



RÓN GLAS

GREY SEAL

Halichoerus grypus



The little stars on this map represent the distribution of Grey Seals throughout Ireland. Each square on the map is equivalent to 100 kilometres by 100 kilometres.

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There are two species of seals to be found around the coasts of Ireland, the Grey Seal and the Common Seal. A seal is a fish-eating mammal whose body is perfectly adapted for life in the water. It has a pair of webbed flippers which it uses as a fish uses its tail. A male Grey Seal (bull) can measure from 210cm to 270cm. The female (cow) is smaller. A seal's body is protected by a layer of fat called blubber which is covered by a coat of close fur. When swimming underwater, a seal has a valve which it can close to keep the water out of its nostrils. In the water, the seal is a graceful swimmer but ashore its movements are awkward and clumsy. During the breeding season, Grey Seals gather in large

colonies on rocky coasts where there are cliffs and caves. The bull seal regards the females as his own property and he will fight any young bull foolish enough to interfere. Baby seals (pups) are born in September and October. With their coats of woolly white hair and big brown eyes, seal pups look like big puppy dogs. At three weeks, the pup sheds its first coat and becomes darker. After about five or six weeks it enters the sea. The mother seals play with their babies in the water and they guard them fiercely against any intruder. Female seals have a strange singing 'hoot' and when they gather in large numbers ashore they make a loud wailing chorus which can be heard a long distance away.

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