

sea watch FOUNDATION



Meet "Flint" one of our adoptee dolphins! Photo: Janet Baxter

Editorial

The big news for this issue is that Sea Watch is very pleased to announce the launch of our Adopt a Dolphin scheme. Full details are below or you can find out more on our website. Please help us to spread the word by telling your friends and family. The finer weather is with us now so there's no excuse for not heading to the coast! So please keep those sightings coming in, and as always, your contributions to the news sheet are very welcome, so please send them (and photos!) to me at lawsonhandley@mac.com.

Happy seawatching

Lori



ADOPT A DOLPHIN SCHEME GOES LIVE!

The Sea Watch Foundation's long-awaited 'Adopt a Dolphin' scheme is to be launched on June 4 with the backing of BBC Springwatch presenter Kate Humble.

The scheme aims to raise additional income for Sea Watch and to increase awareness of our work and activities such as the National Whale and Dolphin Watch.

People can adopt six wild bottlenose dolphins from Cardigan Bay, off the west coast of Wales – all named and identified by Sea Watch Foundation researchers – for £3.50 a month.

Adopters receive a pack from Sea Watch containing a fluffy dolphin soft toy, an adoption certificate, stickers, a poster, CD, access to an interactive game on the Sea Watch website to track the positions of the Cardigan Bay dolphins, a computer screensaver and other items. They will also be sent monthly "Dolphin Diary" e-mails with news about their dolphin.

Some of you will see our leaflet about the scheme inside the July edition of the BBC Wildlife magazine, along with a write-up about National Whale and Dolphin Watch on page 13. The scheme is also being featured in a number of children's magazines and other publications.

A huge amount of work has gone into developing Adopt a Dolphin over the last few months and we are all hopeful that it will be a success on all fronts.

They say charity begins at home ... so we would really appreciate it if you could tell your friends and family about the scheme, so they can adopt a Sea Watch dolphin for themselves or as a gift for someone else.

To find out more please visit <http://www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk/adoptadolphin>, e-mail info@adoptadolphin.org.uk or phone 0845 2023892.



Kate Humble, endorsing the Adopt a Dolphin scheme



Adoptee dolphins "Arian" (left, foreground) and "Tide" (right), Photos: Giovanna Pesante

Don't forget
NATIONAL WHALE AND DOLPHIN WATCH

23 June to 1 July 2007

please contact Hanna (info@seawatchfoundation.org.uk) for more information.

Sea Watch Featured on Country File!

Make sure you tune in to BBC Country File over the next couple of weekends to look out for a feature on Sea Watch. The Country File team spent a day in New Quay with Hanna Nuuttila and Giovanna Pesante. The most likely date for transmission is Sunday 24th June - the first weekend of National Whale and Dolphin Watch!

SIGHTINGS HIGHLIGHTS
FEBRUARY TO MARCH 2007

By Hanna Nuuttila

- **A group of 10-15 sperm whales seen off Lybster, Caithness, and three off Orkney**
- **Minke whales make a surprise visit in South Grampian coast**
- **Killer whales off North Ronaldsay, South Ronaldsay and in Firth of Forth, Edinburgh**
- **Winter humpback whales in the Irish Sea**

As always, please send your sightings to Hanna Nuuttila, Sea Watch Foundation Sightings Officer, at: sightings@seawatchfoundation.org.uk (Please note the changed email address!!)

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Northern Isles

Shetland and Fair Isle

A minke whale and three killer whales were sighted on 22nd March off South Light, Fair Isle, reported by Deryk Shaw from Fair Isle Bird Observatory.

Orkney

From Chris Booth

There were several sightings and strandings during February and March. Most notably, a male sperm whale was seen off Westray on 15th February but sadly later stranded at the Bay of Tuquoy, Westray on 16th February. Another three sperm whales were, however, seen in the Stronsay Firth on 31st March. A pod of six killer whales were seen off North Ronaldsay at the end of February and a pod of seven off South Ronaldsay on 28th March.

