Breeding male grey seals exhibit similar activity budgets across varying exposures to human activity

Running Head: Male gray seal activity budgets

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Human-wildlife interactions can be incidental or direct through activities such as wildlife-tourism. In the presence of anthropogenic activities, some animals exhibit behavioural alterations such as increased vigilance or spatial displacement. Thus, chronic exposure could be adverse to individual fitness through loss of energy or time. Pinnipeds are exposed to human activities in the aquatic environment and on land, but the degree of exposure varies across a species' geographic distribution. For example, breeding colonies of grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) along the mainland coast of England are exposed to anthropogenic disturbance in the forms of tourism and military activities; however, many offshore colonies are relatively undisturbed. Due to the recent expansion of mainland colonies, the impacts of human presence during the breeding season are of urgent interest for managers. Therefore, the aim of this study was to test for any behavioural adjustments associated with anthropogenic presence by comparing the activity budgets of individual male grey seals at a mainland colony, with activity budgets from two isolated colonies. We found no evidence of differences in the male activity budgets for time spent in Non-Active behaviours across colonies, and of the three colonies, males on the mainland spent the least amount of time Alert. This indicates that as capital breeders, selection for conservation of energy is potentially overriding short-term costs of local stressors or that males at the mainland colony have habituated to the human presence. We further provide discussion of the management implications of our findings. *[Keywords: wildlife tourism, Halichoerus grypus, behaviour, conservation, management]*

INTRODUCTION

Human population growth has been associated with increased human-wildlife interactions (Treves & Karnth 2003, Converse et al. 2005), particularly in coastal regions. According to the United States 2011 census, in 2010 coastal counties accounted for < 10 % of land area (excluding Alaska), but 39% of the population; a 39% increase since 1970 (US census data; NOAA). This overlap of human and wildlife spatial usage in coastal regions drives unintentional interactions such as manatee strikes (Jett et al. 2013) or fisheries bycatch (Lewison et al. 2014), but also can promote intentional interactions such as wildlife-tourism (Hardiman & Burgin 2010, Velando & Munilla 2011, Curtin 2013, Le Boeuf & Campagna 2013, Mustika et al. 2013). Marine wildlife tourism is a multi-million dollar industry world-wide. For example, in 2010 reports from Scotland indicated that marine wildlife tourism had a net economic impact of around £65M (equivalent to$110M US; SGSR 2010). In most cases, organized wildlife tourism operates under the ethos of sustainable, non-invasive and conservation-minded wildlife viewing and the public responds positively to these measures (Ballantyne et al. 2009, Le Boeuf & Campagna 2013). To ensure sustainability, many government organizations, non-profit organizations or associations of tour operators work with scientists to generate self-enforced viewing guidelines (Hoover-Miller et al. 2013). However, even when ecotourism is promoted under such 'best intentions', critics argue that there is a potential for cumulative adverse effects to animals' fitness from these activities (Duffus & Dearden 1990, Williams et al. 2006, Catlin et al. 2011, Christiansen et al. 2013).

One group of animals which has high exposure to human interactions is the phocid seals. Species within this group face exposure to human activities at sea while foraging (Skeate et al. 2012) and on land during breeding, moulting and resting periods (Perry et al. 2002, Curtin et al. 2009, Le Boeuf & Campagna 2013, Granquist & Sigurjonsdottir 2014). Many studies have focused on determining the effects of disturbance during critical periods such as pupping or moulting. Altered behavioural states during these times could be placing an energetic cost on seals resulting in long-term repercussions or a reduction in fitness (Suryan & Harvey 1999, Lewis & Matthews 2000, Perry et al. 2002, Engelhard et al. 2002, Stevens & Boness 2003, Curtin et al. 2009, Granquist & Sigurjonsdottir

59   2014). At sea, disturbances can lead to lost foraging opportunities and/or increased energetic costs

60   through physiological or behavioural alterations associated with avoidance behaviours (Williams et al.

61   2006, Christiansen et al. 2013). As capital breeders, the potential for increased energy expenditure due

62   to disturbance while on land is also important to consider, as most phocids are energetically limited

63   during their time ashore to reserves previously gained during the foraging season. For males in

64   particular, the ability to prolong the length of stay on the colony during fasting is strongly correlated

65   with mating and reproductive success (Twiss 1991, Lidgard et al. 2004, Twiss et al. 2006) and any

66   disturbances during these discrete life history periods could lead to reduced individual fitness. How

67   individuals respond to disturbances, whether on land or at sea, will likely be determined by the

68   ecological landscape, level of exposure to tourism activities, and individual differences in tolerance to

69   disturbances (Bejder et al. 2009, Bennett et al. 2013, Christiansen et al. 2013, Christiansen et al.

70   2015).

71   Grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) are a species of phocid which occupies a wide geographic

72   range, breeds across a variety of substrates, and demonstrates variability in behaviours in response to

73   topography and weather, across and within sites (Boness 1984, Anderson & Fedak 1985, Twiss 1991,

74   Lawson 1993). Many of the studies investigating the ecology and behaviour of this species have been

75   conducted on populations breeding on offshore islands in remote places such as northern Scotland

76   (e.g. North Rona and the Monach Islands, Fig 1) or Eastern Canada (Sable Island, Fig 1). However,

77   since the mid-1990s, there has been a remarkable expansion of grey seal breeding distributions along

78   the eastern, mainland coast of England and a parallel expansion south along the eastern US coast

79   (Duck &Morris 2010, NEFSC 2010). As such, haul-out sites and breeding colonies now persist in

80   areas of greater human densities, such as around the Thames Estuary near London (Barker et al.

81   2014). One such breeding colony is Donna Nook; located on the mainland coast of England just south

82   of the Humber Estuary (53.47°N, 0.15°E) (Fig 1). The site is managed as a part of the Lincolnshire

83   Wildlife Trust's wildlife refuge system and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) air force

84   training range. Since the mid-1990s, the colony has experienced rapid population growth with pup

85   production increasing at rates of 5-40% between 1990 and 2014 (Duck & Morris 2010). As a

86   mainland colony, Donna Nook is exposed to various levels of anthropogenic activity. The northern

87   section of the colony is open to public viewing access. Visitors gather during the breeding season to

88   view and photograph the seals but physical contact with and proximity to the seals is restricted by a

89   wooden double fence and by Wildlife Trust wardens. Due to the presence of the DIO base, the

90   southern extent of the colony is off limits to visitor access, and human presence is limited to

91   operational necessities. Throughout the breeding season, on weekdays, the colony as a whole is

92   exposed to anthropogenic noise from military training exercises, usually consisting of periodic jet or

93   helicopter flyovers.

