

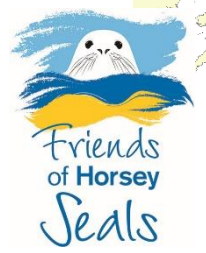
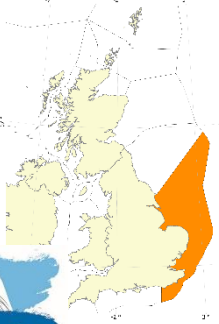


EASTME 2026

Seals

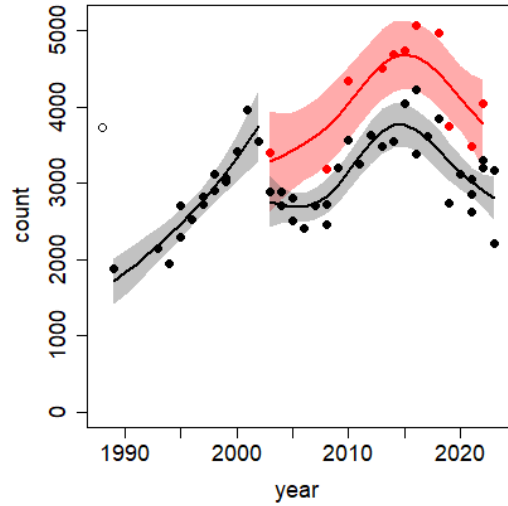
Marine Mammal EASTME CoP contact: dr60@st-andrews.ac.uk

