Why have a Strandings Network?
Unfortunately, marine mammals regularly strand around our coast. Information received on stranded animals can provide an accurate picture of what species occur and show local and seasonal distribution. Dead marine mammal strandings that undergo post-mortem examination provide us with valuable information on cause of death, disease, contaminants, reproductive patterns, diet and also useful pointers to the general health of the populations living in the seas around our coasts. This provides useful baseline data to detect outbreaks of disease or unusual increases in mortality.

Whales, Dolphins & Porpoises

Live Strandings - Urgency
If the cetacean (Whale, Dolphin or Porpoise) is found alive, please telephone the relevant number as soon as possible. If the weather is hot keep the animal cool and wet, avoid pouring water near the blowhole.

Keep well clear of the tail and do not pull the animal by its tail or fins.

Information required (Dead Strandings)
When reporting a dead stranding please give a clear description of location, species if known, overall length and condition of the animal, for example: fresh; slightly decomposed; moderately decomposed; advanced decomposition.

Safety Precautions
Please take great care around live stranded cetaceans, as the tail is extremely powerful and can easily cause injury. Avoid contact/inhalation with aerosols from the blowhole. Keep members of the public and dogs well clear. If handling a live or dead stranding gloves should be worn at all times. Wash hands thoroughly immediately after involvement and also before eating, drinking and smoking. Do not handle strandings if you have cuts or abrasions on your hands. For further information visit www.nhm.ac.uk/zoology/stranding/safety.html

Collaborative UK Marine Mammal & Marine Turtle Strandings Project

www.strandings.com
If you find a stranded marine animal please contact

LIVE STRANDING (all species):
England: RSPCA 08705 555999
Wales: RSPCA 08705 555999
Scotland: SSPCA 0131 339 0111

DEAD STRANDING:
England (cetaceans):
Natural History Museum
0207 942 5155
England (seals & turtles):
Zoological Society of London
0207 449 6672
Wales (all species):
Marine Environmental Monitoring
01348 875000
Scotland (all species):
SAC Veterinary Services:
01463 243030

Seals & Turtles

Live Seals
It is normal for seals to haul out. Only call the RSPCA if you are concerned for the welfare of the animal.

Live Turtles
Of the world’s seven marine turtle species, five have been recorded in UK waters. They are the leatherback, loggerhead, Kemp’s ridley, green and hawksbill turtles. The leatherback, the largest marine turtle, is the species most frequently recorded in UK waters. Leatherbacks have a flexible, leathery shell and are unique among reptiles in that they are able to metabolically raise their body temperature above that of their immediate environment, allowing them to survive in colder waters. Each summer leatherbacks migrate from tropical nesting beaches to UK waters where they feed on jellyfish. The other four species have hard shells and are less frequently encountered in UK waters, where they usually occur as stray juveniles carried by currents from warmer seas.

Leatherbacks found stranded on beaches are usually very weak, but might still be saved.

If apparently uninjured:
Carefully drag the turtle back to the sea and release it (enlist the help of several people and pull the shell rather than the flippers).

Do not drag the animal over rocks, as this will cause severe damage.

If stranded on rocks, it may be better to wait for the incoming tide to provide some buoyancy before dragging the turtle back to sea. Other species (hard-shelled) loggerhead, Kemp’s ridley, green and hawksbill turtles encountered on UK shores are usually cold stunned juveniles and should not be placed back in the sea.

Wrap the turtle in a towel soaked in seawater, do not cover the nostrils.

Place the animal in a sheltered and secure place on its belly. If inactive, raise the back end of the shell so the turtle is resting at approximately 30° to drain the lungs. Report the turtle as soon as possible.
Harbour Porpoise
Adult length 1.3m -1.9m
19-28 pairs of small, spade-shaped teeth

Common Dolphin
Adult length 2.1m -2.4m
40-50 pairs of small, sharp conical teeth

Striped Dolphin
Adult length 2.25m -2.4m
45-50 pairs of sharp, conical teeth

White Sided Dolphin
Adult length 2.5m -2.7m
29-40 pairs of conical teeth

Bottlenose Dolphin
Adult length 2.5m -4.1m
18-26 pairs of teeth

Risso’s Dolphin
Adult length 3.3m -3.8m
2-7 (usually 4) peglike teeth in lower jaw only

Grey Seal
Adult length male 2.1m-2.45m
Adult length female 1.95m-2.2m

Common Seal
Adult length male 1.5m-1.85m
Adult length female 1.4m-1.75m

White Beaked Dolphin
Adult length 2.5m -2.7m
22-28 pairs of conical teeth

Leatherback Turtle
Adult length up to 2.91m

Hardshell Turtle species
Loggerhead
Kemp’s ridley
Hawksbill
Green

Design & layout by Newman Editorial Services 01239 612161
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England (seals & turtles): Zoological Society of London 0207 449 6672
Wales (all species): Marine Environmental Monitoring 01348 875000
Scotland (all species): SAC Veterinary Services: 01463 243030

Species likely to be found stranded on our beaches