94   Humans and human activities are often a part of the ecological system in which grey seal

95   foraging and breeding occurs. Studying the behaviours of animals can reveal how this aspect of the

96   environment influences behavioural choices and ultimately impacts fitness. Previous studies

97   investigating the effects of human activities on grey seal behaviours have focused on non-terrestrial

98   forms of disturbance; either noise-pollution (Perry et al. 2002) or vessel-based viewing platforms

99   (Curtin et al. 2009, Strong & Morris 2010) and the results are inconclusive. For example, Curtin et al.

100   (2009) found that, when wildlife viewing vessels were in close proximity, groups of grey seals (mixed

101   age and sex-classes) at a haul-out site exhibited greater rates of alert behaviours. In contrast, Perry et

102   al. (2002) found no evidence that adult male or female grey seals were responding behaviourally to

103   sonic booms during the breeding season. These differences could represent changes in behavioural

104   patterns across life history stages (breeding vs. non-breeding) (Pavez et al. 2014); however, both of

105   these examples focused on a single breeding or haul-out location and tested for acute response/no-

106   response effects of anthropogenic activities. Our aim was to extend the scope of such questions by

107   utilizing data from across the geographic range of the grey seal to encompass as much of the natural

108   variation in the behavioural ecology of this species as possible.

109   To do this, we compared activity budgets of males breeding on a mainland colony to males at

110   colonies with historically little to no human presence and examined if there appeared to be any cross-

111   sectional behavioural indication of disturbance from terrestrial-based, anthropogenic activities.

112   Studies from other animal systems have suggested that the presence of anthropogenic activities,

113   including wildlife tourism, can increase the amount of time animals spend in vigilance and anti-

114   predator behaviours within a population (Frid & Dill 2002, Holcomb et al. 2009, Côté et al. 2013).

115 Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) in the presence of tourism boats had reduced amounts of

116 time and number of bouts of resting and socializing (Lusseau 2003), harbour porpoises (*Phocoena*

117 *phocoena*) exposed to geological seismic surveying noise showed reduced vocalizations (Pirotta et al.

118 2014), and caribou herds (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) in the presence of tourists were found to spend

119 more time vigilant and standing at the expense of time spent resting (Duchesne et al. 2000). Based on

120 these patterns, if seals at Donna Nook are exhibiting chronic anti-predator disturbance behaviours, we

121 might assume individuals to be more active or vigilant across a breeding season than individuals from

122 the more remotely located colonies. To test our hypothesis, we compared activity budgets for males at

123 Donna Nook to males at North Rona and Sable Island (Twiss 1991); both of which are offshore

124 colonies where the only human presence during the breeding season is associated with research.

125 Specifically, we predict that time males spend in Non-Active behaviours will be lowest and time spent

126 alert will be greatest at Donna Nook in comparison to males at North Rona and Sable Island.

127

128 **METHODS**

129 *Description of breeding colonies*

130   Donna Nook is characterized by tidally influenced, estuarine topography. To the north, tidal

131 marshes transition into a mixture of grassy dunes, muddy wallows and man-made paths consisting of

132 primarily tamped sand. The remainder, and vast majority, of the colony is a sand-flat with little to no

133 topographic variation or vegetation. The entire colony is bordered on the south/western extent by high

134 dunes and thick vegetation. During the breeding season, two aggregations form: the outer aggregation

135 along the shoreline and the inner, or main, breeding aggregation which is distributed farther landward

136 with clustering near the dune-line. Seals often use tidal channels to move from the sea to locations

137 across the sand flats. Sable Island (Canada) is topographically most similar to Donna Nook in some

138 places. It is characterized by relatively unrestricted access and broad expanses of uniform flat sand

139 around the periphery. Intricate dune assemblages occur centrally along some parts of the island

140 (Boness & James 1979, Twiss 1991, Twiss et al. 1994). In contrast, North Rona has variable elevation

141 up to 108m (Twiss 1991). On the western coast, the high cliffs offer no access points and seals must

142   access the breeding colony from four main gullies located on the eastern side. Once on the main

143   breeding grounds, the vegetation is predominantly grassland interspersed with permanent and

144   ephemeral freshwater pools, erratic stones and remnants of dry stone walls (Anderson et al. 1975,

145   Twiss 1991, Twiss et al. 1994, Pomeroy et al. 1994).

146   *Donna Nook general data collection*

147   Field observations were conducted during all daylight hours (mean = 8h 48min daily) across

148   two autumn breeding seasons from 3 November to 12 December in 2011, and from 27 October – 12

149   December in 2012. The breeding colony was split into two study sites to cover the range of

150   topography: the PUB site with grassy dunes and mud wallows (53.476°N, 0.155°E) and the RAF site

151   which was primarily comprised of sand flats (53.474°N, 0.155°E). Males in the study area were

152   identified daily via unique pelage markings or *post-hoc* from high resolution pictures taken with a

153   Canon EOS 30D or 40D with a 100-400mm lens (Twiss et al. 1994, Bishop et al. 2014) at distances

154   ranging from 10 – 180 m, yielding a total of 183 males identified in 2011 and 140 males in 2012.

155   Estimated visitation numbers for Donna Nook were provided by the Lincolnshire Wildlife

156   Trust (*personal correspondence*: R. Lidstone-Scott). This included the number of visitors per day on

157   the weekend and a total for visitors over the 5 consecutive weekdays in 2011 and 2012, and the total

158   number of visitors each year since 1993. Differences in weekend visitor attendance between the two

159   years of the present study were tested for using a t-test and differences in total weekday visitors per

160   week across years were compared using a Mann-Whitney U test due to small samples sizes.

161   *Male activity budgets*

162   An ethogram was generated to allow comparisons between this study and previously

163   conducted behavioural assessments of male grey seals (Table 1S: Boness & James 1979, Anderson &

164   Fedak 1985, Twiss 1991, Lawson 1993, Twiss et al. 1998). The primary observer conducted

165   instantaneous scan sampling of all identified males at five minute intervals while in the field (Altmann

166   1974, Twiss 1991). The order in which males had their behaviours recorded was consistent between

167   scans. Although throughout the season a range of 5-20 males could be sampled at a time, even when

168   peak numbers were scanned, the process of recording all males' behaviours took less than 1min (mean

169 = 50s)). Both of these considerations ensured that the interval between any given male's samples was

170 consistent at 5min. Activity budgets were then calculated from the scan samples to quantify the

171 proportion of time each male spent in the distinct behavioural categories; in particular, time spent

172 Alert (Table 1S). Some specific behaviours, such as attempted copulation, comprise a small

173 percentage of the total activity budget and are not as informative for discerning potential effects of

174 disturbance. Therefore, for this study some behaviours were combined in order to investigate the

175 percentage of time spent in the broad behavioural categories of Non-Active (Rest + Alert) and Active

176 (all other behaviours). The time spent in Aggression and Reproductive activities was also calculated

177 as the combined time spent in specific behaviours (as noted in Table 1S).