Context: abundance in Southeast England SMU



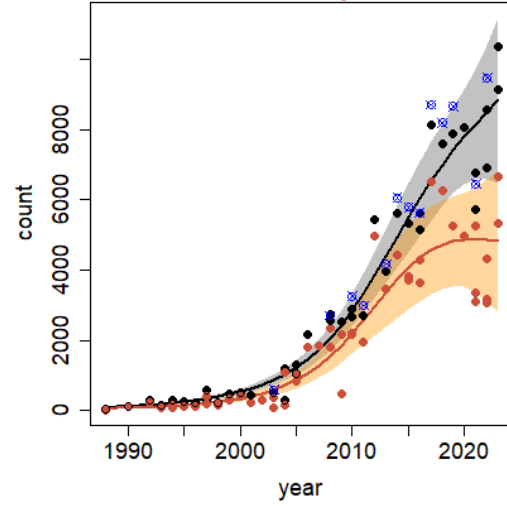
9. Southeast England

The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC



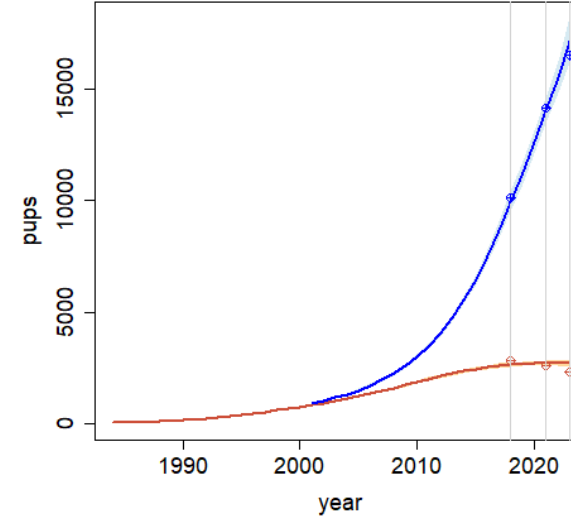
9. Southeast England

Donna Nook to Scroby Sands
