

[Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture, 30 August 2015](#)

Cecil the Seal Killers Named & Shamed in Scotland - Call for Boycott of "Seal Unfriendly" Scottish Salmon

Scottish salmon's serial seal-killers are finally named and shamed today (30 August) following a three-year battle with the salmon farming industry and Scottish Government [1]. Data obtained via Freedom of Information for 2013-2014 [reveals](#) [2]:

- Over half (51%) of active salmon farms in Scotland killed at least one seal and almost a quarter (23%) killed at least two seals
- Shetland is the most lethal region representing almost half (49%) of seal killings following by Orkney (15%), Argyll & Bute (14%), Highland (11%) and Outer Hebrides (11%)
- The most deadly salmon farm is Hjaltland/Grieg's salmon farm at East Voe Laxfirth in Shetland followed by Scottish Seafarms' salmon farm at Veantrow Bay in Orkney
- Norwegian-owned companies Scottish Seafarms (Leroy/Salmar) and Hjaltland Seafarms (Grieg Seafood) are the most deadly companies
- Scottish Seafarms killed 56 seals during 2013 and 2014 - almost a third (32%) of all seals killed by salmon farms in Scotland
- Other trigger-happy salmon farmers include the Scottish Salmon Company, Marine Harvest, "organic" producer Balta Island Seafare, Meridian/Cooke, Bound Skerries Seafood, Loch Duart and Wester Ross Fisheries

The Top 10 seal-killing salmon farm sites (2013 to January 2015*) are:

- #1: East Voe Laxfirth, Shetland (Hjaltland/Grieg) - 24
- #2: Veantrow Bay, Shapinsay, Orkney (Scottish Seafarms): 13
- #3: West of Balta Island, Shetland (Balta Island Seafare): 7
- #4 =: South Voe of Gletness, Shetland (Hjaltland/Grieg): 6
- #4=: Bellister, Shetland (Scottish Seafarms): 6
- #6 =: Gometra, Isle of Mull, Argyll & Bute (Scottish Salmon Company): 5*
- #6 =: Loura Voe, Shetland (Scottish Seafarms): 5
- #6 =: Taranaish, Loch Roag, Isle of Lewis (Scottish Salmon Company): 5
- #6 =: West Voe, Shetland (Bound Skerries Seafood): 5
- #10 =: Grunna Voe, Shetland (Scottish Seafarms): 4
- #10 =: Ardchattan Bay, Loch Etive, Argyll & Bute (Dawnfresh): 4
- #10 =: Toyness, Scapa Flow, Orkney (Scottish Seafarms): 4

* Some data for January 2015 was made available by the Scottish Government. GAAIA filed a FOI request on 24 August 2015 requesting all seal-killing data for 2015 (a reply is expected in late September 2015).

Read more via:

["Media Backgrounder: Scottish Salmon's Serial Seal Killers"](#)

["Appendix: Companies, Regions & Sites"](#)

["Appendix: Source Data - Seal Killing Return Forms Submitted by Salmon Farms"](#)

The data disclosure also reveals that the vast majority of dead seals go unreported and decaying corpses are rarely recovered or collected. In fact, out of 173 seals killed by salmon

farms in 2013 and 2014 only 19 carcasses (11%) were reported, 16 carcasses recovered (9%) and only one carcass (<1%) collected via the [Scottish Marine Animal Strandings Scheme](#).

"Scottish salmon is dripping with the blood of dozens of seals," said Don Staniford, Director of the [Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture](#). "Shamefully, there are dozens of Cecil the Seal corpses left to rot around the coast of Scotland. Don't be a zombie shopper - don't buy farmed and dangerous Scottish salmon!"

"Thanks to the [Scottish Information Commissioner](#) the public can read all the gory details for the first time and boycott seal unfriendly Scottish salmon," continued Staniford. "Salmon farmers may be armed with guns but the public has an even more powerful weapon - [Freedom of Information](#). The process of naming and shaming has forced the industry to reduce the killing of seals. People power can eventually force a complete ceasefire and bring seal killing at salmon farms down to zero."



[Photo of a dead seal killed near a Marine Harvest salmon farm in Loch Alsh - download image [online here](#)]

Due to [rulings made by the Scottish Information Commissioner](#) in July 2015, the Scottish Government was forced last week (21 August 2015) to disclose the damaging data to the [Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture](#) (250 PDFs in a 10 MB Zip file are available via Dropbox - email dstaniford@gaaia.org).

