

1974 - Filey (TA/1180) 9-10/1974. 1 escaped from Flamingo Park Zoo (SE/7879) some time in September-October 1974. Seen near Filey 28/10/1974 (23 miles away) and finally caught on Bridlington harbour pier (TA/1866) [9 miles further on] in early hours of 8/11/1974. (C.I. Massey. YNU unpublished records).

1977 - Ilkley (SE/14) 7/4/1977. 1 raiding dustbins during night along Grove Road. Finally caught at Glen Rosa. Had escaped from captivity in Leeds [over 20 km away] where it was returned (featured in press and TV) (A. Hedley, YNU unpublished records).

1978 - Scarborough (TA/0190) early/5/1978. 2 escaped from Scarborough Zoo and Marineland. 1 remained free for approximately three weeks with reports of its wanderings as far as Scalby [2.2 km away] (C.I. Massey. YNU unpublished records).

1978 - Filey (TA/1180) late/8/1978. 1 escaped from Scarborough Zoo and Marineland. Was free for about three weeks before being captured in Filey [12 km away] (C.I. Massey. YNU unpublished records).

1983 - Hutton Magna (NZ/11) 20/7/1983. Seen in car headlights at 01.00 (S Hayhow. YNU unpublished records).

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HARP SEALS IN YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE WATERS

A NEW SPECIES FOR THE REGION

Introduction

The Harp or Greenland seal (*Phagophilus groenlandicus*), a highly migratory arctic and sub-arctic circumpolar species, seldom ventures south of 60degrees N and consequently has only rarely been recorded in British waters (Hewer 1974).

Its three major breeding populations are situated in areas of pack ice in northeast Newfoundland and the Gulf of St Lawrence, around Jan Mayen Island and at the mouth of the White Sea (Hewer 1974, Bonner 1977).

Records of vagrants reaching British waters, 19th century to the present time, are reviewed in Howes (1989).

Harp seals have a long history of ethnic and commercial exploitation. A significant decline in numbers during the second half of this century, particularly in its eastern populations, was attributed to intensification of annual culls (notably of white-coated unweaned pups) to supply the increased demands of the fashion fur trade (Ronald et al. 1982).

Protection since 1983, when the importation of pelts into Europe was banned, has enabled the population to increase, though at a time when food sources are much depleted.

Abnormal Feeding Migrations

Altered feeding migrations, apparently caused by a collapse of fish stocks (particularly capelin (*Mallotus villosus*) and arctic cod (*Boreogadus saida*)) have resulted in large numbers of one and two-year-old animals moving into the fishing grounds off the Norwegian coast and down into the northern North Sea.

Specimens which drowned in Norwegian fishing nets during February 1987 showed evidence of emaciation, with blubber reserves estimated to be only 16% of the norm for the time of the year (Dines 1987).