Humber Estuary SAC

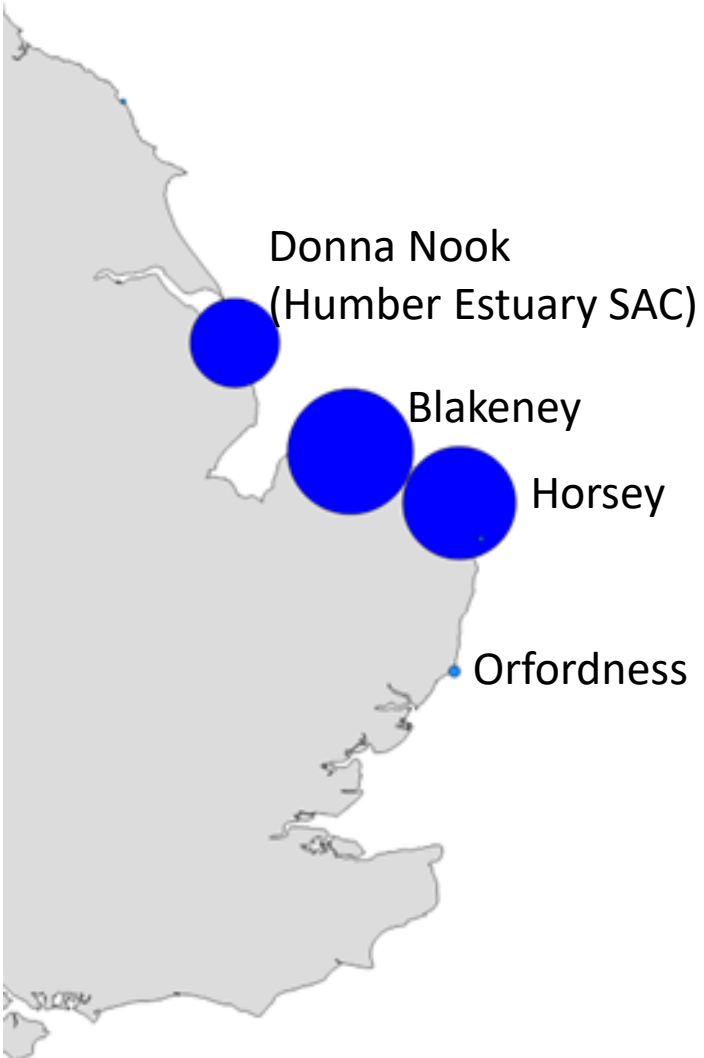


9. Southeast England

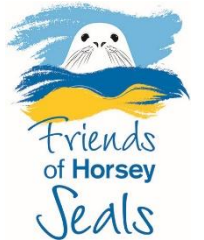
Humber Estuary SAC



Grey seal pup production

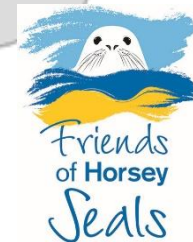
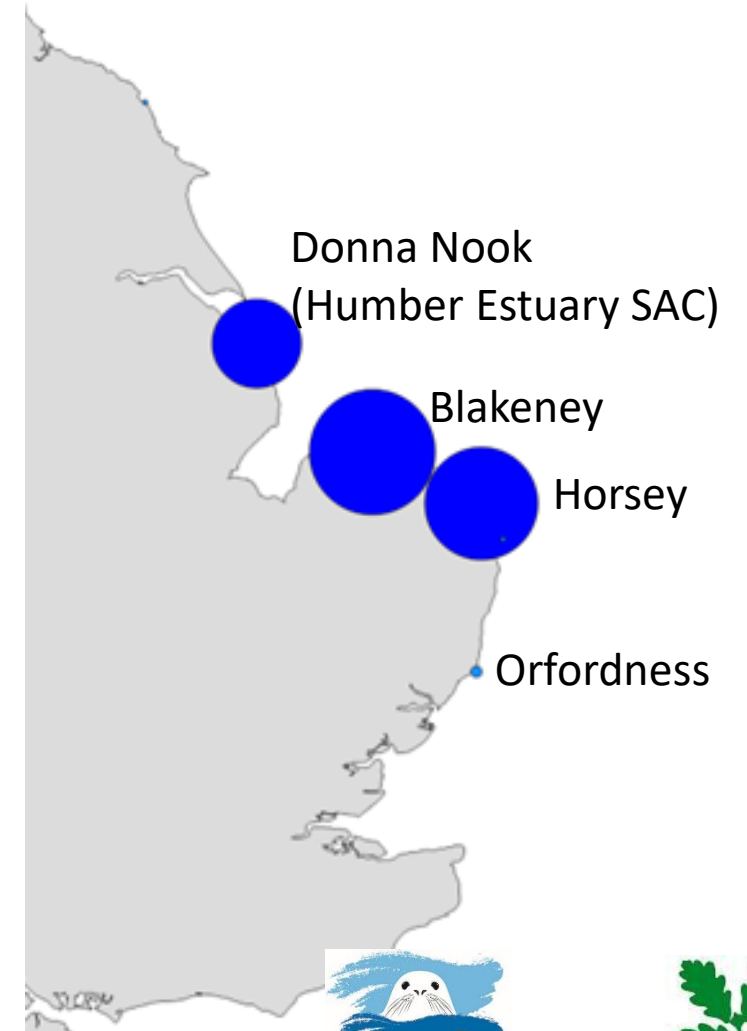