Other sightings include two porpoises in Scapa Flow on the 14th and four on the 18th February. A pod of four porpoises was seen off Westray on 1st March, and seven individuals in the Pentland Firth on 31st March. Finally a solitary Risso's dolphin was observed off Green Holms on 31st March

In addition to the sperm whale, other strandings included a rather decomposed striped dolphin, which washed up at Birsay on 4th February, a freshly dead harbour porpoise found at Deerness on 12th February, and a fin whale, which stranded at Duncan's Geo, Brims, Hoy on 15th February.

Caithness and North East Scotland

A group of 15 sperm whales was spotted off Lybster by Colin Bird in the middle of March and another sperm whale was seen at the end of March. White-beaked dolphins, possible Risso's, and other unidentified dolphins and harbour porpoise were also sighted.

Moray Firth and North Grampian

From Howard Hartley Loates, regional coordinator for Moray Firth (Sutors of Cromarty to Kessock/Inverness)

February-March was a quiet period but a highlight was that Alan Ward managed to get video footage of bottlenose dolphins attacking a harbour porpoise. There have been sightings of both species in the local area throughout the period and they do appear to be becoming more frequent as the warmer weather approaches. Sightings have been made from the South Sutor of Cromarty to North Kessock. People are gathering at Chanonry Point for the rising tide but are often disappointed; hopefully, by next month, sightings will pick up. The EcoVentures boat has now started its operations from Cromarty village and is seeing bottlenose dolphins on a regular basis.

South Grampian

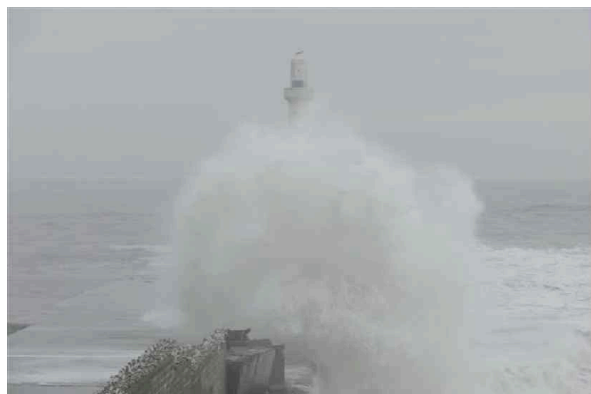
From Kevin Hepworth, regional coordinator for South Grampian

February was another very mild, windy and extremely stormy month with a couple of days of heavy sleet/snow showers mid month. Snow lay in small quantities on the 5th-7th February and mountainous seas in the last week of the month restricted watching. The odd good days that we did get enabled some reasonable views of small groups of bottlenose at Aberdeen and just following the snow, large groups at Stonehaven and what were reported as possible Risso's dolphins off Aberdeen. Harbour porpoises again put in minor showing.

A total of 17 reports were received for February, including 13 sightings of bottlenose dolphins, three of harbour porpoise and one possible Risso's dolphin. The early part of February was dominated by the presence of large groups of bottlenose off Aberdeen on the 2nd (35 animals) and then Stonehaven on the 3rd and 4th (40+ animals). Interestingly, there were also three possible Risso's reported on the 2nd off Aberdeen, but this is still subject to verification and would represent an unusual winter record for this part of the coastline. The remaining sightings of bottlenose dolphins were generally of groups of three to six animals. The most unusual records come from the 23-25th of the month when despite seas with 4-5m swell and force 7-8, there were still animals to be found albeit it with perseverance! The remainder of this month's records were of harbour porpoise, with two and then five later the same day around Aberdeen Harbour on the 18th, and one off Stonehaven on the 4th February.

Although the end of the month EGCP watch at Torry Battery was cancelled, unofficial watchers were treated to up to six bottlenose dolphins dodging the 5m plus swell (see pictures of the conditions, unfortunately, the animals were rather more elusive than the waves except for a brief moment when they took to shelter well inside the harbour).

