

National Whale and Dolphin Watch 23 June - 1 July 2007

The 6th annual National Whale and Dolphin Watch, organised by the Sea Watch Foundation, took place between 23rd and 1st August, 2006. Despite the dismal weather (again) in most parts of the UK, the Watch Week still produced some interesting results.

Ninety two different manned sites or participating boat operators were advertised to the general public, although watches were carried out at more than a hundred locations around the UK. A total of 306 sightings from approximately 116 locations totalling 1346 individuals of whales, dolphins and porpoises were reported during the week, comprising of eight different species. As last year, the harbour porpoise was the most frequently seen cetacean with 116 sightings, followed by bottlenose dolphins, which were reported 109 times during the week. The third most commonly reported species was the minke whale with 29 sightings. Other species spotted included short-beaked common dolphin (22 sightings), killer whale (9 sightings), Risso's dolphin (7 sightings), white-beaked dolphin (4 sightings), and long-finned pilot whale (2 sightings). In addition there were also 7 reports of unidentified cetaceans.

However the severely bad weather in most parts of the UK meant that many watches were cancelled or abandoned early. Even when watches were carried out, the sightings rates were down, as the likely hood of seeing cetaceans decreases significantly with poor visibility, rain, and high seas.

Although sightings number were down from previous years, the results were comparable to previous years with harbour porpoises being widely distributed around the British coasts, with concentrations mainly in the north and west, and as last year there were a high number of sightings reported from the south east, namely from Suffolk and Essex, which could be due to increased observer numbers in the region but also might indicate an actual increase of the species.

Bottlenose dolphins were also widely distributed, reported from their usual haunts in Cardigan Bay, Cornwall, South Devon, Moray Firth and Aberdeenshire but also from Cumbria, Tyne and Wear and near Isle of Wight. Possible bottlenose dolphins were also sighted of Mull of Galloway.

Minke whales were seen mainly in the west coast of Scotland and around Moray Firth, but two minke whales were also sighted from Whitburn Coastal Park in Durham, and one possible minke whale was seen off Lundy Island in North Devon (initially thought to have been a sei whale).

Short-beaked common dolphins were sighted in Bristol Channel, north west Scotland and a large group of 100 or more were sighted in Pentland Firth. Risso's dolphins were sighted off Pembrokeshire, Isle of Man and North East Caithness coast. Killer whales were sighted several times, mainly off North

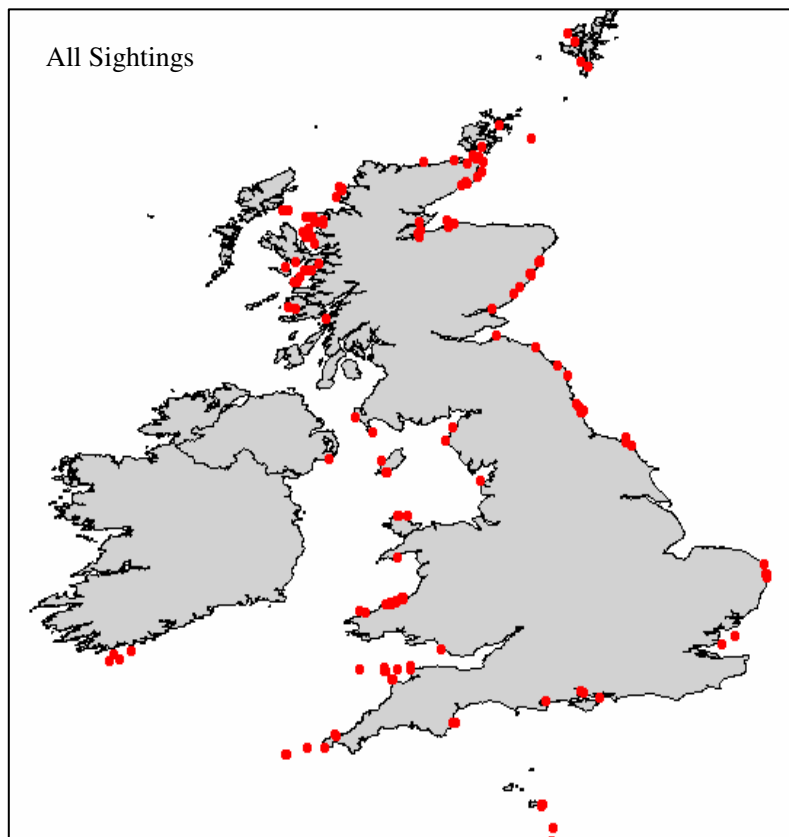
coast of Scotland, Orkney and Shetland. There were only few sightings of white-beaked dolphins, mainly from North East England.

Sightings distribution maps are appended below to give a fuller picture of what was seen all around the UK. These include a map of all sightings and species maps for bottlenose dolphins and harbour porpoise. The remaining species are included in the 'Other species' map.

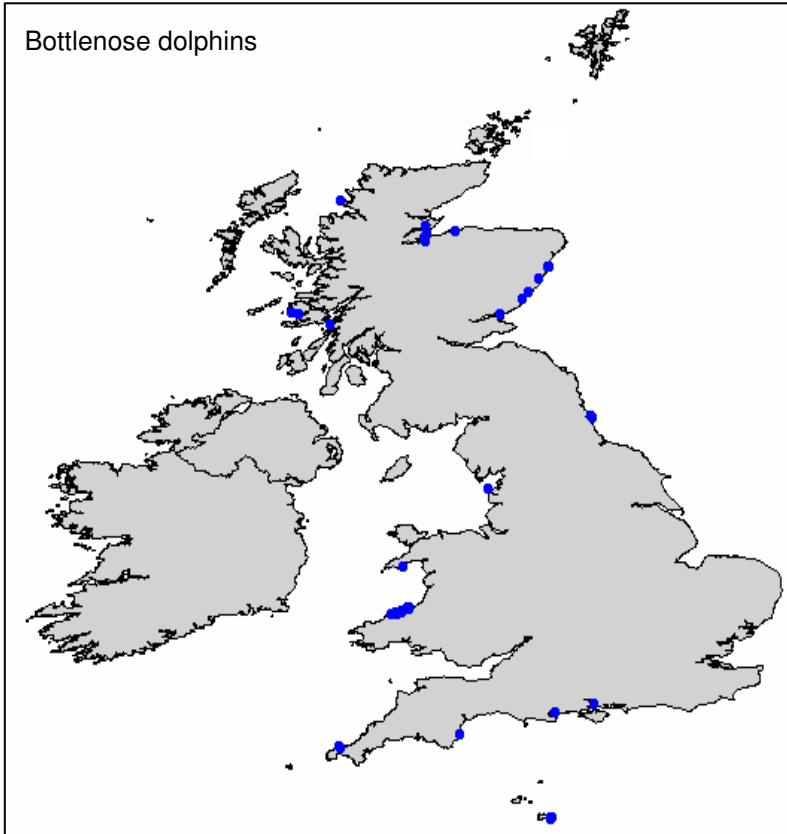
Sea Watch would like to acknowledge our funder, the BG Group for making the National Whale and Dolphin Watch possible. We would also like to thank all of you who supported us and took part in the event: the regional coordinators, local organisations, manned site organizers, volunteers and each and every single person who contacted and reported their watch results. Whether or not you were successful in sighting animals, your information and efforts helped make the National Whale and Dolphin Watch a great success.

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Sightings Maps for NWDW 2007



Bottlenose dolphins



Harbour porpoise