- SMRU conduct biennial aerial surveys to generate SMU-wide pup production estimate
 - 2023: 16,500 pups
- Last Eastme we reported drops in ground-based pup production for 2024 at:
 - Donna Nook
 - Horsey
 - May have been caused by construction work at groynes.
- Could have been offset by Blakeney which is now the largest colony in England
 - 2023 pup production ~8,950 pups



Grey seal pup production

- 2024 – potential declines in Donna Nook and Horsey
- Donna Nook
 - LWT ground surveys at Donna Nook indicate pup production was higher than in 2024 though still lower than in 2023.
- Horsey
 - Friends of Horsey Seals survey the majority of the extent of the Horsey colony
 - Numbers in 2025 season back up to (just above) 2023 levels
- Orfordness
 - National Trust surveys indicate colony has continued to increase
- SMU-wide aerial survey conducted (including Blakeney)
 - Images being processed



BDMLR – 2025 reports

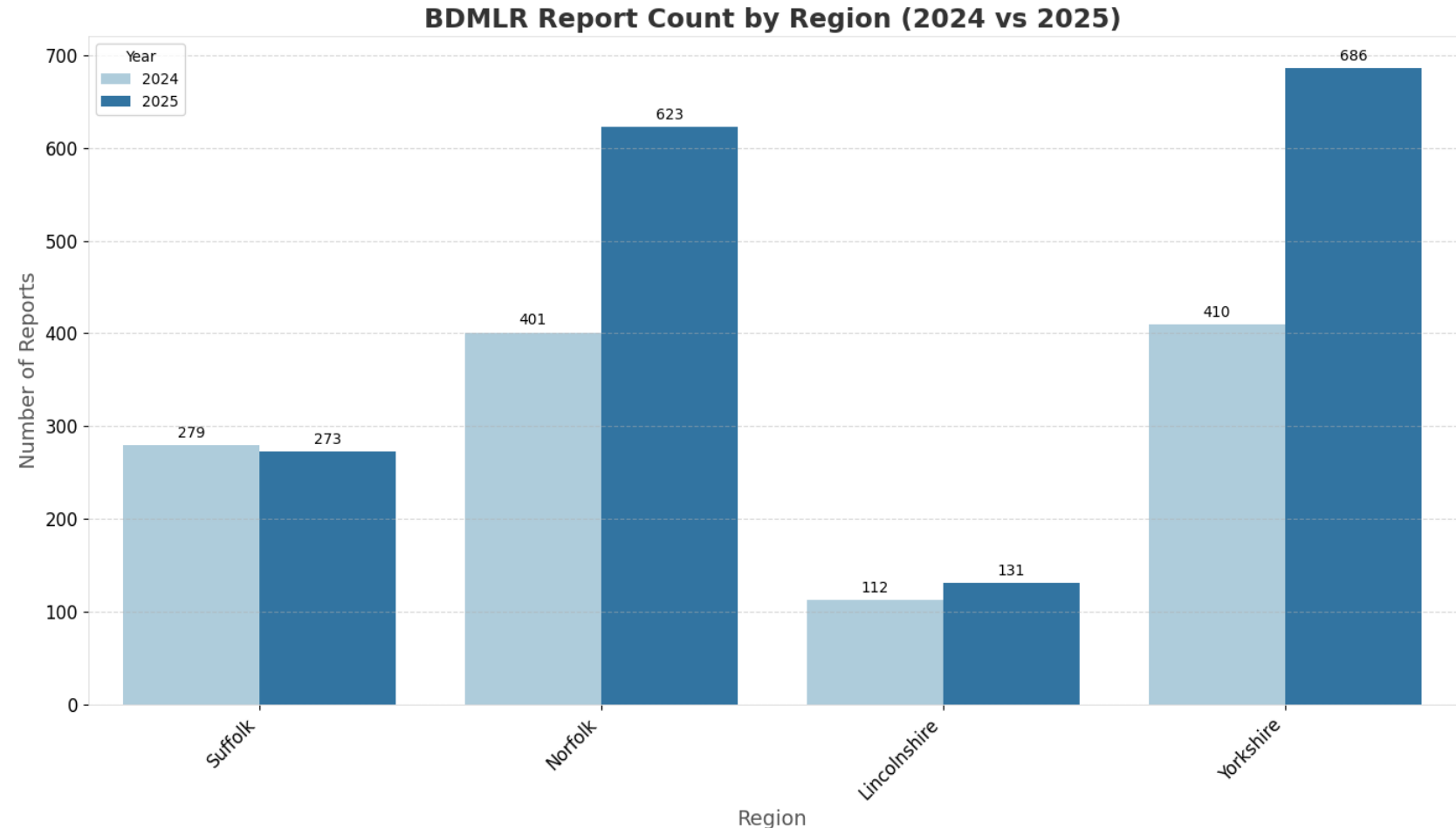


BDMLR has received an increase of reports in every region within the Middle-East of England with the exception of Suffolk that has had a very minor decrease:

- Suffolk: **-2.2%** from 2024
- Norfolk: **55.4%** from 2024
- Lincolnshire: **17.0%** from 2024
- Yorkshire: **67.3%** from 2024

Likely causes of increases in call-outs:

- More heavily populated beaches leading to significant disturbance concerns as pups haul out to rest.
- Increased awareness – knowing who to contact if concerned.
- Growth in seal populations increases the probability of more pups needing intervention.
- Rise in storm activity leading to more pups obtaining injuries.
- Increase in entanglements from marine debris.



BDMLR – Species breakdown



Grey seals make up the majority of the reports we receive through our hotline on a national scale, including the East coast. The East coast is also where we see the most common seal activity.

