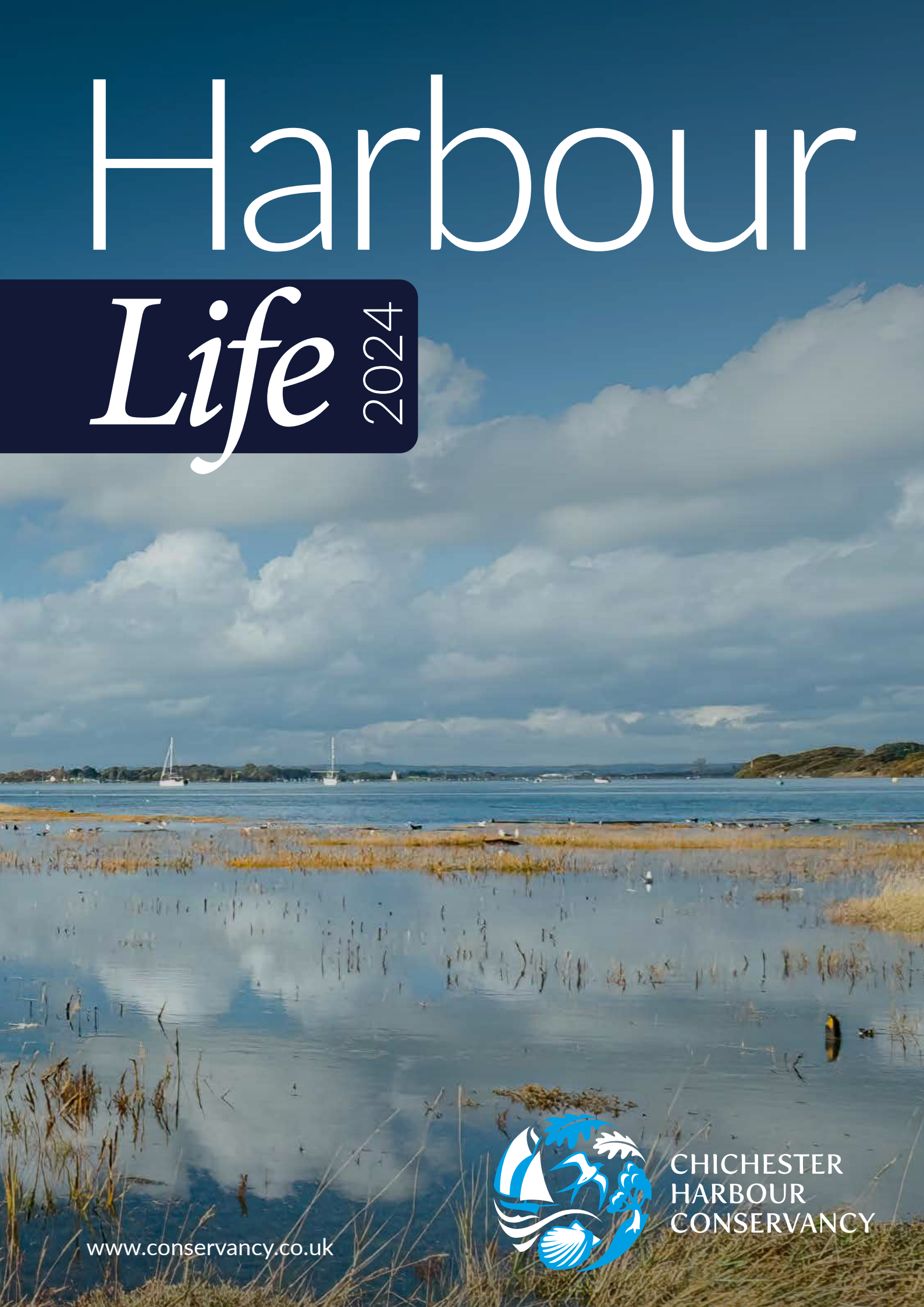


Harbour

Life 2024



CHICHESTER
HARBOUR
CONSERVANCY

www.conservancy.co.uk

Welcome to Chichester Harbour



Matt Briers
Chief Executive
Officer

Chichester Harbour is under enormous pressure; it's time to unite to protect and restore this precious place. I am passionate about the National Landscape of Chichester Harbour; if you are reading this, I'm sure you are too.

Whether you enjoy time on the harbour, in it or around the harbour's edge you will surely have noticed the pressures this landscape is under. Development, coastal squeeze, climate change, recreational pressure and water quality issues are a clarion call for us all to play our part.

The challenge is huge. The 2023 State of Nature report underlined the extent of this crisis; the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries on earth. Here in Chichester Harbour the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) was in 2021 found to be in an "unfavourable declining" condition, with significant habitat loss and degradation over recent decades.

At Chichester Harbour Conservancy we are upping our game, convening stakeholders and organisations to work for the protection and recovery of habitats. Since taking up the position of CEO in April 2023 I have been impressed by the commitment, enthusiasm and energy of our staff, augmented by a dedicated team of volunteers and supporting charities including the Friends of Chichester Harbour and the Chichester

Harbour Trust. Nature restoration must be the focus over the coming years and Chichester Harbour Conservancy is recruiting additional people to realise that, given it will take much work over a sustained period to deliver. Thankfully, we are not alone in this effort, and I know there are many in the local communities that surround the harbour who want to play their part.

So, if you want to get involved and have a particular skill or simply some time or energy to volunteer, please get in touch via our website or that of the Friends of Chichester Harbour. Let us all play our part to protect and restore our precious Chichester Harbour. We are one of the most important sites for nature in the country, home to nationally and globally important bird populations as well as scarce habitats such as saltmarsh and seagrass meadows. As the residents, businesses, boaters, sailors, walkers, paddleboarders, authorities and organisations of the harbour we can work together to safeguard this special place. Together we can regenerate our ecosystems to harness the power of nature and create resilience here for the challenges of climate change and sea-level rise.