In an earlier Decision in 2012 ([193/2012](#)) the Scottish Information Commissioner also ordered Scottish Ministers to disclose information about the numbers of seals killed at salmon farms. However, in early 2014 the Scottish Government stopped publishing site specific data claiming disclosure threatened the health and safety of salmon farm workers.

Following an appeal by GAAIA: "The Commissioner concluded there was insufficient evidence from Ministers of an increased threat to public safety if the information about seal shootings at salmon farms carried out under licence was disclosed," stated the SIC in a [press release](#) (7 July 2015). "The Commissioner ordered the information be disclosed."

The release of the data is viewed as commercially sensitive by the industry and a threat to the market success of Scottish salmon. Hjalmland Seafarms (owned by the Norwegian multinational Grieg Seafood) even mark seal-killing return forms submitted to the Scottish Government as "[Strictly Confidential - Commercially Sensitive Information](#)" [3].

Licence Number		Name on Licence			Date of Return				
S07/2012/W/02		Hjalmland Seafarms			08/02/2013				
DSFB/Netting Station/Fish Farm Registration/Other	Date	Time	Location*	Seals Shot			Carcase Recovery		
				Common	Grey	Unidentified	Recovered ¹	Reported ²	Collected ³
FS0447	19/02/2013	1200	HU374378		1				
FS1099	03/02/2013	1215	HU466507		1				
FS1099	09/02/2013	1540	HU466507		1				
FS1099	14/02/2013	0730	HU466507		1				
FS1099	19/02/2013	0815	HU466507		1				
FS1099	19/02/2013	0730	HU466507		1				
FS1099	23/02/2013	0800	HU466507		1				
FS0333	04/02/2013	0900	HU449482		1				
FS0333	10/02/2013	0730	HU449482		1				
FS0333	12/02/2013	0800	HU449482		1				
FS0333	17/02/2013	0715	HU449482		1				
FS0333	18/02/2013	0800	HU449482		1				
FS0333	22/02/2013	1645	HU449482		1				
FS0333	24/02/2013	0715	HU449482		1				

The Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation [admitted in a letter to the Scottish Government dated 2012](#) (obtained via FOI) that naming individual salmon farms killing seals would "directly impact...the market success of their products" (i.e. people would stop buying farmed salmon sourced from seal-killing salmon farms) [4].

GAAIA today (30 August 2015) wrote to the US Department of Commerce calling for a ban on imports of Scottish farmed salmon sourced from seal-killing salmon farms. GAAIA also wrote to supermarkets (including Marks & Spencer who source exclusively from Scottish Seafarms), the Aquaculture Stewardship Council/WWF, the Soil Association and RSPCA Assured/Freedom Food asking them to publicly pledge to stop sourcing and certifying seal unfriendly Scottish salmon by 30 September 2015. Read the letters online via:

- [Letter to US Department of Commerce](#)
- [Letter to Supermarkets](#)
- [Letter to Aquaculture Stewardship Council/WWF](#)
- [Letter to Soil Association](#)
- [Letter to RSPCA Assured/Freedom Food](#)

In October 2015 in the run up to Halloween, GAAIA will be organising a series of "[Zombie Seal](#)" protests outside UK supermarkets and the head office of RSPCA Assured/Freedom Food (who certify 70% of Scottish salmon farms as welfare friendly). Seal corpses will also

be returned to salmon farming companies and Scottish Government agents responsible for issuing seal-killing licences (more details will be available soon [online here](#)).

"Next time you're at the checkout, how do you know that the salmon in your basket isn't essentially drenched in seal blood?" said actor Martin Shaw in an interview with [The Sunday Times in May 2013](#). "The best thing you can do to end this bloodshed is to simply boycott this intensive and cruel industry."

"When you buy Scottish salmon you pay for bullets to shoot seals," said John Robins, Secretary to the [Save Our Seals Fund](#) in a [press release in May 2013](#).

"It's shocking that the vast majority of seal carcasses are not even reported let alone recovered or collected via the Scottish Marine Animal Stranding Scheme," continued Staniford. "No wonder the salmon farming industry and Scottish Government wanted to keep the information dead and buried. The gory image of zombie seal corpses stagnating with gaping bullet wounds is hardly an appealing advert for Tourism Scotland or Scottish salmon. Cecil the Seal corpse will haunt this lethal industry until it removes guns and installs predator nets."