We also received several reports of strandings during February. A freshly dead harbour porpoise that washed up at Inverbervie had been extensively marked and had its fin severed in what is thought to be a bottlenose dolphin attack. Two dead humpback whales were reported. The first was a large animal drifting some 17 miles south east of Carnoustie on the 21st February, and then the following day, a second (less than one year old) animal was washed up at Auchmithie wrapped in netting. Both animals were freshly dead and may have been a mother-calf pair that got entangled in fishing gear.



Batten down the hatches! Wild February weather in South Grampian. Photos: Kevin Hepworth

March was another month of many contrasts; wet and windy, then cold with blustery easterlies and frequent snow showers mid-month, followed by exceptional warm, dry and sunny, but still quite breezy weather for the second half of the month. These contrasts were reflected in the distribution of the reports coming in. March was notable for having a 'winter glut' for this region, of minke whales. With flowers and leaves appearing up to three weeks earlier than previous years, do these sightings also reflect a new trend in cetacean distribution off this coastline? It certainly isn't due to increased observations as reporting has generally dropped off since 2005, and it certainly isn't due to better weather as we have had some immense seas in March (It's the first time I've ever seen the Shetland ferry disappear in the swell just out of the harbour. Just glad I wasn't on it!).

A total of 39 sightings were received for March, including 34 reports of bottlenose dolphins, three of minke whales, and two of harbour porpoise.

March was unusual in that we have again had reports of minke whales in our area for a third winter month. This species has become increasingly regular (*I would venture to say dramatically so*) in our region since 2002, when it was more usual to have three or four sightings in summer. Minkes then became reported on a much more regular basis, with sixteen sightings in 2004, thirty-seven in 2005, and over sixty in 2006. We started having the occasional winter sighting in 2006 with one in January and one in December that year. Some of this can probably be attributed to greater awareness and increased coverage, but not all. It would be interesting to determine whether the species is increasing in abundance, extending its range back into this area, or shifting from previous hotspots such as the West Coast and Northern Isles. Anyway, returning to the present, the sightings for this month were of a probable minke in Stonehaven Bay on the 3rd March, a single juvenile off Findon Ness on the 23rd March during a vessel based survey, and an adult off Fowlsheugh on the 31st of the month. Harbour porpoise numbers again continue to drop, with only two reported sightings of single individuals off Findon Ness on the 23rd March just before the minke whale encounter, and then two adults feeding off Girdleness on the 24th March. The real stars at this time of year are the bottlenose dolphins which will cheekily dodge the boat traffic inside Aberdeen Harbour, and put on a show to rival any human efforts.

In other March news, we ran two Sea Watch surveys on Tranquillity out of Stonehaven towards the end of the month and secured funding in the form of a couple of small grants from BP towards 2007's programme of Sea Watch surveys and for the Grampian reporting postcard. We also came to an agreement with Northlink's new owners (Calmac ferries) to continue the NORCET (joint initiative between Aberdeen University, East Grampian Coastal partnership and Sea Watch Foundation) ferry surveys during 2007. Finally, although fruitless, we had a very enjoyable last Sunday of the month EGCP/SWFWatch from Stonehaven.

Bottlenose dolphin sightings account for most of our March sightings and in good numbers as usual at this time of year, and with the majority concentrated around the hotspot that is Aberdeen harbour entrance. Away from this location, only a couple of reports were received from Stonehaven and Montrose. Group sizes were generally in the order of 15-20 and occurred daily between the 11th and 18th of the month. The maximum group recorded was 22 on the 11th March. Additionally, at this time of year we frequently encounter young calves and, on average, each group of 15-20 would have 2-3 calves and 2-3 juveniles. The group containing the juvenile known locally as 'Defect' was present on five or six occasions and usually when there were only two or three animals around, 'Defect' was one of them. Due to its spinal abnormalities, it appears that the bulk of the group leave this animal and a couple of adults in the harbour at times. Whilst it does not appear to have any trouble keeping up with the rest of the group, it does not breach and being left behind whilst the bulk of this group venture further afield is not unusual.