178   Many males were only scanned for brief periods or for a single day, and over the course of the

179 season there was considerable turnover of males in the study area. To restrict the potential for these

180 records to skew overall averages, previous studies have calculated activity budgets only for

181 individuals that exceed a threshold number of scans; Twiss (1991) used a cut-off of 180 scans while

182 Culloch (2012) used a cut-off of 200 scans. We selected to calculate the activity budgets for males

183 which had >200 scan records as this represented approximately 2 days of observations. Within the

184 spectrum of male attendance behaviour on breeding colonies, these males would be classified as

185 'Tenured' (Boness 1984, Twiss 1991). Raw values for Sable Island and North Rona activity budgets

186 were provided by SDT from the 1988-1989 seasons on North Rona and 1990 season on Sable Island

187 (Twiss 1991). Due to a geographically isolated 'Yodel' behaviour at Sable Island, 'Non-Active' at

188 this colony was comprised of Rest + Alert + Yodel + Drink + Eat Snow (Twiss 1991). All other

189 behavioural categories were similar to those used at Donna Nook. We acknowledge the use of these

190 datasets might introduce observer biases between the North Rona/Sable Island data and the Donna

191 Nook data. However, differences should be negligible since the observer at Donna Nook was trained

192 by the observer from Twiss (1991), and all data were analysed at a relatively coarse behavioural scale.

193   The arcsine transformation for proportional data has been criticized for ecological data

194 (Warton & Hui 2011). Therefore, we tested for differences in average activity budgets for behaviours

195 between years within Donna Nook (Total N =118, ID N = 95 (2011 N = 61 males; 2012 N = 57

196 males)) using generalized linear mixed-effects models with data logit-transformed (Warton & Hui

197 2011). ID was included as a random effect to account for pseudoreplication of some individuals

198 across both years. The response variables were the proportion of time males spent in the broad

199 behavioural categories of Non-Active, Alert, Rest, Aggression, and Locomotion, while the predictor

200 variable was Year. Since some males spent 0% of their time in Aggression, to allow for logit-

201 transformation, male activity budgets for this behavioural category were shifted, by adding the

202 minimum, non-zero value for time spent in aggression to all data-points prior to transformation

203 (Warton & Hui 2011). This was also done for Locomotion for the same reasons.

204 A similar analysis was then conducted to test for differences in activity budgets between

205 breeding colonies (Total $N = 211$, ID $N = 171$ (Donna Nook $N = 95$ males, North Rona $N = 56$ males,

206 Sable Island $N = 20$ males)) with models run to compare each of the above behavioural categories

207 against the predictor variable of Colony. ID was again included as a random factor. Best models were

208 selected based on AIC minimization following Richards' (2008) criteria, in which the model with the

209 lowest ΔAIC is the best model, and all models which are not more complex versions of better models,

210 and have ΔAIC < 6 are also retained. All analyses were carried out in R 2.13.1 (R Core Development

211 Team 2011) with the lme4 package (Bates et al. 2011).

212

213 **RESULTS**

214

215 ***Anthropogenic presence at Donna Nook***

216 Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust has monitored the total visitor numbers at Donna Nook since

217 1993 and their data shows a general increasing trend through 2006, with stabilisation and some yearly

218 fluctuations in the subsequent years (Fig 2). For the two years of the present study, the tourist

219 visitation patterns exhibited variability within and between seasons with the highest weekend

220 visitation numbers in 2011 ($t = 1.95$, df $= 17.64$, $P = 0.03$). Weekend visitation in 2011 averaged 3559

221 ($\pm$ 591 SE) visitors per day during peak season (Nov 3 – Dec 10), while attendance averaged 2175 ($\pm$

222 392 SE) per day during the same period in 2012 (Fig 3a). The average total number of weekday

223 visitors (summed across 5 weekdays) did not differ between years (U = 23, $P = 0.42$; Fig 3b). Aerial

224 military training activities occurred during 50% of weekdays in 2011 and 83% of weekdays in 2012.

225   *Activity budgets*

226   Activity budgets for males at Donna Nook were generally consistent between seasons and

227 demonstrated considerable similarities in comparison to other colonies (Table 1). At Donna Nook,

228 activity budgets across years seemed relatively stable, and Year was not retained as a significant

229 predictor in the models examining differences in activity budgets for time spent in Locomotion,

230 Aggression, Alert, Rest or Non-Active ($\Delta AIC_{null} = 0$ for all models, Table 1). Across colonies, when

231 examining the overall Non-Active (Rest + Alert) activity budgets, Colony was not retained as a

232 predictor variable ($\Delta AIC_{colony} = 9.1$, $\Delta AIC_{null} = 0$); although, males from Sable Island spent a slightly

233 reduced amount of time in Non-Active behaviours (Table 1, Fig 4). Donna Nook males had higher

234 percentages of time spent in aggression than those at North Rona, but spent a similar amount of time

235 in aggression compared to males on Sable Island (Table 1), and in the model, Colony was retained as

236 a significant variable for explaining the differences in the time spent in Aggression ($\Delta AIC_{colony} = 0$,

237 $\Delta AIC_{null} = 10.33$). There was no difference in time spent in locomotion between colonies ($\Delta AIC_{colony} =$

238 3.11, $\Delta AIC_{null} = 0$). Lastly, males spent more time resting at Donna Nook than at either of the other

239 two colonies (Table 1) and males at Donna Nook spent the least amount of time Alert of the three

240 colonies (Table 1, Fig 5). Both of these patterns were supported by the retention of Colony in the best

241 models for Rest ($\Delta AIC_{colony} = 0$, $\Delta AIC_{null} = 27.04$) and Alert ($\Delta AIC_{colony} = 0$, $\Delta AIC_{null} = 43.0$).

242 ## DISCUSSION

243   Across three breeding colonies, we found no behavioural evidence of increases in anti-

244 predator, vigilance or movement behaviours by breeding male grey seals exposed to human activities,

245 relative to males at non-disturbed colonies, and overall males exhibited similar time budgets for Non-

246 Active behaviours. Rates of active behaviours such as aggression, attempted copulations and

247 locomotion can reflect trade-offs between fitness and conservation of energy for capital breeders. For

248 grey seals, these behaviours have been shown to vary across environmental gradients such as

249 topography (Anderson & Harwood 1985, Twiss 1991), sex-ratio (Twiss et al. 1998) or weather

250 patterns (Twiss et al. 2006). However, the consistency across colonies we found for the time males

251 spent in Non-Active behaviours suggests strong selection pressures for overarching conservation of

252 energy across the geographic range, across a variety of topographies, and in the presence or absence

253 of human disturbance. Males in other highly polygynous species such as the South American sea lion,

254 *Otaria byronia*, (Pavez et al. 2014) and the California sea lion, *Zalophus californianus* (Holcomb et

255 al. 2009) have also shown reduced responses to disturbance relative to females. Selection for this lack

256 of a behavioural response is likely driven by the increased mating success of males who maintain their

257 position amongst groups of females for the longest time; either through greater initial energy stores

258 (mass) or by reduced energy spent on active behaviours (Twiss 1991, Lidgard et al. 2001, Lidgard et

259 al. 2005).