These challenges are huge but not insurmountable. Together we can ensure that Chichester Harbour is protected and restored for the benefit of nature and for the enjoyment of future generations to come.




Matt Briers CBE
Chief Executive Officer



Contents

- 4 Keeping Watch
- 6 Chichester Harbour, a National Landscape
- 8 Three Cheers for Volunteers
- 10 Discover the Harbour by Boat
- 12 Super Saltmarsh - a Habitat Hero!
- 14 Harbour Habitats
- 16 In the Palm of Your Hand
- 18 Small Fish, Big Pond
- 20 Racing into Another Century
- 22 The Secret Life of Seals
- 24 The Four Seasons of Chichester Harbour



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Find out about what's happening in the harbour by signing up to our newsletter at www.conservancy.co.uk



Keeping Watch

Jo Cox took over as Chichester Harbour Master in May 2023. Following a career in the Merchant Navy, including the British Antarctic Survey, her last role was as Harbour Master in the Falkland Islands. We catch up with her to find out what led her to this role, and her priorities for Chichester Harbour.

Jo, what drew you to a career at sea?

I spent much of my childhood sailing and as a youth I was heavily involved with the Sea Cadets. On leaving school I took up an engineering apprenticeship at Land Rover, but all my holidays were spent with the Sail Training Association, as a watch leader on schooners. By the age of 21 I knew it was a life at sea for me, and I enrolled as a cadet at Warsash Maritime Academy.

With many years at sea in some exciting places, what have been your career highlights?

The standout for me was my time in command of Royal Research Ship Discovery, taking her to the Falklands and South Georgia. I had previously spent three years living and working on South Georgia as the Government Officer, so taking RRS Discovery back to such a unique and wild place felt like a professional homecoming.

After so much time in the Antarctic, what drew you to the role of Chichester Harbour Master?

I moved to Emsworth in 2015 as a base during my time away at sea, and it was the first place I really felt at home. I spent as much time as possible in, on and around Chichester Harbour and developed a deep appreciation for this special place. When I saw the role advertised it felt like a once in a lifetime opportunity to combine my professional skills, passion for the environment and conservation and love for the area.

What are your priorities for Chichester Harbour in 2024?

As well as raising wider awareness of the work of Chichester Harbour Conservancy, I have three main priorities:

1. In 2024 we plan to increase our patrol presence, particularly in the evenings and at weekends, to promote safe enjoyment of the harbour for all users.
2. We are working with partners to raise awareness of "green boating", as well as ensuring the infrastructure is in place to support boat users to make the right decisions for the environment.
3. There have been some changes to harbour dues, and we will continue to review these, to ensure that they are fair and equitable for all harbour users.

Chichester Harbour is one of the largest recreational harbours in the UK; do you get to enjoy time out on the water yourself?

Yes I do! I really enjoy spending time sailing with friends, as well as kayaking with my dog, Finn. Rowing is a rapidly growing sport within Chichester Harbour and I'm hoping to try my hand at that too.







**Chichester
Harbour
National
Landscape**



Welcome to your National Landscape

New name and national focus underpin ambitious targets for nature.

On 22 November 2023, all 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) across the UK - including Chichester Harbour – became National Landscapes.

The work in developing this new and united personality for our network has been conducted with the input of the AONB teams across the country together with the public, existing stakeholders from partner organisations, landowners, local businesses, and government officials. This new name captures our essence – the ambition, collaboration and commitment to serve and share for the good of our landscapes, nature, climate, and people. The vision is that National Landscapes will become a designation fit for the 21st century and beyond.

At Chichester Harbour Conservancy we work with partners and local communities to help deliver the democratically derived Management Plan. The change to a National Landscape is an opportunity to broadcast this work clearly and loudly. To restate our values and demonstrate the importance of Chichester Harbour to everyone.

The renaming as a National Landscape creates a national family of locally managed and celebrated protected landscapes.

This marks the next step in fully realising the National Landscapes' vision to be the leading exemplars of how thriving, diverse communities can work with and for nature in the UK. Restoring ecosystems, providing food, storing carbon to mitigate the effects of climate change, safeguarding against



Richard Austin
Director, Chichester Harbour National Landscape

drought and flooding, whilst also nurturing people's health and wellbeing are at the forefront of what we do.

We know there is a lot of local affection for Chichester Harbour. For over 50 years, the Chichester Harbour Conservancy team have worked to conserve and enhance the landscape. However, I think it is fair to say that in the 21st century we now need to raise the profile of the area to attract greater funding and a wider audience. Ultimately, being part of the family of National Landscapes will help us to access the resources we desperately need to improve the state of nature, for the benefit of future generations.

Find out more about the National Landscapes programme at www.national-landscapes.org.uk



The family of UK National Landscapes.

