



Media Release

Date: 5th December 2008

Man charged over seal pup slaughter

A man has been charged in connection with the clubbing to death of 18 grey seal pups found on a beach in the Shetland Islands.

Police were alerted by workers from Scottish Natural Heritage while conducting a seal survey on 29th November. When officers attended the beach, in the East Linga area of the island, they found 12 dead pups on one part of the beach and six on another section.

A man will appear at Lerwick Sheriff Court in due course.

Andy Ottaway, Campaign Director at the Seal Protection Action Group said:

"This shocking event is sadly typical of the kind of cruel abuse inflicted upon our seals. We hope that the perpetrator will be punished with the full force of the law. This horrifying incident can only strengthen our case for greater protection for our globally important seal populations"

The pups killed were grey seals, one of two species in British waters. The Shetland Islands are also home to a globally important population of common (harbour) seals. Recently scientists have reported that there has been a 'frightening' decline of common seals in Scotland and England.

In 2007, the Scottish Government introduced a ban on the deliberate killing of common seals in the Shetland Islands, Orkney and an area of the east coast between Stonehaven and Dunbar because of concern over their declining numbers. It is not yet clear if grey seals are at risk.

However, grey and common seals across other parts of Scotland are not protected and campaigners believe an estimated 5,000 seals are shot in Scottish waters each year by salmon farm and fisheries interests.

Last week the Seal Protection Action Group and a coalition of other animal welfare and conservation organisations protested outside of the Scottish Parliament calling for an immediate ban on the shooting or otherwise killing of seals.

"This culture of killing seals must stop!" Andy Ottaway "We need a ceasefire for seals with immediate effect and the comprehensive protection of our disappearing seal populations from deliberate killing before it is too late."

-ENDS-

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Interviews

For interviews, further information or photographs, please contact Andy Ottaway of the Seal Protection Action Group on 01273 471403.

Editors Notes

- The Seal Protection Action Group (SPAG) registered charity (SC017447) is dedicated to the protection of seals and their environment worldwide www.sealaction.org
- SPAG is a founder-member of the Seal Protection Groups coalition: www.protectourseals.org.uk
- The latest research on seal populations was conducted by the Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU) at St Andrews University and the latest figures show that last year common seal numbers fell from 4,256 to 3,379 in Orkney, from 1,056 to 800 along the eastern coast of the northern Highlands, from 113 to 102 in the north-east, in Grampian, and from 6,702 to 4,732 on the west coast from Oban to the Mull of Kintyre. There was also a fall, from 445 to 215, in Fife, and by nearly half in the smaller populations around Lothian and Dumfries and Galloway. This was reported in The Guardian Newspaper on Oct 20th: www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/oct/20/conservation-wildlife-seals-marine-endangered
- Scotland is home to globally important populations of grey and common (harbour) seals. About 39% of the world population of grey seals is found in Britain (estimated at 120,000) and over 90% of these breed in Scotland. In addition, it is estimated that 35,000 of a world population of about 500,000 common (harbour) seals are in British waters, with 86% of these in Scotland.

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Scottish Reg. Charity No: SC017447

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