260   Previous studies have found little evidence of military activities or helicopters disturbing grey

261 seal behaviour (Perry et al. 2002, Southwell 2005), but there is a lack of consensus on whether or not

262 tourism activities, either on land or sea, negatively impact pinniped behaviours (Engelhard et al. 2002,

263 Curtin et al. 2009, Holcomb et al. 2009, Pavez et al. 2011, Hoover-Miller et al. 2013, Le Boeuf &

264 Campagna 2013, Cowling et al. 2014, Granquist & Sigurjonsdottir 2014, Pavez et al. 2014). Studies

265 which note negative effects at specific locations (Curtin et al. 2009, Pavez et al. 2011, Granquist &

266 Sigurjonsdottir 2014, Pavez et al. 2014) are often isolated or may not consider acute responses in

267 relation to the broader behavioural ecology and evolution of the species. For example, Christiansen et

268 al. (2013) found that the presence of whale-watching vessels did reduce the amount of time minke

269 whales, *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*, spent foraging. However, when considering the temporal and

270 spatial rates of individuals' exposure over an entire season, there appeared to be no potential for a

271 population level effect of these acute disturbances (Christiansen et al. 2015). By examining activity

272 budgets of male grey seals across breeding colonies at a coarse, seasonal scale, our results also

273 suggest that while acute responses to tourism disturbances might be occurring, there appear to be no

274 differences in average time spent Non-Active for males across breeding colonies.

275   Although the intensity of human activities differed between years for wildlife tourism and

276 military actions at Donna Nook, there were no corresponding between-year differences in any

277 behavioural categories and the time males spent Alert in both years was lower than at the undisturbed

278 colonies. In comparison, for harbour seals, increases in Alert behaviours were positively correlated

279 with the number of wildlife viewers during the breeding season (Granquist & Sigurjonsdottir 2014)

280 and males both increased vigilance behaviours and had some indication of increased heart-rate

281 following sonic booms during the non-breeding season (Perry et al. 2002). Harbour seals do not hold

282 terrestrial territories during the breeding season (van Parijs et al. 2000), and are not sexually size-

283 dimorphic (González-Suárez & Cassini 2014), suggesting that the selection pressures for conservation

284 of energy in this species are potentially not as strong as those for male grey seals both during and

285 outside of breeding seasons. These comparisons suggest that specific selection pressures, life-

286 histories, and ecological constraints should be considered if attempting to infer management strategies

287 for disturbance, even across closely related species.

288   While we have demonstrated that male grey seals, like other male pinnipeds, appear to have

289 strong selection pressures driving their activity budgets during the temporally discrete breeding

290 season; this study was not able to discern the mechanism driving this pattern directly. The apparent

291 lack of effect of human activities on Non-Active or Alert behaviours in other studies has been

292 attributed to: (1) individuals not exhibiting any anti-predator response in respects to human activities

293 (Cobley & Shears 1999, Holcomb et al. 2009, Pavez et al. 2014), (2) differences in tolerance

294 thresholds resulting in intolerant individuals being displaced (Bejder et al. 2009), or (3) individuals

295 exhibiting initial acute responses to anthropogenic presence but subsequently habituating (Bright et al.

296 2003, Villanueva et al. 2012, Côté et al. 2013, Le Boeuf & Campagna 2013). None of these

297 mechanisms are mutually exclusive, and we will consider each scenario in terms of the species'

298 behavioural ecology and potential management implications.

299   Many of the species which exhibit increases in vigilance are social species, with considerable

300 selection for anti-predator behaviours (Roberts 1996, Duchesne et al. 2000, Lusseau 2003, Côté et al.

301 2013). The last potential terrestrial predator of grey seals in the UK, the wolf, *Canis lupus,* was

302 extirpated around 1770 (Nilsen et al. 2007). Additionally, since the Conservation of Seals Act of

303 1970, human culling of grey seals in England can only occur under licence, further reducing any

304 potential for males to experience perceived risks while hauled out. The Donna Nook colony formed in

305 the 1980s and did not begin to grow rapidly until 1992 (Duck & Morris 2010, pers. corr RLS). Tourist

306 visitation and the population of seals both gradually increased through 2006, but direct access to the

307   colony was limited by a fence since 1997 and further limited by a second fence layer in 2007 (pers.

308   corr RLS). Therefore, it is possible that current, reproductively active adult male seals (typically aged

309   8-20 years, Twiss 1991) at Donna Nook have not experienced negative exposure that would have led

310   individuals to associate human presence with a threat. Gentoo penguin (*Pygoscelis papua*) colonies in

311   Antarctica have little to no history of land predators and do not exhibit behavioural changes in

312   response to human activities (Cobley & Shears 1999). Similarly, a lack of terrestrial predators has also

313   been suggested as a reason male California sea lions do not respond to tourism disturbances (Holcomb

314   et al. 2009). Thus, focusing on the historical evolutionary selection pressures could identify candidate

315   species for future wildlife viewing opportunities, or help avoid species which have been selected for

316   greater anti-predator responses.

317   Second, a wide range of animals have demonstrated individual differences, but behavioural

318   consistency, in their responses to stimuli (Bell et al. 2009). Male grey seals have demonstrated

319   individual behavioural consistencies in the amount of time they spend Alert (Twiss & Franklin 2010).

320   Twiss et al. (2012) also demonstrated that female grey seals vary in their response to disturbance and

321   either display proactive or reactive behavioural types. The extent of variation in behavioural types in a

322   population could influence responses to disturbance; for example, colonies might be selecting for

323   individuals with specific behavioural types, such as high tolerance to disturbance, and displacing

324   individuals spatially or temporally with lower thresholds (Bejder et al. 2009, Higham & Shelton

325   2011). The ease with which individuals with lower tolerance thresholds can be temporally or spatially

326   displaced is likely dependent on the topography, available habitat (Bennett et al. 2013), and temporal

327   constraints of key life-history periods. Therefore, population level effects could be masked depending

328   on the spatial or temporal scale of the sample. In the present study, male seals at Donna Nook are not

329   space-limited and large portions of the beach are still available for breeding seals (pers. obs). If males

330   differed in their tolerance to disturbance, displacement might not result in being driven off the colony

331   altogether, as it might at colonies with limited breeding substrate. Instead, less tolerant males might

332   select to occupy more peripheral locations. While we cannot rule out spatial displacement within

333   Donna Nook, it is unlikely to have influenced our results. Male distance from the fence ranged from

334   10m-350m, and all seals were exposed to the military training exercises.