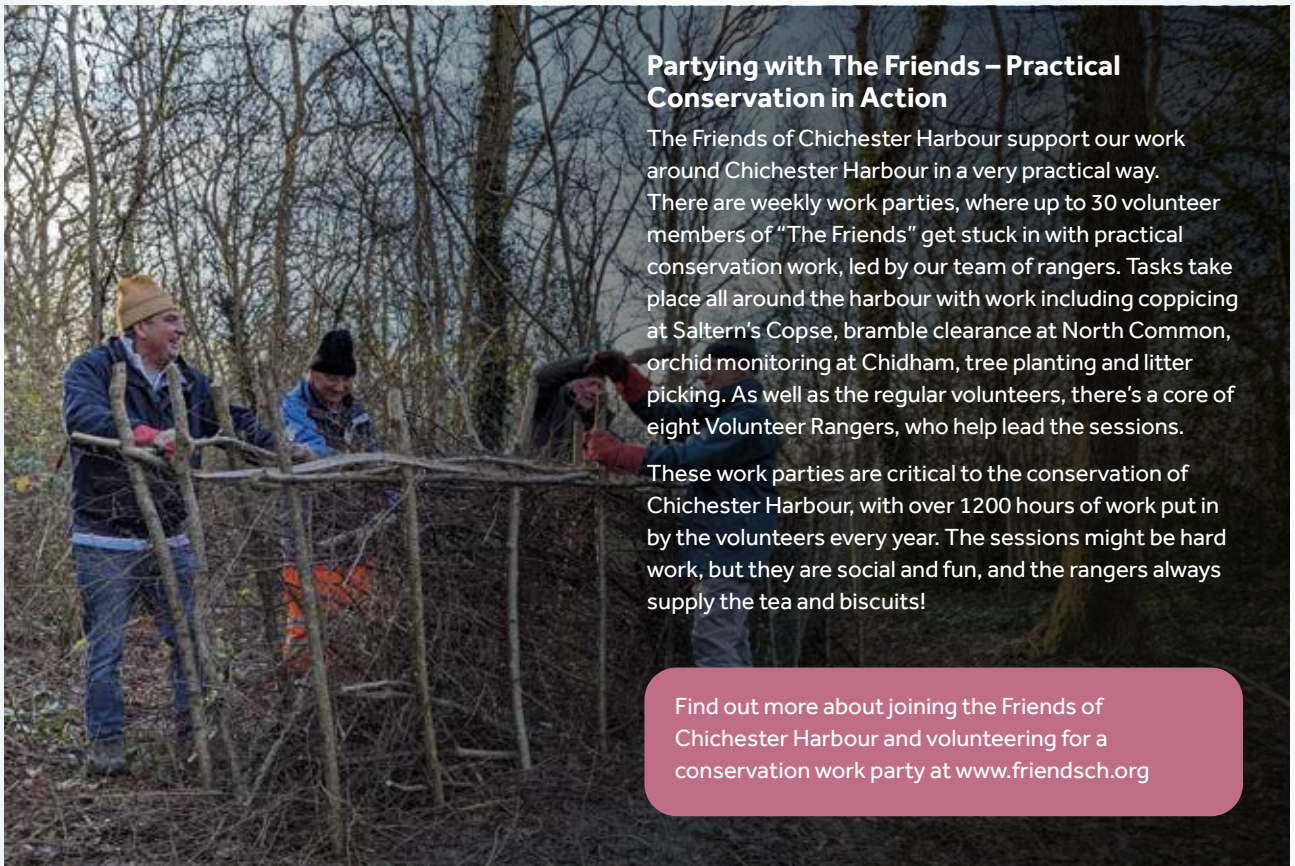
Three Cheers for Volunteers...

Our work at Chichester Harbour Conservancy is supported by a huge number of volunteers. Over the coming years we will be needing more people to get involved with protecting and restoring the precious habitats of Chichester Harbour. Let's take a look at what some of our volunteers do now...

Counting Birds, the Wetland Bird Surveys

Every month throughout the winter a team of avid birders head out, whatever the weather to count and record the wetland birds using the harbour. Co-ordinated by our ecologist, Pete Hughes, the harbour is divided into 14 sectors, each assigned to a volunteer or pair of volunteers, known as "counters". On the specified day the counters spend several hours in their sector, counting the waders and waterfowl as birds roost out the high tide.

WeBS (Wetland Bird Surveys) have taken place across the UK's wetlands since the 1960s, providing a clear and accurate picture of changes to bird populations over several decades. The data from the surveys is critical in the designations of Chichester Harbour as a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and a SPA (Special Protected Area) to protect the bird species that are so important here.



Partying with The Friends – Practical Conservation in Action

The Friends of Chichester Harbour support our work around Chichester Harbour in a very practical way. There are weekly work parties, where up to 30 volunteer members of "The Friends" get stuck in with practical conservation work, led by our team of rangers. Tasks take place all around the harbour with work including coppicing at Saltern's Copse, bramble clearance at North Common, orchid monitoring at Chidham, tree planting and litter picking. As well as the regular volunteers, there's a core of eight Volunteer Rangers, who help lead the sessions.

These work parties are critical to the conservation of Chichester Harbour, with over 1200 hours of work put in by the volunteers every year. The sessions might be hard work, but they are social and fun, and the rangers always supply the tea and biscuits!

Find out more about joining the Friends of Chichester Harbour and volunteering for a conservation work party at www.friendsch.org

Ecology and Nature

We work with a number of passionate people, naturalists and experts in their fields who generously give up their time to monitor the ecology and wildlife of the harbour. Throughout the summer months there is a regular count of the harbour's seals, and a yearly "Shoresearch", a volunteer programme co-ordinated by the Sussex Wildlife Trust to identify and record animals, plants and habitats along our shoreline. The aim of the project is to build a baseline of data on intertidal wildlife to help promote its conservation.

Many local experts also give up their time to guide on our boat trips, informing visitors about the birds and wildlife of the harbour and passing on the important messages about protecting and restoring our special habitats for the future.



Watching the Harbour

Chichester Harbour has over 50 miles of shoreline – that's a lot to keep watch over! A dedicated Harbour Watch team keep a careful eye on the shore; 31 local volunteers who monitor the condition of footpaths and sea defences within their section.

They walk their patch on a regular basis, reporting back any issues so that Chichester Harbour Conservancy Staff can deal with problems in a timely manner. They also collect litter, as do many local residents, all working together to keep the harbour free from rubbish.

The Next Generation

Education is an important part of the work we do here at Chichester Harbour Conservancy, introducing this precious environment to the next generation, the future custodians. From pre-schoolers to University Students, every year 9,000 young people visit our Education Team, learning about rivers, harbours, ecology, coastal processes and the management of the National Landscape.

Our Education Team is supported by 10 volunteers, who support our teachers on field trips, deliver lessons to small groups and ensure that young people understand the importance of our natural landscape.



Future Volunteers

Nature recovery needs people! We are very much focussed on the need to restore the natural environment of Chichester Harbour and volunteers will be key to success. We are a partner in the Solent Seascape Project, an ambitious programme of marine nature restoration across the area.