"The data you have from Marine Scotland is likely to be as good as it gets," said Dr. Andrew Brownlow of the [Scottish Marine Animal Strandings Scheme](#) in an email to GAAIA (25 August 2015). "All seals shot under management licences have to be reported to Marine Scotland and they issue the returns you have. As pathologists, we try to encourage the marksmen to report cases to us as well. This enables us to arrange for the carcass to be examined to assess if the animal had been shot correctly, i.e. that death was likely almost instantaneous, and to assess stomach contents. In reality we get a very small number of carcasses reported to us, so there is very likely to be an under-reporting issue here. There is no legal requirement for carcasses to be recovered, so we rely on the marksmen and their employers to agree to assist, rather than being able to demand cases under any statute."

After seal corpses were washed up in Shetland in 2010, the Shetland News [reported](#):

"Award winning Shetland wildlife tour operator Jonathan Wills said that seals were worth more to the islands alive than dead because they attracted so much interest from tourists. "This is very, very bad publicity. We are trying to sell Shetland as a place where we live in harmony with the wildlife, where we have a successful fishing and fish farming industry without harming wildlife," he said. Australian tourist Michelle Hinde, who was taking photographs of seals on Dr Wills' boat Dunter III, said she was shocked by the news of the deaths. "We came here to see a pristine environment and a community living in harmony with its wildlife," she said."

Tourist operator Nigel Smith, who runs a wildlife watching boat company off the Isle of Skye, has [long campaigned](#) against the killing of seals by [Marine Harvest in Loch Alsh](#).

"Two headless seal corpses have been discovered close to a salmon farm at Kyle of Lochalsh," reported [BBC News](#) in 2008. "Nigel Smith, who runs a wildlife watching tourism company, found the seal corpses: "Tourists on board my boat who saw these decapitated seals were appalled and amazed that seals can be killed in Scotland. "Many people are totally unaware that the fish farming and fishing companies are currently allowed to kill as many seals as they want. This killing is damaging my business and has the potential to affect many other businesses in coastal communities."

Here's more photos of dead seals killed near Marine Harvest's salmon farm in Loch Alsh:



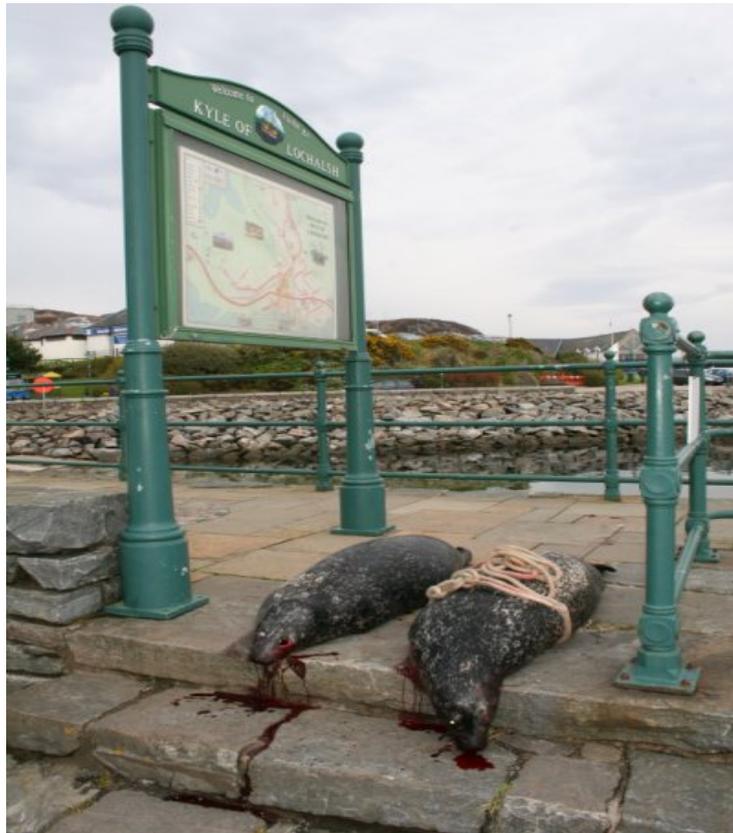
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In 2011, Nigel Smith along with Sea Shepherd's Paul Watson and other animal rights activists and environmentalists around the world signed a [letter to the U.S. Department of Commerce](#) calling for a ban on imports of Scottish salmon sourced from seal-killing salmon farms. Under the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act it [appears illegal](#) for consumers in the United States to buy salmon from farms where seals have been shot. Given that the United States is the biggest export market for Scottish farmed salmon it is not surprising that the Scottish salmon farming industry has strongly lobbied the Scottish Government against disclosure.