335   Temporal displacement is quite different. Unlike hauling-out behaviours which can be

336   temporally and spatially displaced due to wildlife viewing (Granquist & Sigurjonsdottir 2014),

337   breeding seasons are temporally keyed by females' reproductive cycles, involving the interplay of

338   hormone and environmental cues controlling fertilization, implantation, gestation, parturition and

339   oestrus (Pomeroy et al. 2000).This restricts the effectiveness of any plasticity males can demonstrate

340   in their responses. Therefore, as capital breeders, the temporal constraints of the breeding season,

341   along with the selection pressures for maintaining access to females and for conservation of energy,

342   might be overriding any between-individual differences in tolerance, resulting in the observed lack of

343   differences across colonies during this life history stage.

344   Finally, habituation to tourism activities has been demonstrated in species such as the

345   dabchick, *Poliocephalus rufopectus* (Bright et al. 2003) and Magellanic penguins, *Spheniscus*

346   *magellanicus* (Villanueva et al. 2012). The lack of an observed increase in Alert responses at Donna

347   Nook could be due to males responding to protracted exposure by returning to pre-exposure levels.

348   Due to the importance of 'not losing' for male grey seals (Anderson & Fedak 1985), Alert behaviours

349   during the breeding season are likely a mechanism for monitoring threats from competitor males and

350   potential intrusions (Twiss 1991, Lawson 1993). Donna Nook has been exposed to anthropogenic

351   presence since the formation of the colony and initially, visitors were able to access the colony

352   without restriction. During this time, if humans were perceived as potential intrusions into male grey

353   seals' loose spatial territories, it is possible males increased the frequency of Alert behaviours.

354   However, visitor presence has increased over the years simultaneously with the number of seals,

355   potentially leading to a gradual habituation. At an even finer temporal scale, within a breeding season,

356   the number of visitors also gradually increases over time, potentially leading to within-season

357   habituation over the course of a few days (Villanueva et al. 2012).

358   In this study, only adult, tenured males were included in our selection criteria for observation

359   as these males experience the highest rates of mating success (Twiss 1991, Lidgard et al. 2001,

360   Lidgard et al. 2005). Donna Nook is an expanding colony (Duck & Morris 2010), so it is likely that

361   population growth is a product of both immigration as well as internal growth (with the observed 40%

362   increases, the maximum intrinsic rate is ~12%; *personal communication*, P. Pomeroy). If immigration

363   is occurring, some males sampled could potentially be non-habituated, but if these newcomer males

364   are younger, or males exhibiting the alternative, transient mating strategy (Boness & James 1979,

365   Lidgard et al. 2001) they might have been excluded based on our sample criteria. Future studies

366   would thus benefit from looking in more detail at these peripheral or newcomer individuals to

367   determine the potential for non-habituated responses to human activities or to monitor the potential

368   occurrence of habituation over time.

369   Habituation in response to human activities has been criticized as a negative effect, as it could

370   potentially reduce the overall fitness of a population by reducing the natural fight-or-flight response,

371   or by promoting further human-wildlife conflict (Bejder et al 2009). Others, however, have argued

372   that in terms of scientific research, habituation to observers for primates or small mammals is

373   considered acceptable (Higham & Shelton 2011). The present study cannot ascertain if males have

374   habituated to tourism at Donna Nook, but the current management of the colony restricts any direct

375   human-seal contact, and the continual population growth at Donna Nook and other mainland colonies

376   in the region suggests that at present, there appears to be no adverse effects on individual fitness or on

377   population growth.

378

379   **Management Implications and Future Work**

380   Legislation, such as the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (MMPA) in the USA,

381   prohibits disturbance of marine mammals through clauses that define 'harassment' as any act which

382   "has the potential to disturb a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by causing

383   disruption of behavioural patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, breathing, nursing,

384   breeding, feeding, or sheltering". In the UK, similar laws prohibit intentional harassment or

385   disturbance of pinnipeds at significant haul-out sites (Marine Scotland Act 2010), while others

386   prohibit direct takes of animals through culling or hunting (Conservation of Seals Act 1970). To

387   uphold these legislative directives, managers must first be able to identify when animals enter periods

388   of disturbance. Ecotourism is often argued to be beneficial to wildlife through public education and

389   establishments of wildlife reserves, but it is also criticized as prone to the tragedy of the commons

390   (Heenehan et al. 2014) and is an economy which can result in disturbance and reduced fitness for

391 populations of animals (Shackley 1996). Likewise, military training grounds can often provide refuge

392 or habitat for animals (Warren & Büttner 2008) but with potential costs of increased wildlife

393 disturbance (DeRuiter et al. 2013). It is unlikely that either side of the argument is universal and

394 applicable to all species. This study provides evidence that although breeding periods can be energy

395 limited and have often been considered critical times (Hoover-Miller et al. 2013), strong natural or

396 sexual selection pressures during this discrete period can potentially mitigate the pressures to change

397 behaviours across a gradient of anthropogenic exposure in the form of wildlife tourism.

398 We recognize the specific conditions of our study (*e.g.* we only considered breeding males

399 and not females, pups or subordinate males) but within this framework, we provide evidence

400 suggesting that understanding the selection pressures, spatial and temporal constraints, and life-history

401 of a particular species in question, or sex within a species, is paramount for effective management.

402 Thus, future work in the field of human-wildlife interactions and management will benefit from

403 studies which; (1) are targeted to specific sexes and life history stages to examine potential differences

404 in how selection pressures and responses vary (Cowling et al. 2014), (2) are spatially and temporally

405 explicit across a wide range of exposure levels within and between populations to examine differences

406 in responses to disturbance (Christiansen et al. 2015), (3) incorporate both behavioural and

407 physiological metrics such as heart rate (Lydersen & Kovacs 1995) or stress hormones to examine for

408 'hidden' effects and individual variation in responses (Villanueva et al. 2012), and (4) use

409 interdisciplinary methods to investigate the efficacy of specific management practices (Le Boeuf &

410 Campagna 2013). Further consideration of these questions will work towards improving our

411 knowledge of how human presence functions as part of the ecological and selection pressures driving

412 species.

