



NEWS RELEASE - June 2006

MARINE CHARITY ISSUES WHALE ALERT

Whales and dolphins seen in Cornish waters last year are expected to return over the next few weeks – and people in the county are being asked to look out for them.

Marine conservation charity the Sea Watch Foundation is urging members of the public to scan the seas for species such as long-finned pilot whales, which were spotted last summer off Runnel Stone, near Lands End.

Sea Watch is also keen to receive sightings of other whale species, dolphins and porpoises, to help the charity's research into British marine mammals and how they are affected by rising sea temperatures, fishing activities and pollution.

Every year Sea Watch organises National Whale and Dolphin Watch around the coast of the UK. People are encouraged to report sightings and join experienced dolphin-spotters in manned watches from beaches, cliff-tops and other look-out points.

During the 2005 Watch, as well as the long-finned pilot whales, observers in Cornwall saw minke whales off Godrevy in St Ives Bay and large numbers of Common and Bottlenose dolphins, for which the region is well-known.

One of the manned sites for this year's National Whale and Dolphin Watch – scheduled for August 12-20 – is at Pentire Point, North Cornwall. Organiser Joana Doyle, the Cornwall Wildlife Trust Marine Conservation officer, says that there are early indications that 2006 will be a good year for some of the dolphin species.

She explained: "Common dolphin sightings were high this winter, and many sightings were relatively close inshore. Some of the best sightings include a super pod of about 1,200 common dolphins seen in December off Falmouth, and a fin whale surrounded by 50 common dolphins in February a few miles out from Dodman Point."



She added: “The most commonly observed cetacean species around Cornwall include harbour porpoise, bottlenose dolphins and common dolphins. It appears that harbour porpoise sightings have increased in recent years, but the numbers in the small resident population of bottlenose dolphins appear to be decreasing.”

Look out for details of National Whale and Dolphin Watch on the Sea Watch Foundation website www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk which includes a list of local co-ordinators and a species identification guide.

National Whale and Dolphin Watch is sponsored by British Gas, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

- Note to editors: A fully-grown male long-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala melas*) is usually over 20 feet long and weighs around 3.5 tonnes. They are normally found in the deep waters of northern Europe, occasionally entering coastal areas to the west of England and Scotland during the summer months.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, IMAGES OR BROADCAST-QUALITY VIDEO FOOTAGE PLEASE CONTACT:

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