



NEWS RELEASE – June 2006

EAST COAST ON WHALE AND DOLPHIN ALERT

Whale and dolphin-watchers on the east coast will be scanning the seas this summer for marine mammals – and they are looking for members of the public to help them.

A group of 10 common dolphins near Skegness has already been logged this year by the Sea Watch Foundation, a marine conservation charity and research organisation based in Oxford.

They are hoping for more sightings during their annual National Whale and Dolphin Watch, which takes place this year from August 12-20.

Anyone who is near the coast that week can take part in the Watch. They can join experienced observers at key look-out points on cliff-tops and harbours, or make their own observations and send them to Sea Watch. This year there is a new observation point in East Anglia on National Trust land at Dunwich Heath, Suffolk.

Dr Peter Evans, Sea Watch's research director, has studied whales and dolphins for 30 years and advises the government on their conservation. He said: "Many people will remember the northern bottlenose whale that swam up the Thames in January this year. That was unusual, but we do see whales and dolphins in the region, and in the last few years, the numbers of porpoises recorded has increased markedly.."

Sea Watch uses the information gathered during the National Whale and Dolphin Watch to aid its research into marine mammal numbers and the effects of rising sea temperatures, fishing activities and pollution. Last year's event produced 576 sightings, including a group of six fin whales – the largest group ever seen in British coastal waters



Times, dates and details of local co-ordinators will be published shortly on the Sea Watch website www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk where you can also find a guide to identifying whale and dolphin species.

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).

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