

# Grey seal *Halichoerus grypus*



Láturkópur 
 Sigguttooq 
 Útselur 
 Gråsel/Havert 
 Ránesnjuorju 
 Gråsæl



Grey seal and pup © Amy Bishop

The grey seal is a large, **true seal** that is found only in the North Atlantic Ocean, mainly in coastal waters. They **haul out** on exposed reefs or on beaches of undisturbed islands. Males are not only larger than females, but also often look darker and have a longer and more arched snout.

**Adult length** 2 metres  
**Adult weight** 200-400 kg  
**Maximum age** 35-40 years  
**Eats** wide variety of fish  
**Group size** up to 100+ during the mating and moulting season  
**Predators** killer whale

**IUCN status** least concern (2023)  
**NA abundance** 10,500  
**Hunted in** 64 seals/year  
                   mean 2019-2023 8 seals/year, limited in 2019  
                                            5 seals/year, limited in 2019

## Main threats:



By-catch



Pollution

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During **moulting**, grey seals shed their worn-out fur and grow a new, thicker coat, which helps them keep the right body temperature in their cold aquatic habitats. **Moulting** typically takes place on land or sea ice, where seals can **haul out** and rest while undergoing this process. **Pups** are born with a silky white fur that is **moulted** when they leave their mother. Female grey seals are light with dark spots, while males are dark with light spots. Can you guess what the seal on the right is?



Moulting grey seal pup © Sandra Granquist



Two grey seals fighting © Amy Bishop

While the only natural **predator** to grey seals is the killer whale, the grey seals themselves are also **predators** of other marine mammals. Recent observations from Scotland, the Netherlands, and Germany show fatal attacks on harbour seals and harbour porpoises.



**Research:** Climate changes have really big implications in the Arctic environment. What kind of changes will bearded seals experience with warming Arctic and melting sea ice?