Through this project we will be recruiting volunteers, from Marine Ambassadors, who will get out there and share the importance of our habitats, to Seagrass Champions and more. [Sign up to our newsletter to find out when opportunities arise.](#)



Discover the Harbour by Boat

Keep up to
date with boat trips
and everything else
happening in the harbour
– sign up to our monthly
email newsletter on
our website!

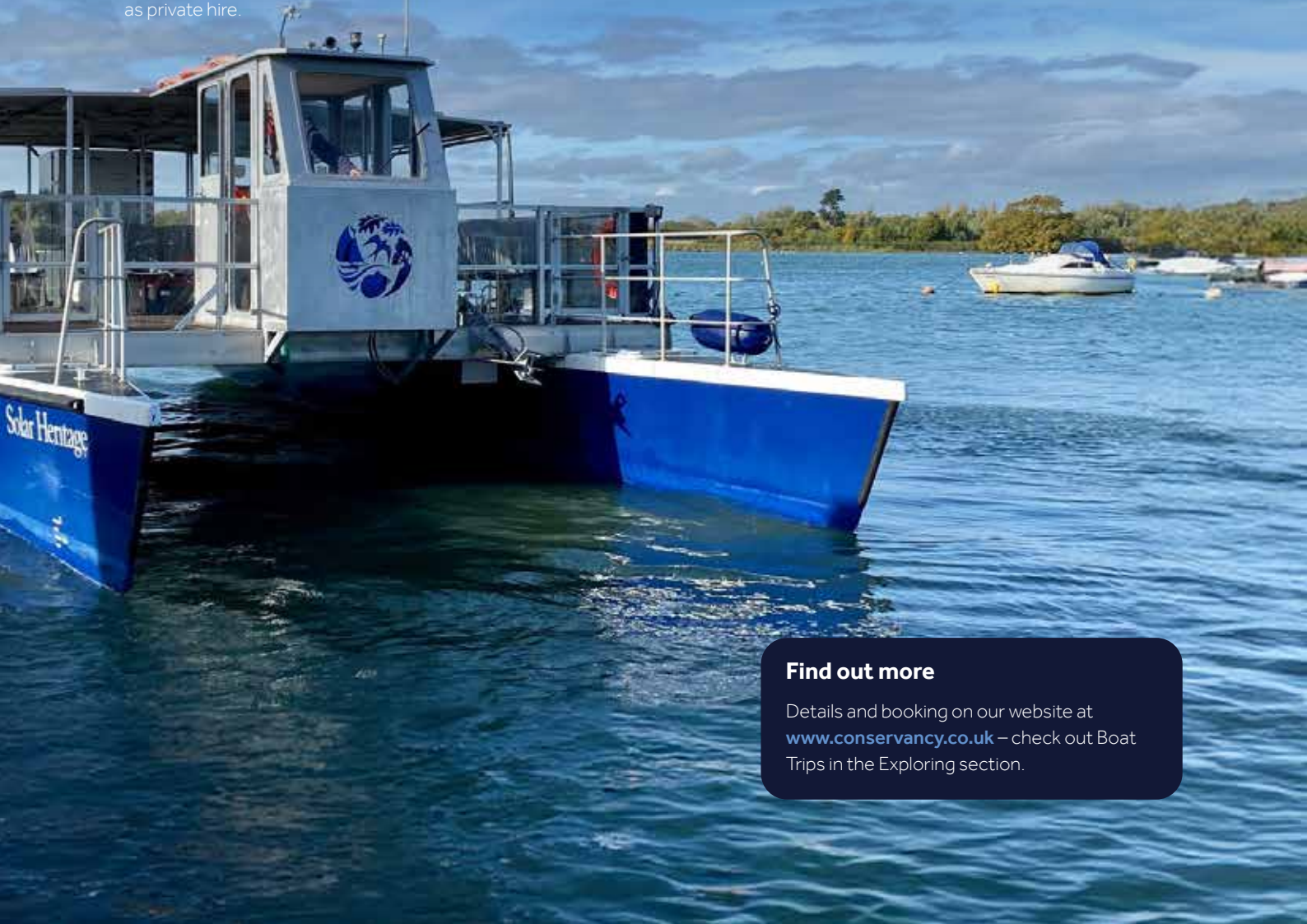
Get onboard and see Chichester Harbour from a different perspective. Choose from a relaxing Harbour Cruise onboard our eco-friendly tour boat or an amazing sailing experience on the beautifully restored 1895 Oyster Boat Terror.

Enjoy peace and tranquility

Peace and quiet is one of the first things you'll experience when you join a Harbour Cruise onboard Solar Heritage, our solar powered Catamaran tour boat.

Each sailing offers the opportunity to get great views of many of the birds and habitats that are special to the harbour. Knowledgeable guides provide commentary as you travel, and some selected trips include experts to help you spot and learn more about the birds and harbour seals. The boat is very accessible with a large, stable deck area, plenty of seating and lots of space to move around to take in the stunning views.

Trips include Discovery Cruises, Seal Safaris, Evening Music Cruises or Birdwatching trips, as well as private hire.



Find out more

Details and booking on our website at www.conservancy.co.uk – check out Boat Trips in the Exploring section.



Family Fun

Plan a family trip or treat a friend with gift vouchers or a booking. Solar Heritage and Oyster Boat Terror are also available for private hire.



Take the helm on a historic sailing boat

Join an exclusive sailing experience on the restored 1895 Oyster Boat Terror. Once used to transfer oysters ashore from larger boats in the harbour, Terror is now used exclusively for leisure sailing trips between May and September.

Trips welcome just 6 passengers at a time and last between 2 and 3 hours depending on conditions. Passengers are encouraged to experience the thrill of sailing a traditional gaff-rigged boat by taking turns at the helm.



Super Saltmarsh a Habitat Hero!

Within the shores of Chichester Harbour sits a superhero. Part land, part sea, its lower reaches obscured as the tide washes in, are swathes of SUPER SALTMARSH!