Hopefully, April will be as equally rewarding, when we aim to have an observer recruitment campaign.



Dolphin high antics! Photos: Kevin Hepworth

South East Scotland

The big news for the South East Scotland was the killer whale(s) sighted in the Inner Firth of Forth Area during February. The first sighting of two killer whales was reported already in December from between Isle of May and Fife, so they might have been in the area for some time before venturing into the Firth of Forth.

West Sutherland

From Andy Summers, Sutherland Highland Ranger

There were no sightings reported to us for West Sutherland during this period. If you have any, please let us know.

North West Scotland

There was just one report of harbour porpoise from Rona Bank, North West Scotland during early March. If you have more sightings from this period – do let us know!

West and South West Scotland (Hebrides)

From Laura Mandleberg, Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust Sightings Officer

There were eight sightings of bottlenose dolphins reported in February, all of them south of Mull. The most southerly sighting was of three dolphins sighted from a motorboat near Campbeltown. The remaining sightings were reported from the Firth of Lorn area. It is possible that some of these sightings were of the same group (4-5 individuals) since they were seen in the same general area (Isles of Luing and Easdale) over a one-week period. There were fewer sightings reported in March with just one sighting of a small group of bottlenose dolphins at Kilhoan, Sound of Mull.

Dumfries and Galloway

Possible bottlenose dolphins were seen on 6th February off Southernness Point, Dumfries and Galloway. Harbour porpoises were also sighted off the same place later on in the month.

North East England

A group of six or more bottlenose dolphins were sighted at Longhoughton Steel, Howdiemont Bay, Northumberland in mid February.

Eastern England: Tees Mouth to River Nene Mouth

A harbour porpoise sighting was reported from Scarborough harbour, Yorkshire in mid February. A dead sperm whale was found in Friskney, Lincolnshire late February.

**Eastern England: Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex
From Mark Iley**

In Essex a regular group of porpoises have returned to the Colne bar in the estuary of the river Colne, and porpoises were also seen on a regular basis in River Blackwater throughout March. A single porpoise was seen off Waxham in Norfolk on 15th March and two harbour porpoises were seen at Great Yarmouth on 29th March. Four harbour porpoises were spotted offshore from Benacre Pits in Suffolk at the end of February. Dedicated watches at Orford Ness lighthouse in Suffolk produced several sightings of harbour porpoise in March.

Eastern England: Thames Estuary**From Renata Kowalik, Thames Marine Mammals Sightings Survey, Marine & Freshwater Conservation Programme, Zoological Society of London (ZSL)**

One seal and two bottlenose dolphin sightings were sent in for February. The bottlenose dolphin sightings were from Shoeburyness and then Grays a little further upriver. However, a harbour porpoise stranding did occur in the area around the same time and this may have been misidentified as a dolphin before it stranded.

During March we received nine harbour porpoise sightings. The sightings ranged over the month and a couple of the sightings recorded a group of 6-9 porpoises. They were all seen around Gravesend and Northfleet.

**Southern England: Kent-Sussex
From Jonathan Bramley**

The only reports for this period are of a white-sided dolphin, which stranded alive but sadly died at Shellness, Isle of Sheppey on the 29th March.

In other news, we are holding a marine mammal training day on the 16th June at Wildwood near Herne Bay. The course will cover cetaceans and seals in Southern Britain. Trainers will be from ORCA, Sea Watch and the Kent Mammal Group. The cost is £20 and the day will run from 10am till 2.30pm. Spaces are limited to 12 participants. There will also be a boat trip on the following Sunday (24th June) to see seals hauled out on the Margate Sands. The cost for this trip is also £20 and spaces are limited to 10 participants. For more information or to book, please contact Jon Bramley on Jonathan.Bramley@btopenworld.com.

Southern England: Hampshire and Dorset

Bottlenose dolphins started to make an appearance in early February with single dolphins seen off Durlston Head, and a pair seen in the same area in the middle of the month. The two dolphins were seen leaping near Bournemouth Pier in mid March and were again sighted at the end of the month just off Anvil Point, Durlston.

