

Label the Grey Seal

Label the picture of the grey seal. The writing below tells you about it. Use the words in **bold** type.



Grey seals spend most of their time in the sea. They have a thick layer of fat or **blubber** which helps them to keep warm. They have four **flippers**. These help them to swim but make them clumsy on land. As seals dive, their **nostrils** and **ears** close so that water does not get in. Their **whiskers** help them detect fish moving in the water.

Find out about Grey Seal Pups



You will need three felt pens or coloured pencils – blue, red and green. Carefully read the information sheet “Grey Seal Pups on the Isle of May”. You are going to pick out the **key words** and use them to make some **notes**.

- In blue highlight those **key words** which tell you what the pups look like. (Description)
- In red highlight those **key words** which tell how it is looked after. (Care)
- In green highlight those **key words** which tell you other interesting facts. (Other information)

Write the **key words** on the **chart** below under the correct **heading**.

<i>Description</i>	<i>Care</i>	<i>Other Information</i>

Use your notes to make an eye catching information panel about grey seal pups for the Scottish Seabird Centre.

Grey Seal Pups on the Isle of May



The Isle of May is the most important breeding ground for grey seals on the east coast of Scotland. There are over 1000 seal pups born there each year between October and January.

The young pup is born with a white silky fur coat. It weighs about 14 kg when it is born. This is the same as 14 bags of sugar! It is quite helpless at first and sucks milk from its mother for about 18-21 days. It grows very quickly and puts on more weight. This fat allows the pup to survive when the mother has to go back to sea to feed. The pup is left alone on the island for the next 1-4 weeks. During this time it loses its white fur coat and begins to take on the grey and brown spotted colouring of the adult. By this time the pup is able to care for itself. Its diet soon includes a variety of sea creatures –fish, shellfish, squid and octopus.

The Isle of May is closed to protect the seals from 1st October until the 31st March. You can watch them from the Scottish Seabird Centre using the Isle of May camera. Through the telescopes on the Viewing Deck it is also possible to see grey seals basking on the rocks and swimming in the sea.



Seal Watch!

Using our remote cameras, you will be able to see live images of grey seals and their pups on the Isle of May.



The best time to watch seals is when they come ashore to breed or moult. They pup between October and January, and moult in June and July. Record what you see e.g. Where are the seals? What are they doing? How many are there? See if you can find the males, females and the pups.

Read the notes to help you.

Male: larger than female – thick wrinkled neck – dark brown, grey or black coat with lighter patches on neck and flanks – long, broad snout

Female: shorter than male – nose slightly shorter and narrower – lighter in colour than male with dark spots on a grey, tan, or yellowish background

Pups: small – white fur coat with a yellowish tinge

Record what you see in the space below. You can make sketches or write notes. Use the other side of the page if you need more space. First complete these important details. The first has been done for you:

Location: Isle of May (from the Scottish Seabird Centre)

Date:

Time:

Weather Conditions:

Which Seal is Which?



There are two species of seals which are permanent residents in Scotland – the grey seal and the common or harbour seal. The seals which breed on the Isle of May, and which you can watch from the Scottish Seabird Centre, are grey seals.

The seals differ from each other in seven main ways. Use the information on the **labelled diagrams** to complete the **table** below. Two have been done for you.

Species	Grey Seal	Common Seal
Size	larger than common seal	
Position of eyes	close to ears	
Shape of nostrils		
Shape and size of nose		
Head shape		
Behaviour of pups after birth		
Where and how they give birth		

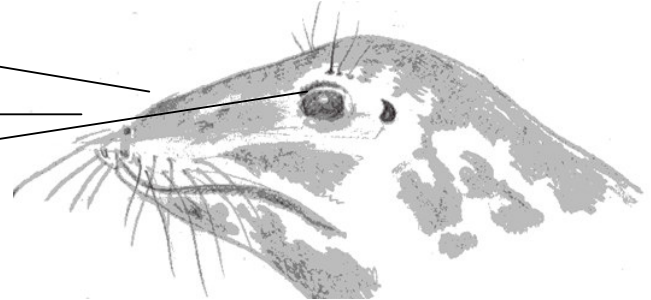
Which Seal is Which?

Grey Seal

horse-shaped head

“Roman” nose

eyes close to ears



parallel **W** shaped nostrils



larger than common seal

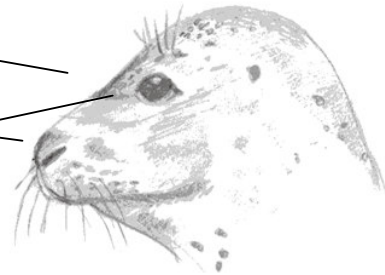
Grey seals return to the same breeding site every year. There are lots of seals at each site. The pups stay on land for 4-5 weeks before they learn to swim.

Common Seal

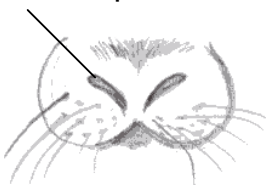
dog-shaped head

shorter snub nose

eyes not so close to ears



V shaped nostrils



smaller than grey seal

Common seals do not breed in a group but give birth alone. This is usually out at sea on rocks or sandbanks. The pups can swim as soon as they are born.