This habitat hero is fringed by mudflats; from a distance saltmarsh looks green and grassy, criss-crossed with tiny creeks. It is often overlooked by the casual observer. But our saltmarsh is a powerhouse in the fight against climate change, and that's just one of its superpowers...

Superpower #1 – Biodiversity

Saltmarsh is a haven for so many species. As well as supporting plant, insect and invertebrate life it is a nursery for young fish and shellfish, a sheltered environment for them to safely grow. Chichester Harbour is GLOBALLY important for many threatened bird species, and super saltmarsh is vital for these – providing a food source as well as safe nesting and roosting sites.

Superpower #2 – Water Quality

Saltmarsh is a natural sponge, filtering run-off from the land and reducing herbicides, pesticides and heavy metals entering the harbour. It also absorbs some of the excess nutrients coming into the harbours and estuaries where it grows.

Superpower #3 – Flood Defence

Stormy seas? Super saltmarsh takes the strain! The height of the habitat absorbs the energy of incoming waves providing natural protection to the shoreline. It's a nature-based solution to the problem of defending land from sea.

Superpower #4 – Climate Change

Saltmarsh is a superhero in the fight against climate change, locking away vast quantities of carbon each year. As well as absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, it buries or sinks carbon as new sediment is brought in on the tide. We might think of tropical forests leading the way when it comes to carbon, but one hectare of saltmarsh can store many times more carbon than the same area of tropical forest.

What a hero! But our hero is under threat... The saltmarsh within Chichester Harbour has declined by 58% since 1946 and we're losing more each year. Saltmarsh's adversaries include sea-level rise and being squeezed out by hard sea defences, but Chichester Harbour Conservancy is leading a coalition of partners working to protect and restore this habitat hero.

So next time you stroll the shores of the harbour, cast your eyes seaward to spot this green and grassy hero. Notice the birds, the plants, the rich biodiversity and reflect on just how lucky we are to have a real-life superhero in our midst!



Glasswort

A pioneering plant of saltmarshes, glasswort is often the first plant to colonise an inter-tidal area if it is high enough. Sometimes known as samphire, in the 16th century it was burned and its ashes used to make glass – hence the name glasswort.



Curlew

Many wading birds, ducks and geese spend their winters across the Solent and in Chichester Harbour, including internationally threatened species. Saltmarsh is nature's larder, providing important food sources and high tide roosts for birds like the curlew. A large wader, easily recognised by its down-curved beak, this iconic bird declined by 48% between 1995 and 2015. Protecting the wintering grounds of such birds is vital for the species survival.



Baby Sea Bass

The sheltered streamlets of saltmarshes make them ideal nursery areas for juvenile sea bass, as well as other fish species. Sea bass spend their first few years of life in these nurseries, growing up protected from predators and feeding on the abundant food supply. Incredibly, it takes 4-8 years for a bass to reach maturity, making the shelter of saltmarsh all the more important!



Sea Lavender

Throughout the summer months the upper reaches of saltmarsh may be swathed in the purple haze of sea lavender. It may not smell like the lavender grown in our gardens, but it is every bit as popular with bees, butterflies and moths. The sea lavender in saltmarshes is common sea lavender, but you can find similar species in garden centres!

The Habitats of Chichester Harbour

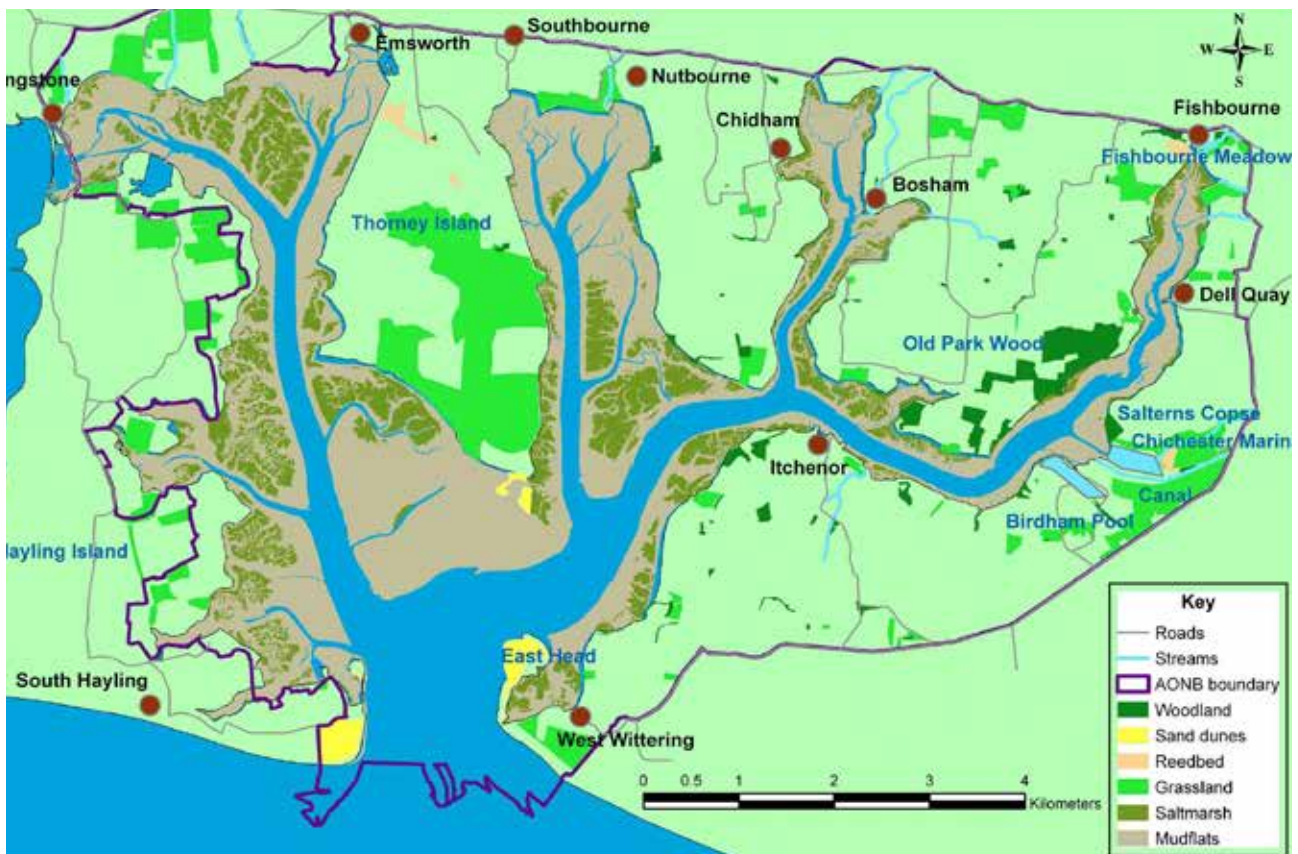
Estuaries are one of the most biologically productive habitats in the world, and Chichester Harbour National Landscape contains a unique blend of estuarine habitats.