413

418   assistance in data collection. Finally, thank you to the three anonymous reviewers for your comments

419   and suggestions from which this manuscript was improved

420

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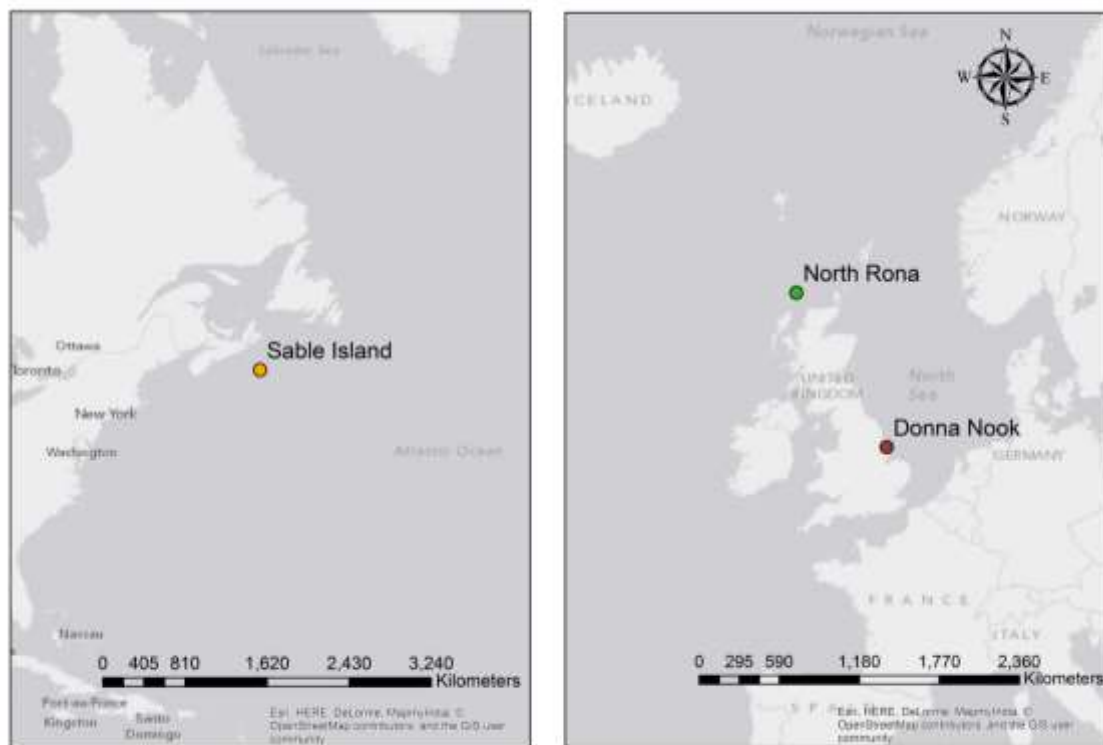
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628   **Figure Captions**

629   **Figure 1**: *Halichoerus grypus.* Locations of grey seal breeding colonies in the North Atlantic with
630   published datasets available for male activity budgets. Data from Sable Island (Canada) and North
631   Rona (Scotland) were collected by Twiss (1991). Data from Donna Nook was collected for the
632   present study.

633
634   **Figure 2:** The total visitors at Donna Nook during the breeding season (Nov and Dec) each year.
635   Annotations indicate timing of events which correlate with dramatic increases or decreases in
636   visitation numbers (data and annotations from: Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Rob Lidstone-Scott).
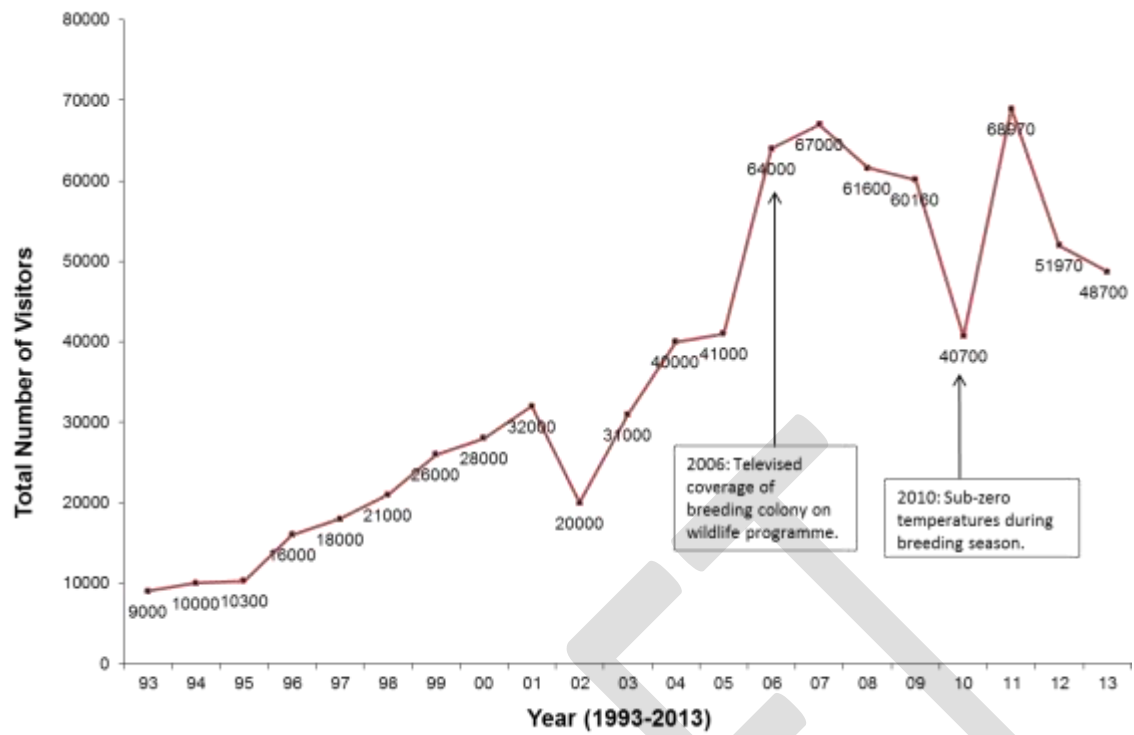
637
638   **Figure 3:** The number of visitors at Donna Nook on individual weekend days only for 2011and 2012
639   at the PUB site (a) and weekday totals (total number of visitors across 5 week days) (b).