**South West England: Devon
From Gavin Black**

Unfortunately we have not received many sightings for February and March from Devon this year. The Devon Biodiversity Records Centre only received four, three of which were porpoise and one was a sighting of common dolphins. These months reflected somewhat of a return to the usual strong south-westerlies, which have been absent the past couple of years. And true to form this meant a number of dead cetaceans washing in.

The three sightings of porpoises came from Berry Head, near Brixham, and Bull and Capstone Point, in North Devon. However, the one record of porpoises at Berry Head does not reflect the actual numbers there. Nigel Smallbones, area coordinator at Berry Head, has been getting sightings of porpoises virtually each day over the winter, as per last year. Dave Jenkins, North Devon Area Coordinator, reports few sightings during this period.

So far, we have records of 12 dead cetaceans stranding on Devon's coasts (this figure will increase as we compile all the records from different organisations involved in recording strandings in Devon). Common dolphins comprised the majority of strandings (nine) with only one porpoise, one unidentified cetacean, and one humpback whale, a first for Devon!

The sub-adult humpback was washed ashore at the point closest to the MSC Napoli, which is still being offloaded. The humpback was very decomposed (see right) and is extremely unlikely to have died as a result of the stricken vessel; however, this didn't stop the press having a field day!

Once again A BIG thank you to all volunteers who have carried out watches. Particularly to Chris Blackmore who carried out 11.5 hours of survey work from Capstone Point, even during this pretty miserable time. Please can I ask all volunteers to keep going as we're getting fantastic information.

South West England: Cornwall

From Dan Jarvis, Cornwall Wildlife Trust (sightings information reproduced with permission of Cornwall Wildlife Trust www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/).

Sightings

February and March have been notably poor for sightings, with sightings of just two species confirmed – harbour porpoise and bottlenose dolphin. However, these two managed to still rack up a good number of sightings during this period.

February-March sightings of bottlenose dolphins came from very limited areas: Penzance and St Michael's Mount in Mount's Bay, plus St Ives, Hayle and Gwithian in St Ives Bay. Most of these reports seem to be of our regular group of eight.

Harbour porpoises were abundant, with reports of small groups or lone individuals coming in from Constantine, Kellen Head, St Mawes, the Lizard, the Brisons, Sennen, Porthgwarra and Wolf Rock. Two incredible sightings of over 100(!) porpoises were received from the Camel Estuary at Padstow on 1st February, followed by St Ives on 15th March. The last of these sightings continued over the following few days with groups of up to 20 still feeding close inshore – certainly some large food sources must have been present over the last couple of months to draw in such large pods of porpoises!

Aside from the above, dolphins of an unconfirmed species were seen at Falmouth, Rame Head and Cape Cornwall, while an exceptionally early (or late?!) ocean sunfish was spotted at Cape Cornwall on 18th February.

News

Call-outs have been relatively quiet compared to the last few months for British Divers Marine Life Rescue (www.bdmlr.org) with only a handful of seals rescued and taken to the National Seal Sanctuary (www.sealsanctuary.co.uk/cornl.html) plus one or two cetacean calls, which didn't require any intervention.

The Wildlife Trust Marine Strandings Network (www.cwtstrandings.org) continues to send out its committed volunteers to record the dead animals being washed up around Cornwall, although numbers are smaller than in other years, quite possibly due to rough weather early in the year preventing fishing boats from being able to go out. As well as the usual cetacean and seal carcasses, a dead loggerhead turtle turned up at Perranporth on 1st February.

Cornwall Seal Group (www.cornwallsealgroup.co.uk) members had a sad day on Valentine's Day when it was discovered that a rock fall during the night had crushed four seals to death. One of the poor victims was identified as having previously visited the site several times in the last few years, but the others could not be identified due to the nature of their injuries. CWT and BDMLR were informed of the incident and acted appropriately. On a happier note, two seals that have only been seen once before both turned up again in the main study area. One hadn't been seen since 2003 while the other had not been recorded at this site before.