It is for these habitats that much of the harbour has international, European, national and local protective designations including as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. These designations underline the importance of Chichester Harbour as a site for wildlife and underscore the need to protect and restore the harbour's habitats.

This map shows where you can find different habitats, from saltmarsh to sand dunes, woodlands to mudflats.

Explore the stunning habitats of Chichester Harbour on foot – visit our website for recommended walking routes.

www.conservancy.co.uk/exploring/walking





Mudflats

The receding tide exposes perhaps the most overlooked of Chichester Harbour's habitats – the mudflats. But these are not just mud, they are nature's larder, providing a vital food source for the internationally important wading bird species that spend their winters here. Ragworms, lugworms, mud shrimps and cockles all live within the mud, and one square metre may contain thousands of tiny spire shells.



Sand Dunes

Formed by sand blown into drifts and stabilised by plants like Marram Grass, sand dunes are home to a wide range of insects and invertebrates, and even lizards. They provide a nesting habitat for many bird species from Skylarks to Ringed Plover; it's important to leave these birds space to nest without disturbance from dogs and walkers.



Grassland

More than just grass, the coastal grazing marshes of Chichester Harbour feature a diverse mix of grasses and wildflowers, home to many insect species. Fringed by ditches, sometimes wet and slightly brackish they are often used to graze cattle or cut for hay and silage.



Woodland

Hundreds of years ago Chichester Harbour was surrounded by oak woodland extending down to the shoreline. Remnants of these ancient woodlands remain, a haven for biodiversity from plants and fungi to birds and mammals.



Saltmarsh

One of the most important and threatened habitats of the harbour, the super-powers of saltmarsh are detailed on the previous page.



Reedbeds

Reeds are Britain's tallest native grass, reaching heights of over two metres. Growing in fresh and sometimes brackish water, our reedbeds are home to endangered Water Voles and several shy and secretive birds, from Bearded Reedlings to Water Rails and even Bitterns.

In the Palm of your Hand

There are thousands of apps out there to help you enjoy your time in nature and on the water and enhance your experience of Chichester Harbour. We asked our team here to pick out a few of their favourites...

01 RYA SafeTrx



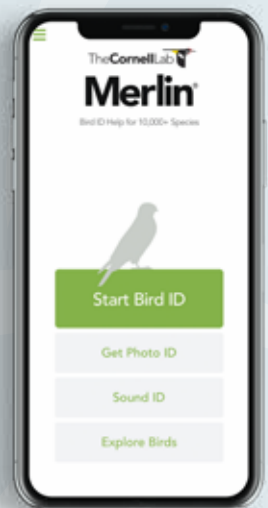
Jo, our Harbour Master recommends using the **RYA SafeTrx** app when heading out on the water. It allows you to add a sailing plan, including start and end points and ETA. It can send notifications to loved ones if you exceed your ETA and contains a wealth of useful information for mariners, including VHF channels and maritime safety messages.

02 Stargazing



With three designated Dark Skies Sites around Chichester Harbour, make the most of the night sky with the **Skyview Lite** app. Using augmented reality to identify constellations and planets - it even tracks the position of the International Space Station!

03 Birds



Our ecologist Pete swears by the **Collins Bird Guide** app. It is the keen birdwatchers go-to, with ID guides, distribution maps, song recordings and much more. If you prefer your apps free, try **Merlin Bird ID** by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Our favourite feature of this app is its ability to identify the calls of the birds around you.



04 SHARK!



The **Shark Trust** app is another one for some citizen science, and fun for all the family. The egg cases of sharks and skates are often washed up on the strand line around the harbour – spot them and take part in the Great Eggcase Hunt. The app helps you identify the egg case, and record your sightings, providing important information about species diversity and abundance.

05 Weather



Initially created for wind and water sport-lovers, the **Windy** app is now beloved of all outdoor enthusiasts. With detailed wind maps, there are 40 other layers, featuring everything from precipitation, temperature and cloud cover, to waves, dew point and humidity. Whilst we're talking about weather, here's a shout-out for **ChiMet**. A website rather than an app, it shows live meteorological conditions at the Chichester Bar – well worth checking before taking to the water.

06 what3words



Recommended by our Rangers and Harbour Patrol team, **what3words** is a location app – a quick and accurate way of communicating a precise location. The world has been divided into 3 metre squares, each with a unique combination of 3 words; the app is used by UK emergency services. Whether in trouble on the water, finding a work party meet-up point or reporting a broken fence, this is the app everyone should have on their phone.

07 Grasshoppers



It's not just birds that can be identified by the sounds they make, the **iRecord Grasshoppers** app can tell you what cricket or grasshopper is sounding off nearby. It also helps you identify earwigs, cockroaches and stick insects, and submit your recordings – citizen science to support the conservation of these species.

Small Fish, Big Pond

Surveying young fish populations
in Chichester Harbour



Every year, staff from Chichester Harbour Conservancy work with partners from Sussex Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA) and the Solent Seascape Project to survey the fish within the harbour.

