

Impacts of Marine Debris



Cornish Seal Sanctuary

Many different species of marine life are affected by entanglement from marine debris; from cetaceans, turtles, sea birds and seals. Each year the rate of entanglements around the UK has increased, causing serious welfare implications for a large number of species. There are 34 pinniped species around the world, inhabiting different areas of the globe, and just over 55% of these are affected by some form of marine entanglement.

For many different species, including seals, Juveniles and sub-adults are more susceptible to becoming entangled in marine debris. At a young age, seals are curious individuals and can be seen interacting with objects found in the environment; whether this is a bit of sea weed or a plastic bottle. Unfortunately, with large items of debris, seals can become caught up in foreign materials, rapping it around their bodies. At a young age, this won't be an issue, until that individual starts to mature into an adult. Injuries from entanglement can include constriction and open wounds, which can impair their feeding patterns, breathing and have a high risk of infection.

The Cornish Seal Sanctuary rescues a percentage of seals each year due to entanglement from the marine environment.

Hope

Hope was rescued on the 15th January 2019 from Gunwalloe, Cornwall. It was a late evening, and it wasn't until the rescue team approached her that soon released she had been caught up in monofilament. When returned to the sanctuary, the sanctuary staff were able to remove the material from around her neck, to reveal the horrific wounds it had caused. Hope's wounds soon healed, and will soon be released back out into the wild!



Juvenile pup that has been caught up in monofilament ▲



Hope ▲

G.I. Joe

G.I. Joe was rescued on 8th February 2019 from Loe Bar, Cornwall. He was unfortunately caught in netting that was longer than the length of his body! From battling in the surf during a storm, he was exhausted and found refuge on the beach. Thankfully, no injury was caused by the material around G.I. Joe, and was brought back to the sanctuary to rest. It won't be long until G.I. Joe puts the weight on that is crucial for his survival and back out into the wild.

Any form of marine debris is harmful to the marine environment, from lost fishing gear to a plastic bottle. Taking better care of our planet will help the future of ecosystems around the world.



Photos of G.I. Joe caught up in marine debris. ▶