

The  
Seahorse  
Trust



# Seahorses around Britain and Ireland



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NATURE





## A creature of legend

Seahorses have been surrounded by myth and legend for centuries and, as a result, have attained an almost mystical presence wherever they are thought to exist.

These areas are usually thought to be the hotter tropical regions of the planet, so it comes as a surprise to many that the British Isles are home to two species of Seahorse, and they have a wide and varied distribution.

### SPINY SEAHORSE

*Hippocampus guttulatus*

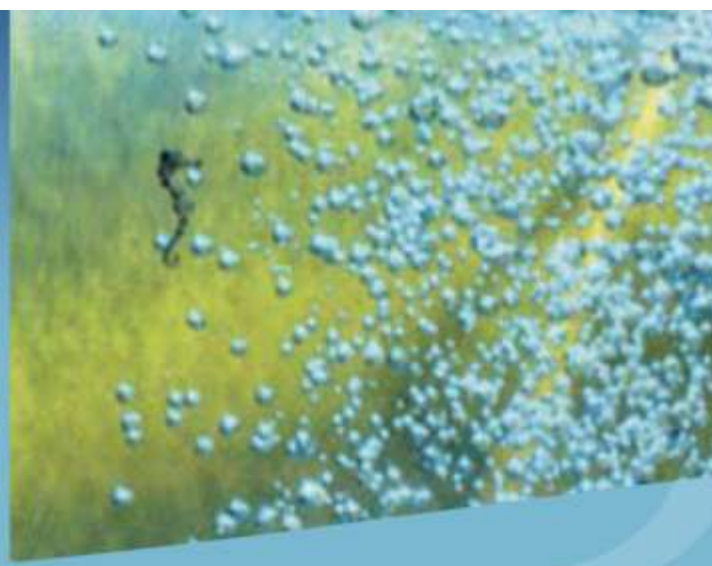


### SHORT SNOURED SEAHORSE

*Hippocampus hippocampus*

To help preserve and protect these delicate and elusive creatures, the **British Seahorse Survey** was set up in 1994 and is run by volunteers.

It is now the longest running continuous survey of its kind in the world and maintained by The Seahorse Trust.



## Helping to ensure the Seahorse survives

Thanks to the British Seahorse Survey we are now beginning to understand a great deal more about Seahorse behaviour. It is now known what happens to them in the winter, where they breed, why we have two species and what their own unique traits are that help them to live so perfectly in their environment.

To this day, we do not know exactly how many Seahorse species there are around the world, or their full distribution. New species are still being discovered as divers explore further into unknown waters.

However, the Traditional Medicine Trade, loss of habitat and poor enforcement of legal protection means it is quite conceivable that Seahorses could go extinct over the next 20 to 30 years unless we continue our efforts to protect them.

The Seahorse Trust was set up as a registered charity in 2000 to preserve and conserve the natural world, especially the marine environment, with Seahorses as its flagship species.

Any charity is only as good as its volunteers and at the Trust we are incredibly lucky to have an amazing team of volunteers from all over the world, and from every walk of life, to help us in our work.

From raising funds, through undertaking research and organising surveys, to spreading the word, the Seahorse Trust is eternally grateful for their dedicated support, hard work and commitment.

# Seahorses around Britain and Ireland



An elegant Shiny Seahorse

Both species of British Seahorse can be found from the Shetland Isles down the west coast of the UK, around Ireland and along the south coast of England. There have also been sightings of Seahorses on the east coast and out in the North Sea.



A Shiny Pony

## A few interesting Seahorse facts!

Seahorses are fish. They live in water, breath through gills and have a swim bladder. However, they do not have caudal fins and have a long snake-like tail.



Shiny Seahorses in the glass

## Courtship

Seahorses pair for life. They meet first thing in the morning to reinforce their bond with an elaborate courtship display. The female meets the male in his territory and as they approach each other, they change colour. The male circles around the female and the pair often spiral around an object.

## Pregnancy

The Seahorse is the only creature where the male has a true reversed pregnancy. The female transfers her eggs to the male which he self fertilises in his pouch. They receive everything they need in the pouch from oxygen to food. Gestation time varies from 2 to 4 weeks and giving birth can be a long process with contractions lasting up to 12 hours.



A pregnant male



Shiny Seahorse

## A chameleon, too

Seahorses can change colour very quickly and match any surroundings in which they find themselves. They have even been known to turn bright red to match floating debris.



## Locations of the SHORT SNOUDED SEAHORSE

*Hippocampus hippocampus*

## Locations of the SPINY SEAHORSE

*Hippocampus guttulatus*



An adult Shiny

## Diving Code of Conduct

If you see Seahorses in the wild when diving, we'd like to know everything you can tell us about them, such as size, distinguishing marks, species, its habitat, male or female, weather conditions and depth. In fact, everything you can think of! We do ask that when you see a Seahorse please look, but don't touch, and follow these guidelines:

- Do not chase, disturb or touch Seahorses. They are a protected species and it is an offence to disturb them. If the Seahorse swims away, do not pursue it.
- A licence is required to actively seek out Seahorses and photograph them. However, if a Seahorse is randomly encountered, one or two photos (use of flash is illegal) is acceptable in order to provide a record.
- Avoid sudden changes in direction when in seagrass - fins and the wash created by them can stir up sediment and cause damage. Do not pull or hold onto seagrass, even if you are drifting. If you need to slow or stop, brace yourself gently on the seabed and settle carefully.

## The National Seahorse Database



All the information and data we gather from around the UK is put together on the National Seahorse Database, which contains pictures, maps and reports. This extensive archive has allowed us to collate all the information into reports, some of which are downloadable from our website.

The database is constantly growing and evolving, and is a very useful tool to see how Seahorses are behaving over a long period of time and as a source of information which will allow better protection for Seahorses and their environment.

We still need to gather more data about British Seahorses, so if you see one please let the Trust know by visiting [www.theseahorsetrust.org](http://www.theseahorsetrust.org) and filling in the Survey Form on the 'Divers' page. We can then compile more information on their ecology and lifestyle, so ensuring that we have this amazing little horse of the sea around our shores for many years to come.

The Seahorse Trust is a Registered Charity, no. 1086027.



A Shiny Seahorse in a water tank

The  
Seahorse  
Trust



The Seahorse Trust is a charitable trust and entirely dependent upon donations and offers to help to undertake its work. We are very grateful for any help or donations the Trust receives.

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**Adopt a Seahorse**

For just £4 per month (minimum 6 months) you will receive a Seahorse Pack containing:

- ID card & information about your Seahorse
  - Certificate of your Seahorse adoption
  - Official Seahorse Trust Pinbadge
  - Official Seahorse Trust sticker
  - Fluffy toy Seahorse
  - Seasonal email newsletter
- .....

**Membership**

Become a member of the Trust and, for just £25 a year, you will receive:

- Certificate of your Membership
  - Official Seahorse Trust Pinbadge
  - Official Seahorse Trust sticker
  - Seasonal email newsletter
- .....

**Donations & Gift Aid**

You can also support the Trust by making one-off donations or a Gift Aid.

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Please visit our website for more information and details of how to help.

**[www.theseahorsetrust.org](http://www.theseahorsetrust.org)**

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