An important "nursery" for many young fish species, including Sea Bass, the sheltered streamlets of the harbour's saltmarsh and mudflats provide a vital habitat for young fish to develop and grow before heading out into the open seas.

Why?

The surveys take place at the beginning and end of the Summer across four sites. They provide a snapshot of the health and diversity of fish species within the harbour, and form part of our monitoring with the Solent Seascape Project – a project aimed at Solent-wide marine and coastal restoration.

How?

First the team use a boat to fan out a 50m seine fishing net in a wide arc. This is pulled in carefully and the fish are decanted into oxygenated buckets of seawater – great care is taken to ensure they survive the surveys. The fish are then identified, counted and measured, before being released and swimming off into the harbour.

What did we find?

Last year Sand Smelts, juvenile Sea Bass and Golden Grey Mullet were amongst the most common fish surveyed. But there were some surprises and exciting finds too, including a Garfish – a long slender fish with an elongated beak-like jaw (a bit like a Swordfish). A young Cuttlefish was also found; most people know these through the chalky bones that wash up on the shore, but these molluscs are fierce predators!

The data gained from the surveys is only a snapshot but gives us an important picture as we monitor the health of the harbour, and work on the protection and restoration of the marine habitats, including saltmarsh and seagrass, that small fish depend upon.



Racing into Another Century

Chichester Harbour is home to the highest concentration of sailing clubs in the southeast; it's a haven for racing. The shelter of the harbour provides ideal conditions for novices to hone their sailing and racing skills, whilst the varying tidal flows provide a challenge for even the most seasoned of racers.

Although some sailors are content to enjoy a leisurely sail in beautiful surroundings, for many racing brings an extra level of excitement and exhilaration to the sport.

As race day dawns, anticipation starts to build... Even before arriving at the club, as a competitor you are keeping an eye on the weather and wind forecast and ensuring kit is ready to go (perhaps any last-minute repairs to whatever may have snapped last time!).

Getting a good start is key to race success. Where are the tidal flows, where are your competitors and have you chosen the best route to get the maximum speed out of your boat? Time to put that preparation to the test.

There's not long to savour the buzz of a win; the next race starts soon and the conditions could have changed completely - time for new tactics.

Racing is very social – the banter builds as you ready your boats shoreside. If there's not enough wind (or too much) you might be hanging about a bit, but there's plenty to chat about (without giving away your best tactics!). It's this shared passion that keeps sailors turning out in all weathers.

The highlight of the Chichester Harbour racing calendar takes place in August each year: The Chichester Harbour Race Week. In 2023 over 400 boats from 45 sailing clubs across the UK took part. A week of racing with competitors

from as far afield as Fort William in Scotland, as well as from all along the south coast and of course the regular racers of Chichester Harbour.

The race week is organised by the Chichester Harbour Federation, which this year celebrates its centenary. Started in 1924 with just four sailing clubs, today the Federation coordinates racing between 13 clubs as well as representing marinas, boatyards, sailing schools and associations.

Get involved

If you fancy trying your hand at racing, there are plenty of opportunities within Chichester Harbour. All of the sailing clubs and centres around the harbour offer RYA programmes from the basics to advanced racing skills. Parents and coaches introduce young sailors to the sport through 'sprint racing', with a safety boat on hand to provide encouragement and training. Many young sailors from Chichester Harbour progress through the ranks of their chosen class, taking part in national and international competitions with some pursuing their dreams to Olympic success.

Save the date!

Race Week 2024
19th - 23rd August

Find out more: www.chifed.org





“Sailing in Chichester Harbour is both a challenge and a delight. No two outings are ever the same - it’s a continuous learning curve!” Bosham sailing club member

The Secret Life of Seals

Chichester Harbour is full of surprises, perhaps chief amongst them is the fact that we are home to the largest seal population in the Solent. You may have been lucky enough to spot one, bobbing in the water or resting on the mud flats at low tide.



Spot The Difference

Each seal's coat is uniquely marked, its very own pattern of spots and blotches. Careful observation can allow us to know which individuals are regulars in the harbour haul-outs.

Grey or Harbour?

Whilst they may look the same to the untrained eye, there are two species of seal that call Chichester Harbour home, Harbour Seal and Grey Seal. Both species use the harbour to rest and recuperate, "hauling out" at low water onto the mudflats. But how do you tell the two species apart?

Harbour Seal ID:

- 'Cuter' appearance than a grey seal
- V-shaped nostrils
- Cat-like face
- Finely spotted coats



Grey Seal ID:

- Long 'Roman' nose with parallel nostrils
- Bigger than a Harbour Seal
- Distinctly marked with a blotchier coat





Diving Specialists

Harbour seals spend 90% of their time at sea diving and can dive for prolonged periods, up to between 10 and 30 minutes, reaching depths of 50m or more. Their bodies are specially adapted to the task, reducing their rate of oxygen consumption by up to 70%. This is incredible when compared with hibernating bears that reduce their rate by 25% and sleeping humans by only 10%!

Wizard Whiskers

As a fish swims through the water it creates disturbance trails, minute movements in the water. A seal's whiskers are specially adapted to sense these tiny disturbances up to 180m away, detecting the direction, distance and even the size of the fish!

Monitoring the Chichester Harbour Seals

Since 2015 there has been a co-ordinated seal count between Chichester and Langstone Harbours. Taking place monthly throughout the summer, these counts provide data about the health and numbers of the Grey and Harbour Seal populations.

Where do they go?

In 2009 five Harbour Seals from Chichester Harbour were fitted with satellite trackers in a project with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. It was found that they ranged widely across the Solent's harbours to hunt their prey with one venturing as far as Shoreham.

Grey Seals on the other hand are more pelagic, spending longer periods at sea and roaming much further up and down the length of the English Channel.

Born Ready!