Events

The BDMLR Medic training course for Falmouth Marine School in February went as planned and a second course is now confirmed for the end of April for the students at Newquay College. As with last year, the rescue group were invited and attended the St Ives Round Table charity evening, this time coming away with a variety of prizes ranging from £250, golf lessons and a three-night stay at a hotel on the Isles of Scilly (well done to my brother Phil for winning that last one in a drinking contest!).

The Marine Strandings Network's new Area Organiser Rory Goodall set up an evening of talks on various marine conservation groups and research (Ruth Williams: Marine Strandings Network; Dan Jarvis: British Divers Marine Life Rescue; Sue Sayer: Cornwall Seal Group; Colin Speedie: Cornwall Wildlife Trust basking shark project), which was held at



A highly decomposed humpback stranded in Devon. Photo Gavin Black

Penzance Dive Club during March. The evening was a great success with over £100 being raised towards the Strandings Network. It is hoped that the evening will be repeated again at another location in East Cornwall in the near future.

The last Seal Group meeting was in February where a record turnout of members discussed national and local seal conservation issues as well as presenting updated research. The next meeting is to be held in mid-April where agenda items include a recap of the recent filming that was done for BBC's Springwatch series!

Emergency numbers:

For live seals, call the **National Seal Sanctuary** on 01326 221361.

People are warned to not approach or handle any pups that they may find on the beach, as this can cause the mother to reject it, as well as the danger of being bitten and risk of infection.

For dead cetaceans, seals etc, call the **Cornwall Wildlife Trust** hotline on 0845 2012626.

People are advised not to touch carcasses due to the risk of infection. CWT is the official recorder of dead marine wildlife in Cornwall.

For live marine animals in distress, call **British Divers Marine Life Rescue** on 01825 765546.

People are advised not to immediately return stranded cetaceans to the water, but to keep the animal upright and wet, avoiding getting water in the blowhole, until trained Medics and veterinarians can make thorough health checks.

Wales

From Hanna Nuuttila, Sea Watch Foundation Sightings Officer

In Wales, the winter and early spring has been relatively quiet although we have had occasional sightings of harbour porpoise and bottlenose dolphin in Cardigan Bay (in particular off Cardigan Island, Mwnt, Aberporth and New Quay). Dolphins were also seen off Aberystwyth and in north Cardigan Bay. In Pembrokeshire, the bottlenose dolphins have been spotted a few times over the period, sometimes in groups of up to 20 animals. Common dolphins have also been seen in North Wales. A juvenile minke whale live-stranded on Criccieth beach, on the Llyn Peninsula in early March, but despite rescue efforts, was unable to find its way to deeper waters and was euthanized. In early February, there was also a very unusual sighting of a probable humpback whale pair off Anglesey. Although unusual, the description of these animals matched that of a humpback whale. Coincidentally, humpback whales were also seen in the same week off the Isle of Man.

North West England

Four harbour porpoise were reported south of Blackpool on 20th February, and three bottlenose dolphins and two harbour porpoise were spotted off Jenny Brown's Point, Carnforth, by Rare Bird Alert on 21st March.

Isle of Man

From John Galpin, regional coordinator for the Isle of Man, and Manx Whale & Dolphin Watch

February began with scattered sightings of harbour porpoises from around the Island, with a wonderful day on the 3rd when together with the porpoises, 8-10 bottlenose and a number of Risso's dolphins were seen off the beach at the Ayres Visitor's Centre at Ballaghennie in the NW of Mann.

On the 11th, another large pod of over 20 bottlenose dolphins were seen in the south of the Island, off Kallow Point at Port St. Mary, where they entertained us with a spectacular display of breaching and leaping for some considerable time.

On the morning of the 18th, close to the cliffs just south of Peel, a large black cetacean was seen in the water, which, when disturbed, was seen heading north around Contrary Head, swimming towards Peel. The animal was described as black, and about 40 feet long; no dorsal fin was observed.

