



Guidelines for the Selection of Biological SSSIs
Part 2: Detailed Guidelines for Habitats and Species Groups

MAMMALS (seals)

Unrevised

To view other chapters of the Guidelines visit: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2303>

MAMMALS (seals)

This is the unrevised seals section from the previous SSSI Guidelines for mammals. The rest of the mammals guidelines have been reviewed and revised ([Walsh et al. 2019](#)).

3 Site selection requirements

3.1 Seals

3.1.1 Grey seal

Some protection is needed for this species, particularly because of the important international status of the British population. The stocks are small in England and Wales and so additional protection is needed there to maintain numbers. Some NCC control over possible future culls would be desirable, and this is possible on National Nature Reserves and other SSSIs by virtue of section 10(3)(b) of the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 (as amended in 1973 and 1981).

3.1.2 The British grey seal population consists of six main stocks, with breeding centres in (i) south-west Britain (Scilly, Cornwall, Wales), (ii) the Inner Hebrides and west mainland coast of Scotland, (iii) the Outer Hebrides, (iv) Orkney, (v) Shetland and (vi) the Farn Islands and Isle of May. This division correlates with differences in timing of the breeding season. There are two landfall periods when the grey seal population should be given protection from disturbance on some of the sites concerned - during the occupation of breeding sites and during the use of moulting haul-outs, which may consist of quite different sites.

3.1.3 **The two largest breeding sites** (size being based on pup production) **and the two largest moulting haul-outs** for each of the above stocks of grey seals **should be selected** as SSSIs, except that the south-west Britain stock should be divided into one for Wales and one for south-west England, giving seven in all. These are minimum requirements, and, if other factors such as vulnerability of sites give cause for increasing the number, additional cases should be discussed with the appropriate CSD mammals specialist. Counts are to be based on data from the last five years, where available.

3.1.4 Common seal

This species has six main areas of population around the British coasts - (i) the Inner Hebrides and west mainland coast of Scotland, (ii) the Outer Hebrides, (iii) Shetland, (iv) Orkney, (v) the east coast of Scotland and (vi) the Wash and east coast of England. It is less dependent on

land for breeding than the grey seal and, although haul-outs are to be found in all months of the year and particularly during the moulting period, it does not form such large rookeries. Nevertheless, there are important sites (in some cases groups of small sites) for each population which should be considered for protection. So, as for the grey seal, **the two largest pupping sites and moulting haul-outs** (which may be the same) for each population area **should be selected** as SSSIs. Numbers should again be based, when possible, on counts over the last five years.

- 3.1.5 **For both grey and common seals**, if the total number in any one stock protected on NNRs or other SSSIs selected for other reasons is already greater than that in the two largest pupping sites, there may be no need for further protection for that stock. Similarly, if haul-out sites have been protected elsewhere or are the same as the pupping sites, no further such sites may be necessary.
- 3.1.6 Sites **for both grey and common seals** should not be denotified or exchanged because of slight changes in seal numbers shown by new five-year counts. (Some will, in any case, be islands or rocky shores selected as SSSIs on other grounds.) There have been some problems with the counting techniques for common seals, and it should be remembered that old counts may therefore not be comparable to recent

Table 26 Status and distribution of British mammals (with nomenclature based on that of Corbet & Southern 1977)

Species	Protective legislation	Believed status	Change	Distribution: England (E), Scotland (S) and Wales (W)
<u>INSECTIVORA</u>				
HEDGEHOG <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	*	Very common	-	Widespread; E, S, W
MOLE <i>Talpa europaea</i>		Very common	-	Widespread; E, S, W
COMMON SHREW <i>Sorex araneus</i>	*	Abundant	-	Widespread; E, S, W
PYGMY SHREW <i>Sorex minutus</i>	*	Very common on	-	Widespread; E, S, W
WATER SHREW <i>Neomys fodiens</i>	*	Common where it occurs	-	Widespread but local; E, S, W
LESSER WHITE-TOOTHED SHREW <i>Crocidura suaveolens</i>	*	Common where it occurs (island subspecies)	-	Very restricted distribution; Isles of Scilly (Scilly shrew)
<u>CHIROPTERA</u>				
GREATER HORSESHOE BAT <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>	*	Endangered	Declining	Restricted distribution; E, W
LESSER HORSESHOE BAT <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	*	Endangered	Declining	Restricted distribution; E, W
WHISKERED BAT <i>Myotis mystacinus</i>	*	Vulnerable	Declining	Widespread; E, W
BRANDT'S BAT <i>Myotis brandtii</i>	*	Vulnerable	Declining	Widespread; E, W
NATTERER'S BAT <i>Myotis nattereri</i>	*	Vulnerable	Declining	Widespread; E, S, W
BECHSTEIN'S BAT <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i>	*	Rare	-	Restricted distribution; E
MOUSE-EARED BAT <i>Myotis myotis</i>	*	One individual	Virtually extinct	Very restricted distribution; E
DAUBENTON'S BAT <i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	*	Vulnerable	Declining?	Widespread; E, S, W
SEROTINE <i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	*	Vulnerable	Declining	Southern England and Wales
LEISLER'S BAT <i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	*	Rare and vulnerable	-	Widespread; E, W
NOCTULE <i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	*	Vulnerable	Declining	Widespread; E, S, W
PIPISTRELLE <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	*	Vulnerable	Declining	Widespread; E, S, W
BARBASTELLE <i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	*	Rare	-	Widespread; E, W
BROWN LONG-EARED BAT <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	*	Vulnerable	Declining	Widespread; E, S, W
GREY LONG-EARED BAT <i>Plecotus austriacus</i>	*	Rare and vulnerable	-	Very restricted distribution; E
<u>LAGOMOPHA</u>				
RABBIT <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		Very common; introduction (12th century)	Increasing	Widespread; E, S, W
BROWN HARE <i>Lepus capensis</i>		Common	Declining	Widespread; E, S, W
MOUNTAIN HARE <i>Lepus timidus</i>		Common where it occurs	-	