"Better be seal-safe than sorry and boycott all Scottish salmon - even [RSPCA Assured/Freedom Food](#) and [ASC-certified](#) farmed salmon which sanction the slaughter of seals," concluded Staniford. "It is shameful that the Scottish salmon farming industry continues to kill seals and shocking that supermarkets still source seal-unfriendly farmed salmon. Sadly, the majority of consumers are unaware that both the [RSPCA Assured/Freedom Food](#) and the [Aquaculture Stewardship Council](#) certification schemes permit the killing of seals. Installing predator nets at salmon farms is more expensive than bullets but it is a price worth paying for seal-friendly salmon."

A 2011/2012 survey of salmon farms by the Scottish Government found that 87% of salmon farms do not even use predator nets - belying the salmon farming industry's claim that seals are shot only as a "last resort" [4].

Read more via GAAIA's "[Killing Farms](#)" and Don Staniford's blog "[The Killers](#)"

Contacts:

Don Staniford (GAAIA): dstaniford@gaaia.org (email to arrange a phone call - currently in Canada)

John Robins (Save Our Seals Fund): 07721 605521

Notes to Editors:

[1] Read more on the three-year FOI battle via:

[Media Splash for Seal-Killing Salmon Farms!](#)

[VICTORY: Disclosure of Seal-Killing Salmon Farm Data Ordered by 21 August](#)

[Landmark Rulings on Seal-Killing Salmon Farms](#)

[D Day for Seal-Killing Salmon Farms](#)

[Scottish Salmon's Secret Seal Killers!- FOI refusal prompts call for boycott of farmed salmon](#)

[Lethal Scottish Farmed Salmon: Serial Seal Killers Named & Shamed!](#)

[Victory for freedom of information: seal killers in Scotland named and shamed by 7 May](#)

[Scottish Salmon's Seal Killers Named & Shamed!](#)

Key News Coverage:

["Mark Smith: A right to know who is guilty of barbarity"](#) (The Herald, 9 July 2015)

["Campaigners welcome ruling on seal shooting disclosure"](#) (BBC News, 8 July 2015)

["Fish farms which shoot seals can be named, commissioner has ruled"](#) (The National, 8 July 2015)

["Salmon farms that slaughter protected seals to be 'named and shamed' after landmark ruling"](#) (The Independent, 7 July 2015)

["WATCH: Shocking moment marksman shoots dead seal in cold blood"](#) (Daily Express, 23 June 2015)
["Mass seal slaughter as RSPCA opts to protect fish farms"](#) (Daily Telegraph, 13 April 2015)
["Hundreds of seals are secretly being shot along British coasts: Cubs left to starve after mothers are slaughtered to protect farmed fish stocks"](#) (Daily Mail, 7 April 2015)
["Outrage as hundreds of seals secretly slaughtered by Britain's fish farming industry"](#) (The Daily Mirror, 6 April 2015)
["End Secrecy Over Seal Deaths"](#) (The Sunday Times, 24 August 2014)
["Seal campaigners call for salmon farm cull"](#) (The Sunday Times, 12 May 2013)
["Scottish government ordered to name seal-shooting salmon farms"](#) (The Sunday Herald, 28 April 2013)
["U-turn on naming fish farms that shoot seals"](#) (The Sunday Herald, 13 January 2013)
["Government ordered to reveal secret seal shooters"](#) (The Sunday Herald, 2 December 2012)

[2] For further analysis and source data read:

["Media Backgrounder: Scottish Salmon's Serial Seal Killers"](#)
["Appendix: Companies, Regions & Sites"](#)
["Appendix: Source Data - Seal Killing Return Forms Submitted by Salmon Farms"](#)

