

Successful management of a wild wandering walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*) in western Europe

¹Dan Jarvis BSc. (Hons), PgCert., ²Sue Sayer MBE BSc. (Hons) PGCE, ¹Lizzi Larbalestier MA PCC CertEd, ³Melanie Croce

¹British Divers Marine Life Rescue, Lime House, Regency Close, Uckfield, East Sussex, UK, TN22 1DS

²Seal Research Trust, Copperleaf Cottage, Phillack Hill, Hayle, Cornwall, UK, TR27 5AD

³Seal Rescue Ireland, Courtown, Co. Wexford, Ireland

Corresponding author
dan@bdmlr.org.uk

Timeline

1: 17.03.21 a juvenile male walrus known as 'Wally' first sighted at Valentia Island, Co. Kerry, Ireland

2: 19.03.21 – 17.05.21 inhabited Tenby harbour, UK; first observations of hauling on boats and structures and use of management methods

3: 19.05.21 sighted off Cornwall, UK

4: 27.05.21 – 01.06.21 inhabited the harbour at La Rochelle, France, hauled out on boats and structures

5: 05.06.21 visited the harbour at Bilbao, Spain

6: 17.06.21 – 27.07.21 resided in the busiest harbour at the Isles of Scilly, UK, a group of over 100 small islands only five of which are inhabited. Damaged/sank several small boats; threats made against his life and wellbeing of rescue and conservation staff; public causing disturbance and putting themselves in danger

7: 02.08.21 – 29.08.21 visited a number of harbours along the south coast of Ireland, with similar issues and management measures as those in the Isles of Scilly

8: 19.09.21 last sighted hauled out on a pier in Hofn, Iceland



Management of people and the walrus had to be implemented in Tenby (A), Scilly (B) and Ireland (C) to ensure the wellbeing of all, and to allow him time to recover for his next journey.

Walrus management

- Air horn and hosepipe (A)
- Daily behaviour monitoring and disturbance incidents recorded for ongoing risk assessment (B, C)
- Alternative floating platform provided in harbour (B, C)
- Distracting with a larger boat (B)
- Barricading access to or removal of vulnerable vessels (B, C)
- Walrus and orca vocalisations – not used (B)
- Polar bear scent – not used (B)

People management

- Consultation and communication with key stakeholders (A, B, C)
- Constant visible presence of 'walrus wardens' (A, B, C)
 - Best practice advice to prevent disturbance regularly issued (A, B, C)
- Signage at harbour access points (B)
- Regular updates in media and on social media (B, C)
- Ongoing collaboration with partner organisations for other climate refugee walruses

Scan here to access the
Out Of Habitat Marine
Mammals Workshop
Report 2021