That afternoon at 13:30 hours, while watching a display of breaching bottlenose dolphins off Peel breakwater, a large tail fluke was seen, thrown into the air, not 50 metres from the rocks. The fluke was very large - very much bigger than that of the breaching dolphins. It was white on its underside with a black rim or outline around its outer edge and had a wide, large, open 'V' shaped notch - a humpback whale!

Humpback sightings around Mann are not common, although a pair of whales fitting such a description were seen along that same stretch of coast on 17th July 2006.

March began wild and windy, with reports of just a few harbour porpoises. But on the morning of the 22nd, a group of 4-6 Risso's dolphins were seen at the north end of Douglas Bay as they swam south, close to the rocks. Interestingly, they were described as all black, not the usual grey, scarred bodies of mature Risso's that are more commonly observed around these shores.

Subsequent sightings and photographs of these dolphins do indeed show a group of Risso's dolphins all sporting predominantly black colouration, with only a few greying patches developing on some animals. These Risso's dolphins and occasional mature Risso's have been regularly sighted since, from Douglas Head to Langness in the far south of the Island. The last significant sighting for March was on the 26th when a group of 3-4 Risso's were seen in early evening at Langness.

The old 'Herring Tower' on Langness Peninsula (Dreswick Point on the charts – though not known by that name locally) has been one of the most reliable places to see Risso's dolphins in recent years. In particular, those wonderful and still May evenings have yielded good sightings of Risso's dolphins close to shore.

The other notable sighting at the end of March was made by the Calf bird wardens as they surveyed the sea around the Chicken Rock. A group of over 20 harbour porpoises was seen in a tight ball as they churned the water throughout much of the watch, presumably feeding.

The forthcoming summer season promises to be very exciting. The 'Isle of Man Cetacean Survey 2007' has received substantial private and Government financial support, for which we are very grateful.

The Isle of Man Government, through its Department of Tourism and Leisure (DTL) and the Wildlife and Conservation Division of The Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), together with private sources, have financed a season of offshore surveys in the waters around Mann.

The funding is sufficient to support up to 40 days of line transect surveys throughout all the Manx territorial waters out to the 12 mile limit. A number of experienced observers have joined the team and together with local volunteers, will man the surveys.

For more information about recent Manx sightings or the 'Isle of Man Cetacean Survey 2007', please visit the website at <http://www.mwdw.net/> > www.mwdw.net.

Channel Islands

Two bottlenose dolphins were recorded off Grosnez Point on the 2nd January by Tony Paintin. Please let us know if you have any other records for this area.

Northern Ireland & Republic of Ireland

Compiled by Lori Handley (All records are validated and available on www.iwdg.ie)

We reported in the January issue a large increase in the number of fin whale sightings compared to the previous months. Interestingly, sightings are down again in February-March, with six sightings in February and none in March, compared to 18 in January. Of the February sightings, five whales were seen off Knockadoon Head, Cork on the 1st of the month, and other sightings were of 1-2 animals off Capel Island, Oysterhaven and Courtmacsherry Bay, all in Co. Cork, and off Ardmore Head, Waterford.

Bottlenose dolphins, harbour porpoises and common dolphins were seen throughout February and March. An exceptionally large pod of bottlenose were encountered during a line transect through Galway Bay on 26th March, and a fairly large pod of 25 was seen off Loop Head, Co. Clare on the 3rd. Nine sperm whales were spotted from an Irish Air Corp plane approximately 100 miles off Mullet Peninsula on 23rd February. The group consisted mainly of large adults, but with one possible juvenile, and they were seen logging on the surface. Finally, eight pilot whales were spotted during an RV Celtic Explorer blue whiting survey off the Northwest coastline on 31st March.

Sea Watch Foundation's project "Encouraging Public Participation in Cetacean Monitoring" is supported BG International, Dong Efterforskning og Produktion and Atlantic Petroleum, and the Countryside Council for Wales.

Further details on all our activities can be found on the Sea Watch Foundation website (www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk), by e-mailing <info@seawatchfoundation.org.uk> or by calling Sea Watch on 01545 561227.