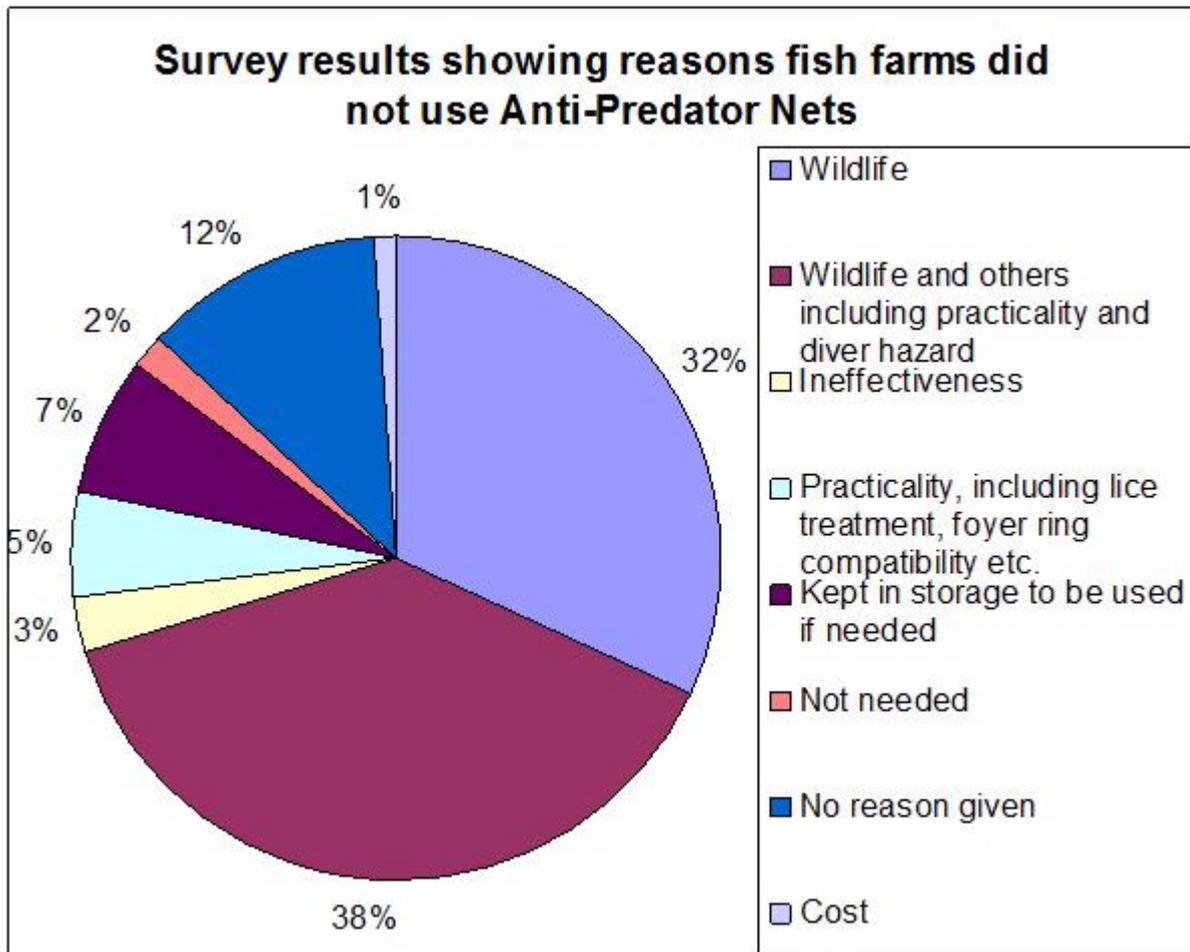
[3] Hjaltland Seafarms (Grieg Seafood) - unsuccessfully it turns out thanks to the [SIC's Decisions](#) - marked various return forms "Strictly Confidential - Commercially Sensitive Information" (download [online here](#) and [online here](#)).

[4] In 2012, the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO) argued in a letter to the Scottish Government (obtained via FOI) that disclosure of the names of salmon farms killing seals would "have a direct impact....on the market success of their products" (download the letter in full [online here](#)).

[5] Here's details of a Scottish Government survey (released following a FOI request) - read [online here](#):

2011/12 Survey - Anti-Predator Nets

A total of 13% of fish farms actively use anti-predator nets and a further 7% have anti-predator nets in storage, making 20% in total (36 out of 175 responses). A number of reasons were offered for not using such nets but the most significant by far at 70% was related either solely or partly to possible impacts on wildlife. It should be noted that properly installed and maintained high-tension seal exclusion nets should not harm seals or other marine mammals. However this requires employing extra trained staff and regular net maintenance and cleaning which costs money and eats into profit margins.



“These damning figures blow the industry’s claim that seals are only shot as a ‘last resort’ out of the water,” said Don Staniford, Director of the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture in a [press release](#) in September 2012. “The bloody truth is that 4 out of 5 salmon farms do not even have predator nets and are killing seals unnecessarily.”

Read more via "[Fish Farms in Shooting Seals Row](#)" and "[Scottish Salmon’s Lethal Seal of Disapproval - 87% of farms fails to install predator exclusion nets](#)"