

SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

Project Case Study: SeaMonitor: Seals Pups

THEME:

Environment: Manage Marine Protected Areas and Species

FUNDING (ERDF+MATCH):

€4,664,863.79

MATCH FUNDING:

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Ireland

LEAD PARTNER:

Loughs Agency

PROJECT PARTNERS:


Marine Institute, Queens University Belfast, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), University of Glasgow, University College Cork, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Ocean Tracking Network - Dalhousie University, University of California Davis

Start Date: 25/07/2017

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 @SeaMonitor1

 Loughs Agency

SeaMonitor is a unique marine research project, studying the seas around Ireland, Western Scotland and Northern Ireland.

It will deliver Europe's largest fish counter, supporting the conservation of basking shark, cetaceans, salmon, seals and skate. It will also provide three Management Plans; one for skate in the area from Loch Sunart to the Sound of Jura and two for salmon in both the River Foyle and Clyde estuaries.

Seal Pups tracking

Ariel and Merida were the first rehabilitated seal pups in Northern Ireland to be equipped with trackers before their release in November 2019. This equipment allows scientists to closely monitor their behaviour after rehabilitation, as well as their diving and feeding habits in the wild. Since their release the trackers have indicated a much longer range of travel than scientists predicted, extending across the Irish Sea to England and Wales. In early March Ariel ended up on the shores of North Wales having made the journey from Northern Ireland, to the coast of Scotland, then the Isle of Man and onto the coast of North Wales.

They were followed in February 2020 by Darby, Esmeralda and Mulan, another tracked release of seals pups.

This mission was made possible by the University College Cork, Exploris Aquarium and Loughs Agency, as part of the Sea Monitor project.

Since seals are considered as a protected species in the UK and Europe, scientists wish to give them the utmost protection and strive to rescue them and give them a release in the natural habitat whenever they can.

"We use state-of-the-art tags glued to the seals' fur which drop off naturally during the seal's annual moult, but until then provide information on where the seals are going as well as their dive behaviour. This gives us unique insights into post-rehabilitation survival and how juvenile seals learn to forage successfully in the wild."

Dr Mark Jessopp, lead scientist from University College Cork who released Ariel and Merida



Ariel and Merida tracking Data



The tracker attached to the seal