Harbour Seals give birth to pups here in Chichester Harbour during June and July. Born during low tide on the mudflats, they are ready to head to sea by the next high tide, swimming and diving with their mothers. Grey seals on the other hand do not breed here; their pups are white and fluffy when born and they need three weeks on land before they're ready to go to sea.



Seal Talk

Banana-ing The shape a seal forms, like a banana, to raise its head and tail off cold wet mud to keep warm.

Bottling The shape of a seal's snout as it lies vertically in the water to snatch a brief nap.

Flushing A stampede of panicked and frightened seals as they scramble off a beach when seriously disturbed.

Haul out A place used by seals for rest, sleep and recovering strength.

Jugging The shape a seal forms when it lies on its side to keep head, tail and one bent fore-flipper (like a jug handle) out of cold water as the tide comes in.

Plump One of several collective nouns for a group of seals - a 'plump' of seals on land. Also a 'bob' of seal in the water and a 'crash' of seals - see 'flushing' above.

Rookery A place where seals haul out to have their pups.



Beauty Sleep

The time seals spend resting on the mudflats is essential to their health; they can't digest food whilst in the water, and the "haul out" is when seals get their sleep, socialise and feed their pups. Although catching a glimpse of a sleeping seal is a rare treat for any nature-lover, it is vital that we avoid disturbing them. Think how you feel when sleep-deprived, even essential tasks like getting a meal together can be hard. Unlike us humans, a seal can't pop to a shop, or order a takeaway. To hunt those fast-moving fish seals need to bring their A-game.

The Four Seasons of
**Chichester
Harbour**

**Enjoy the best of our
National Landscape
throughout the year.**



Spring

As spring arrives, take a waterside walk, cruise along a countryside cycle path or simply stop and take in the views...

Signs of Spring...

Spot the first white Blackthorn blossom appearing around Thorney Island in March followed by bursts of Hawthorn flowers in hedgerows from April. Alexanders (small yellow flowers arranged in umbels) flower alongside footpaths in early spring.

Migrating waders and water wild fowl including Whimbrel pass through in late April and early May. It's breeding time for seabirds and Sedge Warblers and Reed Warblers arriving in April.

Listen for the beautiful melodies of songbirds like Blackbirds, Robins, Song Thrush and Chaffinches as they establish territories and attract mates. Hear the distinctive 'yah' cry of the Mediterranean Gulls who are most noisy during March and April.

You may be lucky and see one of our two species of seals resting on the mud flats at low tide.

A Spring Day Out

Plan a day out and follow our 16km **Two villages and a ferry** circular walk. Walk from Bosham, around the peninsula through changing landscape, reedbeds and meadow to the harbourside at Itchenor. Catch the seasonal Itchenor ferry back across the channel.



Nature Fact

When you spot a Seal resting on the mudflats they are 'hauling-out'; this time resting is vital for them to digest their food, socialise and feed their pups.

Summer

It's a busy season on the water for visitors and for wildlife...

Signs of Summer...

Summer is a beautiful time to enjoy wildflowers all over the harbour; look out for Wild Orchids on North Common, Hayling Island, Chidham bund, Fishbourne Meadows and East Head.

Spot the tern rafts on Thorney Deepes and watch the terns as they fly back and forth. Introduced from 2019 to improve the breeding success of Common Terns, since the arrival of the rafts 149 of these seabirds have fledged in Chichester Harbour.

A Summer Day Out

Explore by kayak or paddleboard! Protected quiet harbour waters offer paddle experiences for all the family. Easy launch points and a variety of pubs and cafes to stop at along the way make a fun day out.



Nature Fact

When you see hundreds of Crab moults washed up on the shoreline, don't be concerned. These are simply 'skins' shed from Shore Crabs as they grow. They are typically found washed up during spring and summer and can number in the millions.

Nature Fact

Ancient majestic Oak trees frame the harbour. A single Oak can support over 300 different species of insects and also houses wildlife seeking food and shelter, all whilst removing pollution and carbon dioxide from the atmosphere!



Autumn

Take in the sight of spectacular autumn foliage and the start of the migration of thousands of birds to the harbour...

Signs of Autumn...

Be one of the first to spot the return of the Brent Geese! Thousands of these annual visitors overwinter here, migrating from their nesting grounds in Siberia. Coast paths around East Hayling (Mill Rithe to Mengham Rithe) are really good places to watch Brents in early autumn. Earliest arrivals come in October and they typically stay until spring half term.

Late summer to early autumn is when the water is warmest and large numbers of juvenile fish (Bass, Grey Mullet, Sand Smelt) can be encountered feeding in shallow water and creeks, attracting Mackerel to feed on them.

An Autumn Day Out

Plan a cycle to the beach along the Salterns Way; a 12 mile family friendly cycle route from the centre of Chichester to the sand dunes of East Head.

Winter

Winter marks the arrival of hundreds of wading birds who spend the season feeding on the mudflats and saltmarshes...

Signs of Winter...

It's easy to spot birds from the shore at high tide as they rest on islands, spits and upper parts of the saltmarsh or join one of our bird watching boat trips and learn from the experts.

Download a wildlife App to help identify birds by their calls. Find Grey Heron, Little Egrets, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Dunlin, Avocet Oystercatcher and Grey Plover.

Enjoy the night sky! There are three Dark Sky Discovery Sites designated in Chichester Harbour including north of the footpath in West Itchenor and at Maybush Copse in Chidham. Plan your stargazing when there is no bright moon at night as the skies will be at their darkest.

A Winter Day Out

It can be a challenge to find a mud-free family winter walk! Try a stroll round Hayling Seafront to black point. If you go on a Sunday morning you might see the RNLI lifeboat practice. After a stormy night, head to the beach and look for shells washed up.



Nature Fact

Six different species of bats live around the harbour. Bats hibernate during winter when food is scarce, to conserve energy. They often pick hibernation roosts in old buildings or the eaves of houses.

Nature Recovery Needs People

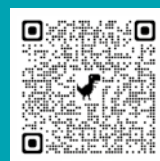
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