we will remove your details ASAP. Please note, we do not sell, share or give your details to anyone else and they are held here at [The Seahorse Trust](http://The Seahorse Trust) solely so we can keep you updated with the latest news and events by the Trust. Please check out our Privacy Statement on our website at <https://www.theseahorsetrust.org/>

We could not have done this without the support of these amazing supporters (and so many others) and importantly- you. THANK YOU

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These amazing organisations below and so many others support us in so many different ways.

Please click on their logos to find out more about them.