Species	Protective legislation	Believed status	Change	Distribution: England (E), Scotland (S) and Wales (W)
<u>RODENTIA</u>				
RED-SQUIRREL <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	*	Common in Scotland, but vulnerable in England and Wales	Declining	Widespread; S; fragmented and discontinuous; E, W
GREY-SQUIRREL <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>		Very common; introduction (1876)	Increasing	Widespread; E, S, W
BANK-VOLE <i>Clethrionomys glareolus</i>		Abundant (with island subspecies)	-	Widespread; E, S, W
FIELD-VOLE <i>Microtus agrestis</i>		Abundant (with island subspecies)	-	Widespread; E, S, W
COMMON-VOLE <i>Microtus arvalis</i>		Very common where it occurs (island subspecies); introduction?	-	Very restricted distribution; Orkney (Orkney vole)
WATER-VOLE <i>Arvicola terrestris</i>		Common	Declining?	Widespread; E, S, W
WOOD-MOUSE <i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>		Abundant	-	Widespread; E, S, W
YELLOW-NECKED-MOUSE <i>Apodemus flavicollis</i>		Common where it occurs	-	Restricted to southern E & W
HARVEST-MOUSE <i>Micromys minutus</i>		Common but local	-	Restricted to E & W
HOUSE-MOUSE <i>Mus musculus</i>		Very common; introduction (pre-Roman)	-	Widespread; E, S, W
SHIP-RAT <i>Rattus rattus</i>		Vulnerable; introduction (Roman)	Declining	Restricted; fragmented distribution
BROWN-RAT <i>Rattus norvegicus</i>		Very common; introduction (18th century)	-	Widespread; E, S, W
FAT-DORMOUSE <i>Glis glis</i>	*	Uncommon; introduction (1902)	-	Very restricted distribution; E
COMMON-DORMOUSE <i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	*	Uncommon; local	Has declined	Restricted distribution; E, W
-COYPU <i>Myocaster coypus</i>		Virtually extinct; introduction (1930s)	Severely controlled	Restricted distribution; E
<u>CARNIVORA</u>				
FOX <i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		Common	-	Widespread; E, S, W
PINE-MARTEN <i>Martes martes</i>	*	Uncommon; low density	Increasing range	Restricted distribution; S; fragmented; E & W
STOAT <i>Mustela erminea</i>		Common	Increasing	Widespread; E, S, W
WEASEL <i>Mustela nivalis</i>		Very Common	-	Widespread; E, S, W
POLECAT <i>Mustela putorius</i>	*	Common where it occurs	Increasing	Restricted distribution; largely W
BADGER <i>Meles meles</i>	*	Common	-	Widespread; E, S, W
OTTER <i>Lutra lutra</i>	*	Endangered in England and Wales; vulnerable in Scotland	Has declined	Widespread; S; fragmented; E & W
WILD-CAT <i>Felis silvestris</i>	*	Uncommon; low density	Increasing range	Restricted distribution; S

Species	Protective legislation	Believed status	Change	Distribution: England (E), Scotland (S) and Wales (W)
<u>PINNIPEDIA</u>				
COMMON SEAL <i>Phoca vitulina</i>	*	Locally common; small population overall	Increasing?	Widespread on coasts; E, S, W
GREY SEAL <i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	*	Locally common; rare internationally	Increasing	Widespread on coasts; E, S, W
<u>ARTIODACTYLA</u>				
RED DEER <i>Cervus elaphus</i>	*	Common	Has increased	Widespread; largely S, but also E
SIKA DEER <i>Cervus nippon</i>	*	Common; introduction (19th century)	-	Widespread but discontinuous; S, E
FALLOW DEER <i>Dama dama</i>	*	Common; introduction (Norman)	-	Widespread; E, S, W
ROE DEER <i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	-	Common	Increasing	Widespread; S, E
MUNTJAC <i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>		Common where it occurs; introduction (c. 1900)	Increasing	Restricted distribution; E and a few in W
CHINESE WATER DEER <i>Hydropotes inermis</i>		Uncommon and local; introduction (c. 1900)	-	Restricted distribution; E

This list of British mammals includes all those species breeding on land in the British Isles, excluding the Channel Islands. It excludes all the Cetacea, Marsupialia, vagrants and introductions, unless prior to 1950 and now a permanent part of the fauna. The asterisk in column 2 marks all those species named in some protective legislation covering England, Scotland and Wales (ranging from a close season to full protection). Population estimates based on recent counts are only available for very few mammalian species (red deer: 270,000 (1970; grey seal: 92,000 (1985); common seal: 24,700 (1985); greater horseshoe bat: 2,200 (1984)), so the information on status is very approximate and relative. Distribution information is largely from Distribution maps of the mammals of the British Isles (Arnold 1984), with additional information from single species surveys; a dash means that there is no recent information.