



MarLIN

Marine Information Network

Information on the species and habitats around the coasts and sea of the British Isles

Harp seal (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*)

MarLIN – Marine Life Information Network
Marine Evidence-based Sensitivity Assessment (MarESA) Review

Morvan Barnes

2008-06-02

A report from:

The Marine Life Information Network, Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom.

Please note. This MarESA report is a dated version of the online review. Please refer to the website for the most up-to-date version [<https://www.marlin.ac.uk/species/detail/125>]. All terms and the MarESA methodology are outlined on the website (<https://www.marlin.ac.uk>)

This review can be cited as:

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See online review for
distribution map

Distribution data supplied by the Ocean
Biogeographic Information System (OBIS). To
interrogate UK data visit the NBN Atlas.

Researched by Morvan Barnes
Authority (Erxleben, 1777)
Other common names -

Refereed by Admin
Synonyms *Phoca groenlandica*

Summary

🔍 Description

The harp seal *Phoca groenlandica* is member of the 'true seal' family. Like all true seals, it has a tapering and pointed muzzle, small, clawed pectoral flippers, and small hind flippers that cannot rotate under the body. Like similar species, it has beaded whiskers on the muzzle. The harp seal is a moderately plump seal, with a small, slightly pointed head and a moderately thick neck. It can reach 1.9 m in length. It has a short muzzle and moderately large eyes. It is most easily recognised by the its colour pattern. It has a silvery white body, with a black head and a broad swath of black on either side meeting at the shoulders. Some harp seals may occasionally be more of a sooty grey or with scattered black blotches.

📍 Recorded distribution in Britain and Ireland

Usually found much further north than the British Isles, the harp seal has been recorded in the Firth of Clyde, Scotland and in the Shetlands.

📍 Global distribution

-

 **Habitat**

The harp seal inhabits cold waters close to the shore.

 **Depth range**

-

 **Identifying features**

- Bulky body up to 1.9 m in length.
- Small tapering muzzle with beaded whiskers.
- Short, thick neck.
- No external ear.
- Small pectoral and hind flippers.
- Silvery white body with black head and a large black swath on each side meeting over the shoulders.

 **Additional information**

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 **Listed by** **Further information sources**

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