

The Thames Marine Mammal Partnership aims to raise awareness of the appropriate code of conduct around Seals and Porpoises in the Tidal Thames and to coordinate responses to injured animals.

# Seals and Porpoises in the Tidal Thames

More information at  
#ThamesMammals  
[www.zsl.org/thamesmammals](http://www.zsl.org/thamesmammals)





# The Thames is full of life

The Tidal Thames is home to a number of marine mammals, including harbour seals, grey seals and harbour porpoises. These species can be found throughout the region, including in central London.

Every year, reports are received of "seals in need of rescue" in the Tidal Thames when they are hauling out, resting on mudflats or pontoons.

With cleaner waters in the Tidal Thames, it is likely that the number of marine mammals will increase.

It is therefore essential to clarify when a marine mammal is presenting 'normal' behaviour and when an animal could be a cause for concern, to better manage rescue responses and reduce unnecessary rescue situations.

## Seal behaviour

### Healthy and happy

- Haul-out onto the foreshore & pontoons to rest and when moulting
- Banana shape – mostly for harbour seals
- Wet patches around their eyes
- Red / bronze coloured fur



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### Cause of concern

- Observable skin lesions
- Individual tangled in net or plastic
- Individual showing signs of malnutrition (i.e. concave flanks, indented stomachs)
- Individuals showing signs of laboured breathing (could be a sign of Phocine distemper virus)

## Porpoise, dolphin & whale behaviour

### Healthy and happy

- Individual in the water



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### Cause of concern

- Individual on the foreshore
- Individuals far upstream in the river
- Floating (not actively swimming)
- Individual showing signs of an injury
- Individual tangled in net or plastic

## What to do if you see a marine mammal in the river?

### A. If animal looks healthy and happy:

Admire the animal from a distance, you could put yourself in danger and cause the animal distress if you approach it.

Report your sighting to ZSL's inthethames website: [zsl.org/inthethames/](http://zsl.org/inthethames/)



Photo by G. Bastyra

### B. If you are unsure on the health of the animal:

Report sighting to PLA Vessel Traffic Services on **0208 855 0315**

The PLA will assess if the animal needs to be rescued and will contact **British Divers Marine Life Rescue** (BDMLR) or **RSPCA** if necessary.

Please do not attempt to rescue the animal yourself.



Photo by Ross Flett (BDMLR)

### C. If the animal is dead:

Please report your sighting to the PLA VTS on 0208 855 0315 who will work with the Cetacean Stranding Investigation Programme (CSIP) on **0800 652 0333**.

**Please do not approach any animals, water levels rise rapidly in the Thames and may put you in danger.**