640
641   **Figure 4:** *Halichoerus grypus.* The median percentage of time spent in Non-Active behaviours at
642   each of the three colonies (Donna Nook = DN11 & DN12 (in 2011 and 2012); North Rona = NR88 &
643   NR89 (in 1988 and 1989); Sable Island = SI90 (in 1990)). Boxes represent the interquartile range
644   around the median (dark line) with notches displaying the 95% confidence interval around the
645   median. Whiskers represent the 75th and 25th percentile respectively. Circles outside of whiskers
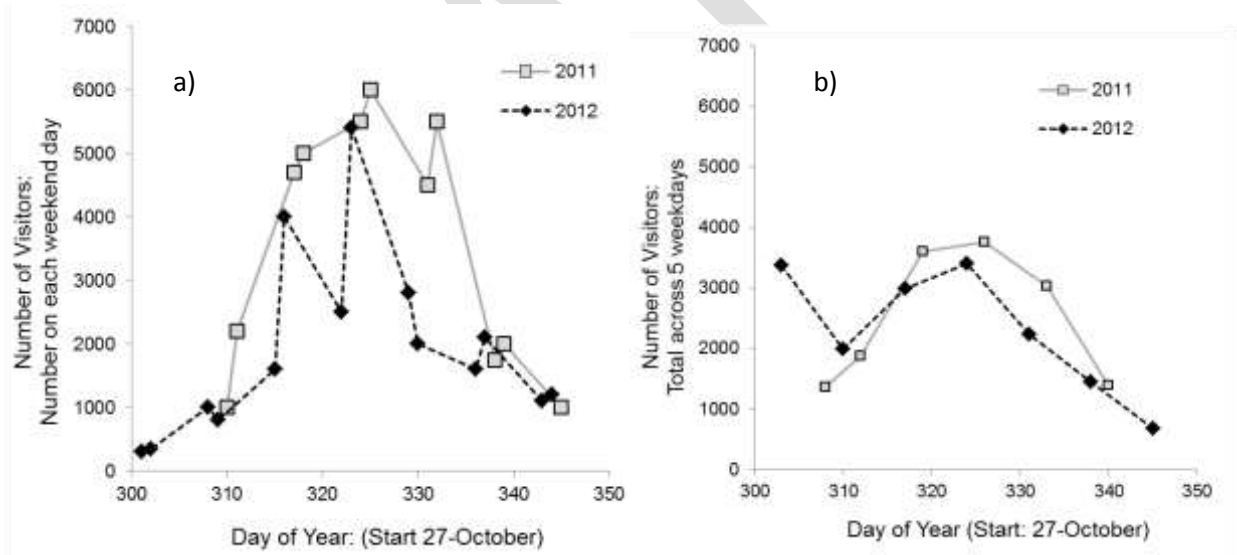646   represent possible outlies.

647
648   **Figure 5:** *Halichoerus grypus.* The median percentage of time spent Alert at each of the three
649   colonies (Donna Nook = DN11 & DN12 (in 2011 and 2012); North Rona = NR88 & NR89 (in 1988
650   and 1989); Sable Island = SI90 (in 1990)). Boxes represent the interquartile range around the median
651   (dark line) with notches displaying the 95% confidence interval around the median. Whiskers
652   represent the 75th and 25th percentile respectively. Circles outside of whiskers represent possible
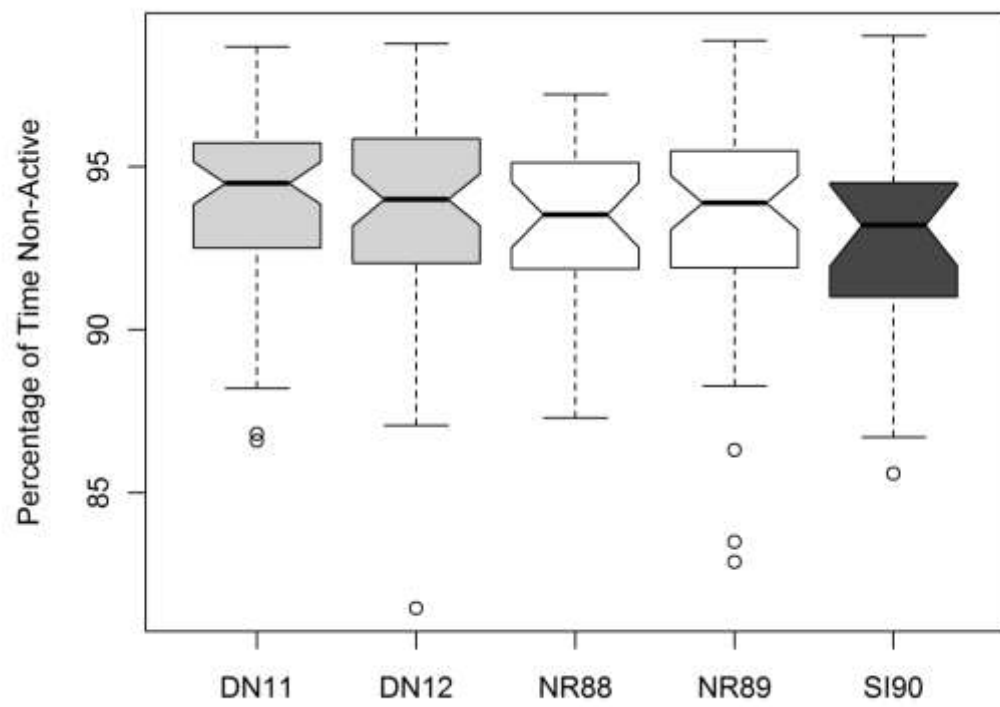653   outlies.

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655

656   **Figure 1**

657

658   **Figure 2**

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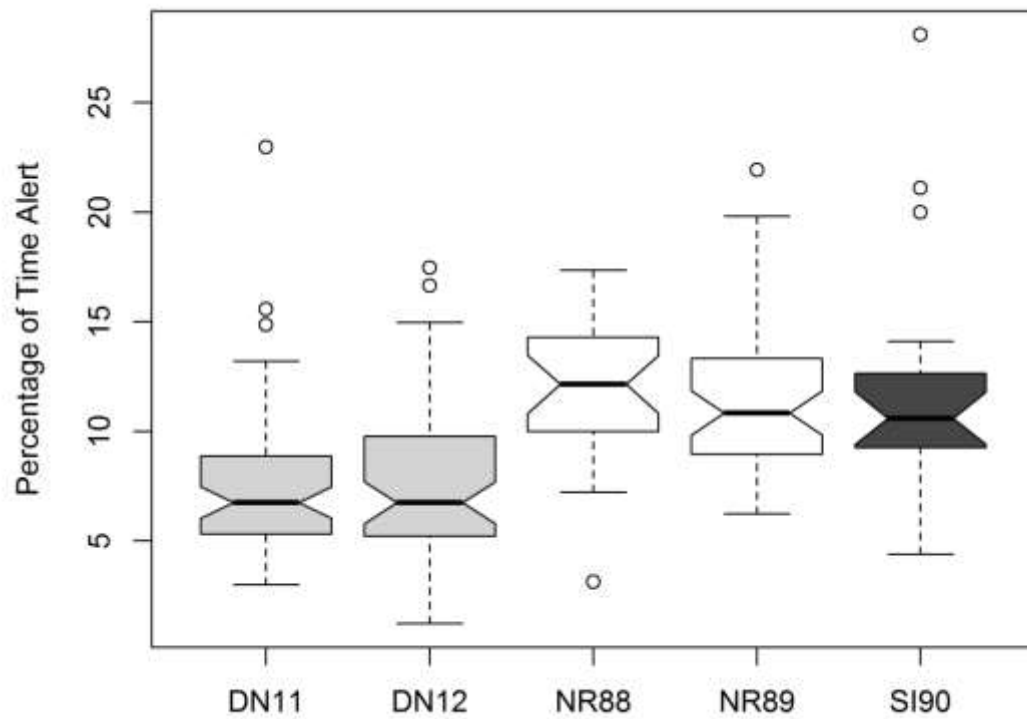669   **Figure 3**

