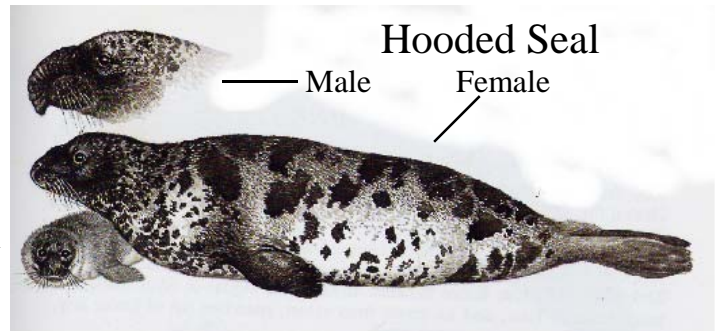


A nine month old rare Hooded Seal was found washed up on a beach in Tenerife, in The Canary Isles. It was hundreds of miles from its natural home which is in the arctic. It was malnourished and had lost its fur. It has an under-active thyroid and was cared for at a marine centre in Tenerife for 4 months, but has now been brought to the seal sanctuary at Gweek for a full veterinary assessment, where they have had a number of seals suffering from the same condition. They will be doing blood tests and monitoring his progress over the next few months.



He is keeping his distance from the other seals at the sanctuary, and is a bit stunned by all the visitors, but is doing really well and is feeding well. If he make a full recovery he will be taken back to Greenland and released back into the wild. Hooded seals are a migratory species and sometimes visit European waters, but it is unusual for one to go as far south as Tenerife. The males are larger than females and have a much more pronounced proboscis hanging over the mouth, as shown above. The proboscis can be inflated, as shown at left (top) and the male can also turn a nasal lining or wall, inside out, and inflate that as well, as illustrated at left (bottom)

After researchers, sponsored by Earthwatch, presented data proving the damage being done to dolphin's ecosystem in the western Mediterranean by the constant traffic of oil tankers, container ships and other large cargo

vessels, the Spanish Merchant Navy and the IOM (International Maritime Organisation) agree to move the shipping lanes 20 miles to the south. In the Mediterranean just east of Gibraltar there are several off-shore marine areas, and until now merchant ships have sailed straight through this supposedly protected area in enormous numbers, disrupting the feeding grounds. The decision to shift the shipping lanes offers a reprieve for the last healthy population of Bottlenose Dolphins in the Mediterranean. Only two professional researchers were involved in producing the data, but there were over 500 volunteers in the project. It just goes to show how you as divers could help researchers to achieve fantastic results. The cetaceans were studied not only for their own sake, but also because they are part of an ecosystem and are useful as bio-indicators. Loggerhead Turtles have also been studied in the area, and have also been in danger of disturbance. Several have been fitted with radio transmitters and each time the turtles surfaced, sent signals to a satellite, not only giving its position but also how deep it had dived and also for how long it was submerged, and one turtle had been submerged for over 110 hours without breathing.

Bottlenose Dolphins were reported 11 times during April, but the pod of 8 with a juvenile, that was the subject of most reports during March was not among those reported. Most of the reports were of two middle-sized dolphins, one with a notch out of its dorsal, playing around Penzance harbour mouth and Fowey harbour mouth, travelling between the two in about 5 hours or less. There was however a pod of 15 to 20 outside Penzance Harbour at 8.30 am, on the 21st, together with a pod of about the same number of Common Dolphins, and as a dive boat left the harbour the Bottlenose headed off east toward Marazion and the Common Dolphins left in the direction of Newlyn. There were 4 other reports of Commons, and one report was of about 120 off Black Head. Of 6 reports of Harbour Porpoise, 4 were around West Penwith and 2 in the Lizard area. Basking Sharks were reported 22 times, all on the south coast from Wolf Rock to Picklecombe in Plymouth Sound. A single Grey Seal was seen below the watch at Cape Cornwall on 4 different days. .