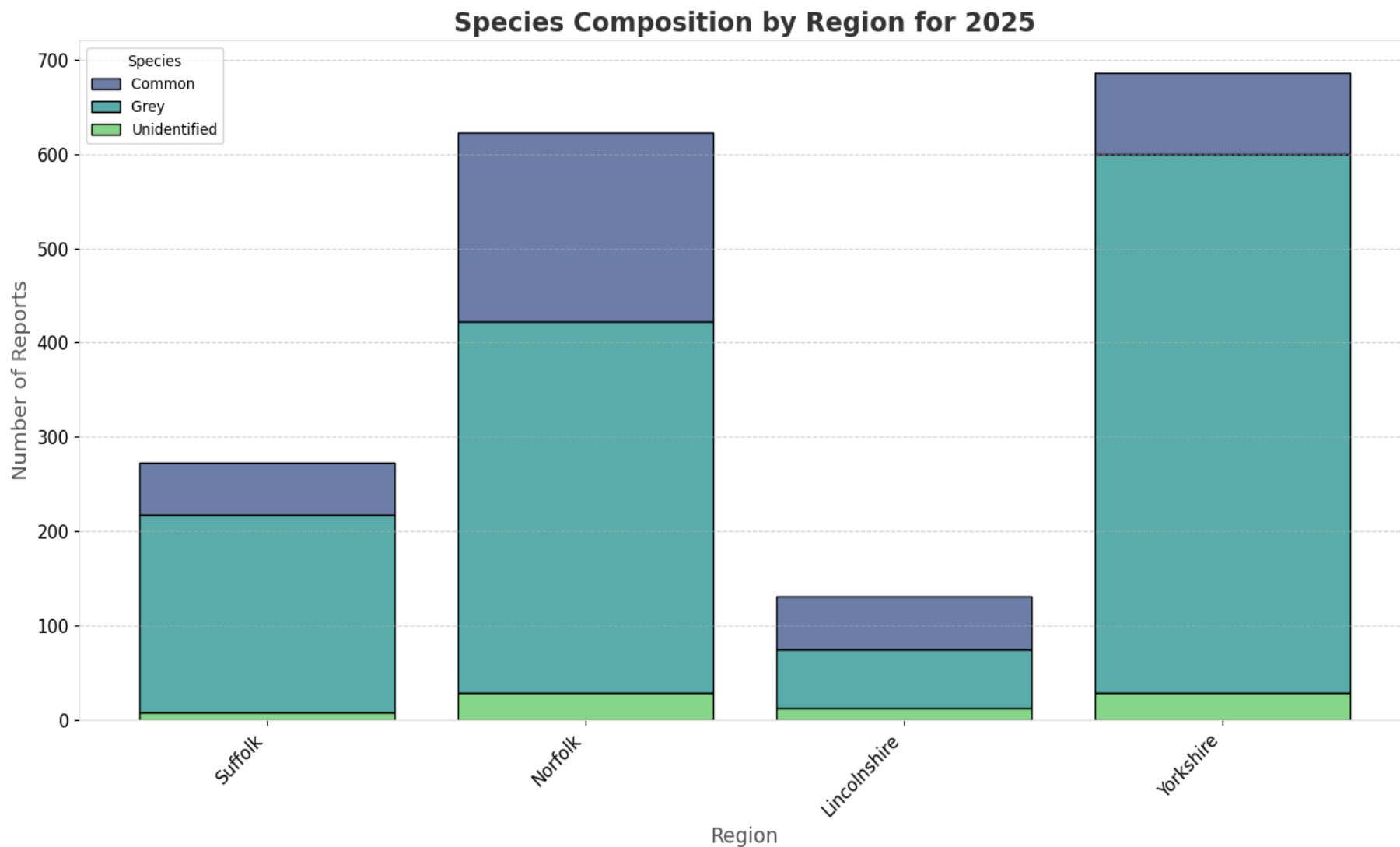
- **Species breakdown:**

- Common seals: **23.3%**
- Grey seals: **72.2%**
- Unidentified seals: **4.6%**

We have also seen a significant increase of both native species for 2025 in comparison to 2024.

- **Percentage increase:**

- Grey seals: **44.9%**
- Common seals: **59.6%**





Natural England Updates

Any questions: jack.digman@naturalengland.org.uk



Harbour Seal condition assessment for The Wash and North Norfolk Coast SAC completed.

Result = '**Unfavourable – Declining**'
[Designated Sites View](#)

Failed attributes:

- Population size,
- Recruitment and reproductive capability,
- Food availability,
- Non-native species and pathogens,
- Water quality - contaminants

Relevant publications in 2025/2026

Wiley
Transboundary and Emerging Diseases
Volume 2026, Article ID 4680980, 9 pages
<https://doi.org/10.1155/tbed/4680980>

WILEY

Research Article

Detection of Two High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza Virus (HPAIV) Subtypes, H5N1 and H5N5, in a Mass Mortality Event in Wild Seabirds and Co-Location With Dead Seals

DOI: 10.1111/1365-2664.70236

RESEARCH ARTICLE

BRITISH ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY | Journal of Applied Ecology

