



## SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

### Project Case Study: SeaMonitor—Project Update

#### THEME:

Environment: Manage Marine Protected Areas and Species

#### FUNDING (ERDF+MATCH):

€4,722,671.31

#### MATCH FUNDING:

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

#### LEAD PARTNER:

Loughs Agency

#### PROJECT PARTNERS:

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

Start Date: 25/07/2017

End Date: 31/12/2022



[www.loughs-agency.org/seamonitor](http://www.loughs-agency.org/seamonitor)



@SeaMonitor1



Loughs Agency

#### Tracking rehabilitated seal pups

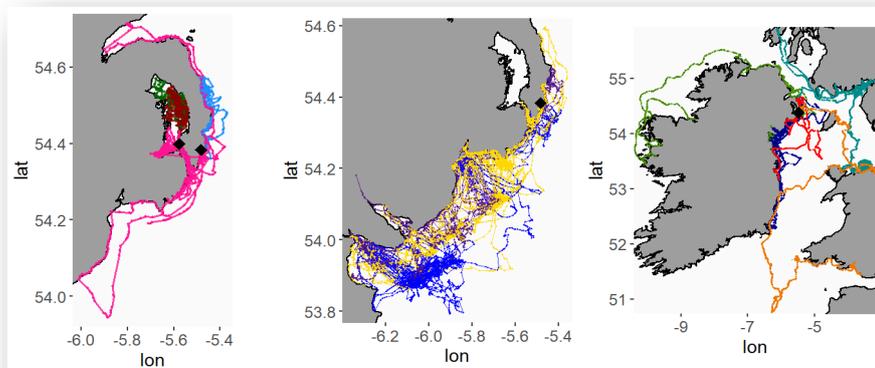
Following the successful tracking of 5 seals last season (Oct 2019 – June 2020), a further 11 individuals have been released since Aug 2020. 5 of these seals have been fitted with devices that in addition to transmitting location and dive summary data (e.g. depth & duration), record tri-axial acceleration which can be used to provide scientists with novel insight toward the fine-scale behaviours and movements of these animals.

Data transmissions have been received from tracked individuals for periods ranging from ~5 weeks to several months (and for recent releases is ongoing), and show seals diving to depths regularly exceeding 30-50m for durations of more than 5 minutes, suggesting good dive capability.

Preliminary explorations of spatial movements suggest a range of post-release behaviours are evident, and seals use a variety of habitats across several regions. Some individuals remain in near-coastal waters close to the release site at Portaferry (County Down, Northern Ireland). Others move along the coast (often towards Carlingford Lough and Dundalk) and forage further offshore (10-20km from land). Some seals make large exploratory trips across the Irish Sea to Scotland, England and/or Wales, or to the West of Ireland.



A number of individuals have been tracked up rivers, possibly due to the presence of salmonids. One seal foraged within multiple wind-farm sites, eventually settling at one off North Wales, where it made repeated trips from resting sites on the coast over a period exceeding 10 weeks.



Each map shows the spatial movements of seals released between October 2019 and January 2021. Each colour represents a different seal, and the black diamonds correspond to release sites around Portaferry (County Down, Northern Ireland).