



What did you do before the Lighthouse ?

Before starting my PhD, I worked as a research assistant for a number of years at the Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU) in St Andrews. I first came to SMRU in 2014 to start an MSc in Marine Mammal Science. For my master's thesis, I worked with Dr Lars Boehme investigating the winter distribution of Weddell seals in Antarctica. After I graduated, I worked on a number of grey seal photo-ID projects with Dr Paddy Pomeroy and I then began working for the Harbour Seal Decline Project with Dr Mònica Arso Civil.

What are you doing at the Lighthouse ?

My PhD is funded through the SUPER Doctoral Training Partnership and I am supervised by Dr Debbie Russell, Dr Gordon Hastie and Prof Phil Hammond based at SMRU, Prof Paul Thompson from the Lighthouse Field Station, and Dr Andrew Brownlow from the Scottish Marine Animal Strandings Scheme. I am investigating the ecological interactions between grey and harbour seals to better understand the potential role that grey seals have played in the harbour seal decline. I am analysing diet and movement data to investigate the species' niche characteristics through time, and strandings information to quantify the extent of grey seal-inflicted mortality.

What advice would you give someone who wants to follow in your footsteps ?

Try not to feel rushed into starting a PhD; spend some time exploring your interests and working with different people/research groups. This is a great way to work out what you want to specialise in and gives you an opportunity to build your research skills. Also, don't be afraid to discuss ideas with colleagues and mentors during this time – this will not only improve your research, but it will also help you to feel more confident in your ideas.



Izzy Langley
PhD student • 2019 - present