670

671   **Figure 4**

672
673   **Figure 5**

674 **Table 1:** Activity budgets for males at Donna Nook and comparison colonies (±SE); Percentage of
675 time spent in each activity is the mean across all males with ≥200 scans (or ≥180 scans for North
676 Rona and Sable Island*).

	2011 (*n* = 61)	2012 (*n* = 57)	DN (*n* =118)	NR (*n* = 73) *	SI (*n* = 20) *
§Rest	86.48 (0.62)	85.63 (0.76)	86.07 (0.45)	81.55 (0.63)	79.76 (2.02)
§Alert	7.54 (0.45)	7.88 (0.47)	7.70 (0.33)	11.77 (0.42)	11.76 (1.27)
Locomotion	1.47 (0.13)	1.33 (0.12)	1.40 (0.09)	1.70 (0.12)	1.83 (0.26)
§ Yodel	--	--	--	--	0.72 (0.33)
†Approach Female	0.09 (0.02)	0.00 (0.00)	0.09 (0.02)	0.36 (0.04)	0.26 (0.08)
†Attempted Copulation	0.53 (0.07)	0.49 (0.07)	0.52 (0.05)	0.89 (0.10)	0.51 (0.14)
†Copulation	0.77 (0.13)	0.91 (0.12)	0.84 (0.08)	1.32 (0.14)	0.90 (0.31)
†Non-Ag Flip	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.003)	0.01 (0.005)
‡α Aggression to Females	0.08 (0.02)	0.65 (0.08)	0.35 (0.05)	--	--
‡Non-Contact	2.87 (0.27)	2.58 (0.18)	2.73 (0.13)	2.09 (0.16)	3.31 (0.37)
‡Contact	0.16 (0.03)	0.12 (0.06)	0.14 (0.02)	0.41 (0.06)	0.24 (0.10)
Reproductive	1.39 (0.19)	1.82 (0.27)	1.59 (0.16)	2.48 (0.20)	1.68 (0.45)
Aggressive	3.11 (0.21)	3.34 (0.17)	3.21 (0.14)	2.27 (0.17)	3.55 (0.40)
Non-Active	94.02 (0.33)	93.51 (0.39)	93.78 (0.25)	93.55 (0.36)	92.91 (0.72)
Active	5.98 (0.33)	6.48 (0.39)	6.22 (0.25)	6.44 (0.36)	7.05 (0.72)

NR = North Rona Colony 1988 & 1989; SI = Sable Island 1990 (Twiss 1991).

§ = Behaviours included in 'Non-Active'

† = Behaviours included in 'Reproductive'

‡ = Behaviours included in 'Aggressive (male)'

α = Aggression to females consisted of any 'Aggressive' behaviour directed at a female

677

678

679 **Supplementary**

680 **Table 1S:** Ethogram of behaviours used during scan-sampling and for calculating activity budgets of
681 males at Donna Nook. For additional behaviours see: Twiss 1991 and Lawson 1993.

Aggressive Behaviours	
Approach male	Focal male moves directly towards another male (Bishop et al. 2014).
Open Mouth Threat	This is a threat display which consists of a male opening his mouth to a wide gape directed at opponent with no vocalization or contact with conspecific (Twiss 1991, Lawson 1993, Bishop et al. 2014).
Aggressive Flippering	The behaviour involves a male vigorously waving his fore-flippers and/or slapping his own sides in a clearly aggressive manner.
Lunge	An attempt to bite without making contact.
Bite	A singular bite or contact made through a lunge. This behaviour is sometimes associated with a vigorous shaking of the head laterally while maintaining grasp of opponent. Subcategory of this behaviour is Bite Hind Flippers (BHF) where male grasps opponents' hind-flippers or tail with his mouth.
Fight or Contact AI	The segment of an aggressive interaction (AI) during which repeated contact is made by one or both males. This is usually preceded by a threat period during which males exchange non-contact threats (for further details see: Twiss 1991).
Roll	Usually seen after a fight or chase, male turns on his dorsal-ventral axis. Suggested as a form of locomotion or a 'victory roll' (Twiss 1991, Lawson 1993).
Body Slap	A male pushing his body off the ground and slamming his ventral surface back down onto the substrate. Usually performed in multiple repetitions per bout (Bishop et al. 2014).

Reproductive behaviours	
Approach Female	A subgroup of general locomotion, approach refers to direct movement of a male towards a female.
Non-Aggressive Flippering	Male slowly strokes the flank of the intended mate with his or her flipper. Usually seen prior to mounting or during male positioning. (*Abbrev:* Non-Ag Flip)
Attempted copulation	Attempted copulations begin when a male attempts to get his fore-flippers on the female's back and grabs the scruff of her neck with his jaws (Twiss 1991). This behaviour has also been called a "mount" (Boness 1984).

Copulation	Following the attempted copulation/mounting behaviour, the male will attempt intromission—if successful this is the point in which actual copulation commences. If the copulatory embrace post-intromission persists for a minimum of 10min the copulation is classified as 'successful'. From previous studies (Twiss 1991) 'successful' copulations last on average 15-20m and we assume that if shorter than 10 min, it is unlikely that insemination will occur.
Unsuccessful copulation	Copulations which do not last for longer than 10 minutes post intromission are considered unsuccessful. 'Unsuccessful copulations' indicate the male achieved intromission but lost contact with the female after a short period of time and the cause of the interruption was recorded.
Other	
Rest	Non-active state. Head down, eyes may be open or closed.
Comfort Move	General repositioning, scratching or flipper-movements which stationary. Eyes may be open or closed and head may be off the ground.
Alert	Cases where a male is clearly observant, head raised, or gaze directed.
Locomotion	Movement around the colony without directed approach towards a female or male. Change in geographic location.
Out of Sight	Where a male is not visible from the hide (due to topography or range of view) but is known to still be present in the study site.

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