

Seal saved on the Isle of May



Scottish Seabird Centre and SNH join forces to free injured seal

A seal caught up in a fishing line on the Isle of May has been saved thanks to quick action and effective partnership between the Scottish Seabird Centre and Scottish Natural Heritage.

The seal was first seen at Pilgrims' Haven on the Isle of May around a fortnight ago by staff and volunteers at the Scottish Seabird Centre at North Berwick who zoomed in on it from over 10 miles away using the Centre's live interactive cameras. It was then apparent that it was in danger as a result of being caught up in fishing line, most probably discarded in the sea. Unfortunately the island was unoccupied and seas were very rough so no rescue attempt could be made.



© David Pickett

The seal then disappeared for around ten days or so, but this week was again spotted on the Seabird Centre's cameras, still wrapped in line and clearly more distressed than before. David Pickett, SNH's Isle of May reserve manager, was quickly alerted to the seal's predicament by the Seabird Centre and took immediate remedial action by cutting the seal free from the line. The seal then went back into the sea, and despite signs of injury caused by its entanglement, the outlook is positive: the wound should heal of its own accord in time and the seal is likely to fully recover from what has been a harrowing and dangerous experience.

Tom Brock OBE, Chief Executive of the Scottish Seabird Centre, said: -"It was distressing to see this injured seal on our live cameras. It is tragic that wildlife is suffering like this. We

are just so pleased that this particular seal could be rescued, but it does highlight the problems that wildlife faces.



Litter and rubbish are a real issue and a significant risk to wildlife – on our cameras we often see gannets on the Bass Rock lining their nest with plastic bags. Litter ends up around our coast and in the sea. We appeal to everyone to respect Scotland's seas and help our wildlife by disposing of rubbish properly and recycling wherever possible.”

David Pickett, SNH's Isle of May Reserve Manager, added:-
“Working on the Isle of May and being surrounded by wildlife is a fantastic experience, and you never know what will happen next. It was upsetting to find the seal in such a state affected by marine litter, but it felt great when I finally snipped through the last of the fishing line and the seal could head back to the sea. The seal has a nasty wound on its neck caused by the line, but we have seen seals recover from worse injuries in the past. So hopefully it has a good chance of survival.”

The Scottish Seabird Centre is a charity dedicated to inspiring people to care for wildlife and the natural environment (Scottish charity no SC025837). For more information on the Scottish Seabird Centre visit www.seabird.org

Scottish Natural Heritage owns and manages the Isle of May, a National Nature Reserve.

For more information on Scottish Natural Heritage visit www.snh.gov.uk and for the Isle of May and other National Nature Reserves visit <http://www.nnr-scotland.org.uk/>