



### What did you do before the Lighthouse ?

I studied Zoology at Leeds University followed by an MSc in Biological Photography & Imaging. I worked at the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) processing aerial images of fur seals in South Georgia and I've been fortunate enough to visit St Kilda 3 times as a fieldworker. First assisting a PhD student studying the St Kilda mice and later for the University of Edinburgh's Soay Sheep Project. It was on this very remote island where I established my love of fieldwork and the practical side of science. Here, I learnt from another women in science, Jill Pilkington. I gained so many valuable skills in the field, accurate data collecting, teamwork, and how to keep a smile on your face when you are out in the cold and wet, during a Scottish winter. All skills that have been transferable into my current role.

### What do you do at the Lighthouse ?

My last contract at BAS had just come to an end when I heard about a 4-month summer fieldwork job at the Lighthouse and relocated from rural Norfolk to the small village of Cromarty. (Cromarty, that's just past Edinburgh, right!?)

My role was to continue collecting photo-ID data for the Loch Fleet harbour seal study which has been going since 2006. Line Cordes, introduced me to the seals and showed me the ropes. I recognise the individual seals from their pelage patterns, allowing us to keep track of them over the years providing information on demographic trends. Add in some seal GPS tagging and we can look at their foraging and movement behaviour. Fast track a few years and I have completed 10 pupping seasons and my brain is full of seal mugshots. This year we are excited to adapt our data collection methods in response to the seals changing haulout behaviour.

We are a small team, but it means you get amazing opportunities to help with other projects and build your skillset. There is a lot going on at the Lighthouse and I've participated in all aspects of the different fieldwork projects. It's not all glam, there is a lot that happens before and after to make these long-term projects a success!

I love my time in the field and on the water and in recent years I've been joined by a (mostly) well behaved assistant, however, she always refuses to carry any kit.

### What was the most valuable thing you learnt at the Lighthouse ?

I value the team I work with. Those that have come and gone and those that are still here. Learning from others and sharing your skills with others. Paul and the team have given me many opportunities and support. I feel grateful I work with a passionate team I value, respect, see as friends, and who like to row with me and share a good coffee down at our favourite spot. Little did I know that a 4-month summer job in 2012 would lead to nearly 10 years, and counting, as part of the Lighthouse Team and part of the vibrant Cromarty community I now call home. Think outside the box and take the opportunity, even if it seems a little scary at the time, you never know where it could take you.



# Rebecca Hewitt

Technician & Research Assistant • 2012 - present