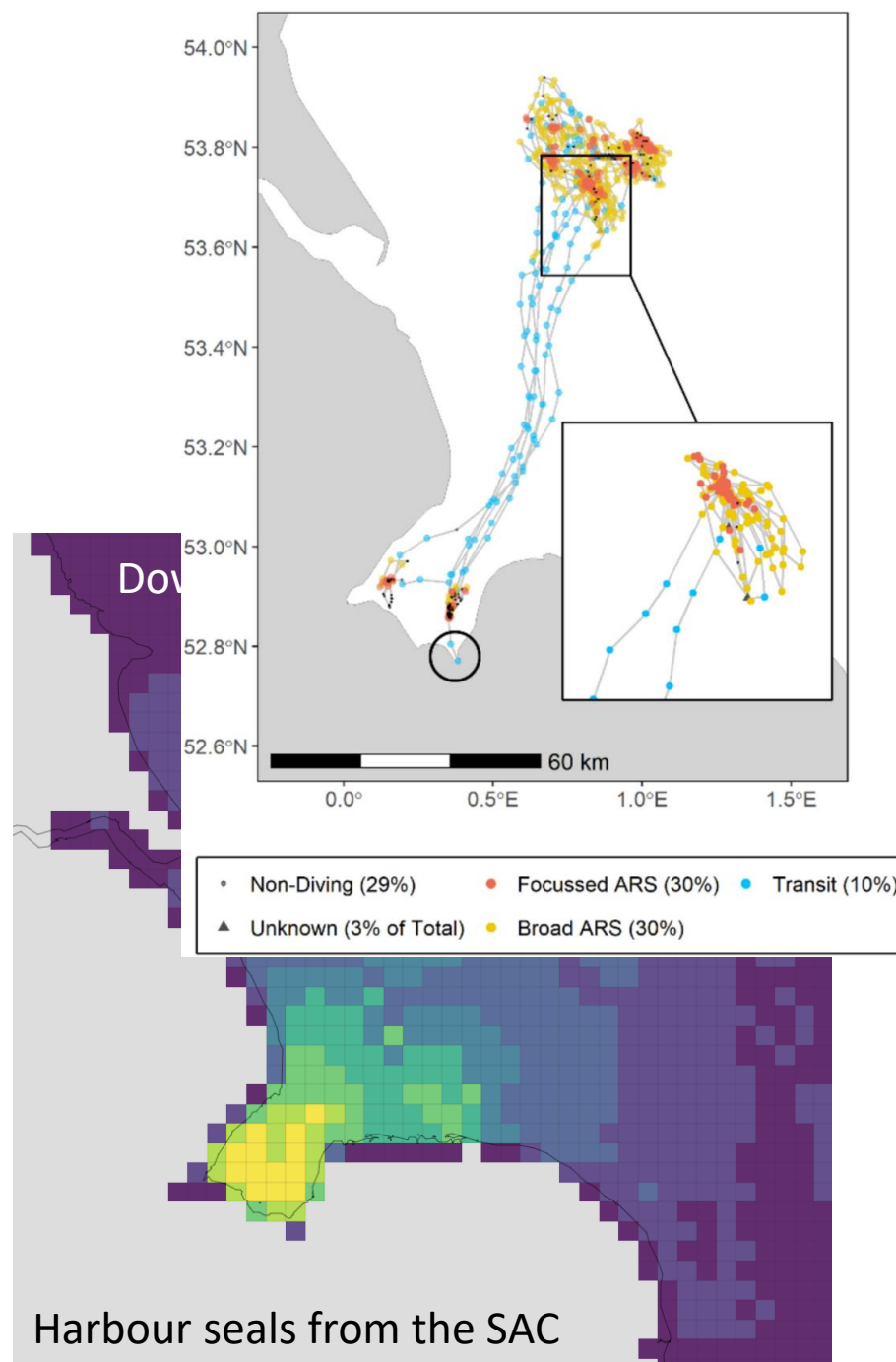
At-sea distribution of seals on the Northwest European Shelf: Towards transboundary conservation and management

Landscape Ecol (2026) 41:21
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10980-025-02281-z>

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Scale-dependent foraging behaviour and habitat associations of two sympatric marine top predators



Conclusions

- **2025 Summary**

- No indication that apparent drop in grey seal pup production has continued
- No indication of harbour seal population recovery
- Not abnormal year for strandings, though harbour seal intake continued to decline

2026 will see continued

- Seal population monitoring
- Investigation into lack of harbour seal population recovery
- Investigation, with the help of citizen science, into grey seal predation