

Coins

– The Animals of the World – The Grey Seal



face value	20 zł
metal	925/1000 Ag
finish	proof
diameter	38.61 mm
weight	28.28 g
mintage (volume)	58,000 pcs

Obverse: An image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland. Under the Eagle the notation of the year of issue, 2007, below an inscription, Zł 20 Zł. The images of the national flag at the sides of the Eagle's legs. At the top, a semicircular inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA. The Mint's mark, $\frac{m}{w}$, under the Eagle's left leg.

Reverse: In the central part images of two adult seals and one young seal, and the shade of two seals in the background. Above the stylised sea waves. At the top, a semicircular inscription, FOKA SZARA, at the bottom, a semicircular inscription, Halichoerus grypus.

Obverse designer: *Ewa Tyc-Karpińska*
Reverse designer: *Robert Kotowicz*



face value	2 zł
metal	CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy
finish	standard
diameter	27.00 mm
weight	8.15 g
mintage (volume)	1,000,000 pcs

Obverse: An image of the Eagle established as the State Emblem of the Republic of Poland. Under the Eagle the notation of the year of issue, 2007, below an inscription, Zł 2 Zł. The images of the national flag at the sides of the Eagle's legs. At the top, a semicircular inscription, RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA. The Mint's mark, $\frac{m}{w}$, under the Eagle's left leg.

Reverse: In the central part the head of the seal and its shade in the background. Below the stylised sea waves. At the top, a semicircular inscription, FOKA SZARA – Halichoerus grypus.

On the edge: An inscription, NBP, eight times repeated, every second one inverted 180 degrees, separated by stars.

Obverse designer: *Ewa Tyc-Karpińska*
Reverse designer: *Robert Kotowicz*



Coins struck by the Mint of Poland plc. in Warsaw.

Printed by NBP Printing Office

On 17 January 2007, the National Bank of Poland is putting into circulation the coins of the series "Animals of the World". The coins dedicated to the grey seal, are of the following face values:

- 20 zł – struck in proof finish in silver,
- 2 zł – struck in standard finish in the Nordic Gold alloy.

The purpose of the series is to present the animal species threatened with the developing civilisation.

The seals found in the Baltic Sea are classified under three species: grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*), common seal (*Phoca vitulina*) and ringed seal (*Phoca hispida*).

All the above-specified species have been and still are found close to the Polish coast. Numerous records and rich historical data provide the evidence that they lived in large numbers on and around the coast of Poland. The population of grey seals has been always the largest, it is a species typical of the coastal zone. Still in the 30s of the 20th century it used to reproduce on the Polish coast, but it does not form resident colonies there any more. In 1984, it was placed under legal protection in Poland.

The grey seal is the largest Baltic seal. As the only species of seals, it has a characteristic, elongated snout, frequently compared to the dog's muzzle. Males with dark, homogeneous colouring reach 2.5 m in length and weigh even up to 300 kg. Females, which are smaller, grow up to 2 m, reaching half of that weight. Their fur is fair with dark, irregular spots. Young grey seals are born in February and in March, on the ice or on the land, depending on the range of ice cover on the Baltic Sea. Pregnant females choose secluded and safe places on the land. One young seal is born with a creamy white coat, which it will shed during the moult after three weeks. Up to that time a mother feeds it on the land with fatty milk and the newborn puts on weight 2 kg a day on average. When abandoned by the mother it spends 2–3 more weeks on the land, drawing energy from the accumulated stores of fat. After that time it goes to sea and begins its independent life on the fish diet.

A grey seal is a residential species, however, it happens that young, a few week old animals undertake long, lonely trips to other areas of the Baltic Sea. They favour coasts with a large number of isolated rocky islands or sandbars close to the places with large quantities of fish. Grey seals use back flippers in the water, on the land they move clumsily with the use of front flippers, dragging the back flippers passively behind them. In line

with the historical information at the turn of the 19th century there lived ca. 100 thousand grey seals in the Baltic Sea. The first estimations of the number of grey seals made then in the area of Gdańsk Coast and East Prussia accounted for 1000 individuals living there, although these animals were hunted for on the coasts of Poland and the culling was rewarded with a financial bonus. Seals were regarded as a pest destroying fishermen's nets and competing with them for fish. Till the 30s of the previous century guns, stabbing tools and also specially constructed net traps were used for hunting. The basin of Gdańsk Bay has been specially preferred by grey seals and the specimen of this species were numerous in the southern area of the Baltic Sea.

The grey seal is the species which visits Polish waters in the greatest numbers. The presence of grey seals is recorded in nearly every region of our coast and also very occasionally in the rivers and coast lakes. They are most frequently observed in the area of Gdańsk Bay and Puck Bay.

At present, the Baltic population of grey seals is ca. 17,000 animals. Over 20 years of protective actions it has been possible to increase their population threefold. Currently, they mainly inhabit the coasts of Sweden, Finland and Estonia north of the 58°N parallel. A small number of them live close to the southern coasts of Sweden (ca. 200 individuals). Colonies of seals in the southern area of the Baltic Sea between Lithuania and Germany within the borders of their historical habitats still do not exist.

The Baltic seals are threatened, first of all, with a man and his activity. Young, inexperienced seals are killed in the fishermen's nets. The seals are threatened with the elimination of habitats, bothering, illegal hunting. Pollution results in the females' infertility. The necessary actions for saving Baltic seals are in the case of Baltic countries, indicated, i.a., in the recommendations of the Helsinki Commission and International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). In the places of their permanent occurrence there are established reserves and sanctuaries. In some countries there have been established seals rehabilitation and reproduction centres. The actions aimed at the reduction of death rate as a result of by-catch in the fishermen's nets are still not sufficient.

In Poland there operates an outlet of the Marine Station of Gdańsk University in Hel which implements the project of restoring the stock of grey seals in the southern area of the Baltic Sea through reintroduction, i.e. the re-establishment of the species into the natural environment. In order to allow the species to return to this

part of the Baltic Sea, the re-establishment of these animals should be at the same time supported by focusing the public opinion on the issue of saving the protected species and applying special protection to potential habitats of animals, ensuring them peace and safe reproduction. Active protection and restoration of the stock of grey seal accompanied by general social approval is likely to succeed.

Should you find a seal on the beach or notice it on the Baltic coast, phone the Marine Station of Gdańsk University in Hel. Emergency phone no. (24 h): 0 - 601 88 99 40. Do not frighten the seals away and do not push them to water, ensure them peace and the possibility of rest. Only such a behaviour can guarantee their return to our coast!

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