



News sheet - October 2004

Editorial: Membership of Sea Watch

Sea Watch Foundation is a registered Charity and also a non-profit making Limited Company.

The Council of Management extend an invitation to all our friends and supporters and all of you involved in the study and conservation of cetaceans to become members of the Company that administers Sea Watch.

If you would like to know more about the legal structure and management and would like to consider applying to become a member of the Company, please contact us by email or by post, and we will send you an application form.

Please contact us at info@seawatchfoundation.org.uk or Sea Watch Foundation, 11 Jersey Road, OXFORD, Oxon OX4 4RT

Shetland Islands – Sightings submitted to Shetland Sea Mammal Group

7th September A minimum of 6 Risso's Dolphins were seen off Bard Head, Bressay, shoaling fish from about 13:50. They were present for at least one hour when they kept moving east and then returning back inshore.

10th September 2 large minke whales were observed close in off the north side of Out Skerries.

29th September About 40 harbour porpoises and a minke whale were seen in South Nesting Bay. A whale was also seen in Scalloway harbour - possibly a sei whale, although this would be unusual so close inshore.

North Scotland: Report by Iain Macdonald - regional co-ordinator for North-East Scotland

All three of the most frequently recorded species, harbour porpoise, bottlenose dolphin and Minke whale were reported. As was the case during the summer the number of Minke whale sightings was lower than in 2003. A sighting of 3 adult and one juvenile Risso's dolphin off Brora on 5th September was notable since this species is not often recorded from the shallower sections of the Moray Firth. Possible Risso's dolphins were also recorded further east off Lybster, Caithness on 8th September. On the same occasion bottlenose dolphins and harbour porpoise were also recorded off Lybster. In late September and into October, Gills Bay on the north coast of Caithness proved the place to be to find harbour porpoise. Over 30 animals were reported as being present and were probably regular at this site for a few weeks, until at least 24th October when approximately 30 animals were present.

The highlight of the autumn and probably the highlight of 2004 was recorded on 8th September by Mr Colin Bird of Caithness. At his favourite lookout at Lybster viewpoint, Colin reported seeing a bottlenose dolphin attacked by a probable killer whale. This was shortly followed by a probable killer whale attacking a porpoise. In total Colin reported 3- 4 bottlenose dolphins, 1 harbour porpoise and 4 probable killer whales (Colin only saw the dorsal fins of the large cetaceans which attacked the dolphin and porpoise, but made the point that he assumed the animals to be female killer whales). Whichever species were involved, the sighting must have been amazing to watch. Colin's account of the dolphin and porpoise being attacked is:

"19.57 Bottlenose dolphin shallow leaped from the sea, just as his head hit the water one of the larger creatures came up under him and went for his underside. This was followed by four or five seconds of splashing. At this point it occurred to me that it was like a dog shaking a rag doll. Although I had a camera, I was so wrapped up in what was happening it never occurred to me to use it. (light was poor by this time). I thought I had all the luck I was going to

get but I kept watching these creatures and thought I would hang on until it was too dark to observe.

20.14 I was surprised to see a single porpoise swimming out from the shore then a large creature appeared to its right and slightly behind then the two came together and there was three or four seconds of splashing."

The Caithness coast produced more sightings of killer whales at Lybster and at Whaligoe steps approximately 8 km north of Lybster where 12 animals were seen hunting seals on 10th October.

Another exciting report from Colin Bird was a sighting on 23 October of a single killer whale that was keeping a group of approximately 10 Atlantic white-sided dolphins close to shore off Lybster harbour. It proved to be a great day for cetacean species off Lybster where possibly 6 species of cetacean were reported. Some species could not be confirmed as definite, but the final list was; harbour porpoise, bottlenose dolphin, Risso's dolphin, Minke whale, killer whale and Atlantic white-sided dolphin.

North Grampian: Report from Peter Macdonald – regional co-ordinator for North Grampian

September

The weather just got better during the first week, and sightings came in from various sites. Off Findochty, large groups of 40+ were seen. During the second week, bottlenose dolphins, harbour porpoise, minke whale (Cullen bay) and 2 humpback whales were recorded off Lossiemouth.

The dolphin sightings continued to be healthy with ample feeding coming into the firth, mackerel and squid were still plentiful. Over at Lybster, orca were being recorded, so maybe that was why the bottlenose dolphins were here....

The dolphins were well spread out with large to small groups all along the coast.

The second SWF survey took place on the 11-12th with fair weather and bottlenose dolphin sightings over at Spey bay.

We also held a festival at the end of the month at Findochty and a week-long tour of schools in our area with the whale and dolphin road show.

October

Sea Watch surveys on the 2-3rd & 9-10th recorded harbour porpoise close to Troup head near Gardenstown, and a lone bottlenose dolphin, during the survey back west at Spey bay we were visited by the search and rescue helicopter and a close to the boat, a basking shark....

With the shorter days and colder weather, watching dropped a wee bit but bottlenose dolphins were still being seen in various area with Lossiemouth to Burghead being a favoured area.

Land-based sightings were slowing down but this is normal for the time of year the dolphins seem to move out the area at this time (end of month), but during the last survey we encountered 17+ dolphins off Buckie and Findochty the week before. On the 1st November, two sightings of 20+ bottlenose dolphins were seen at Lossiemouth and Spey bay.

Looking back, the late summer has been fine; we have seen four species on our surveys, heard about two others - the orca and a sunfish in Cullen bay. It was exciting to see in September the large groups with at least 10 calves in their midst. So the future looks fine for the dolphins. Maybe they are not seen so often and in the usual areas but all things change - the food supply and the fishing boats must have played a role in this. All we can do is hope for fair weather and "loupers on the bow".

South Grampian: Report from Kevin Hepworth – regional co-ordinator for South Grampian

Harbour porpoise - 30 reports came in, all but three from October, probably a reflection of the calm weather compared to September's very autumnal weather with frequent easterly gales. Five on 29th Sept off Doonies Farm was a good report. All other sightings were of between 1 and 3 individuals, with exceptional reports from 23rd and 31st October from boat-based surveys.

Bottlenose dolphin - 18 reported sightings, largely from Montrose to Stonehaven, with six from Aberdeen where the animals have been seen once a week or so. 24 on 12th September, and 23 on 20th September, represent good

sightings of them feeding in the harbour entrance at Aberdeen. 40+ seen on the 21st October in the morning were later reported heading south past Montrose. Two groups were encountered from a boat survey on the 31st October, with 12-15 off St Cyrus and a second group (18+) off Stonehaven a couple of hours later

White-beaked dolphin numbers have, as usual, fallen dramatically, with the last 'regular' sighting occurring on the 5th September off Slains Castle. A second very late report came in of three off Muchalls on 9th October, and a possible lone animal off Cove on 23rd October will go down as a dolphin species although the three brief glimpses suggest it may have been a white-beaked dolphin.

Minke whale - one off Doonies Farm on the 29th September

Dolphin species - an unusual report of 25+ very acrobatic, small dolphins heading south past Stonehaven Golf Club on 26th October may have been bottlenose, but any further ID was not possible and the observer's suggestion of porpoise seems unlikely.

Report for NW Sutherland from Andy Summers: July – October 2004

No reports for September and only one for October:

24th October at 15.00 6 miles SW of Cape Wrath 3 minke whales feeding on a "massive" shoal of herring.

West Scotland: HWDT Reported Sightings: September – October 2004

September 2004 brought HWDT's 10th anniversary together with 20 years of Sealife Surveys, to be celebrated in style at our West Coast Whale Festival (Please see www.hwdt.org for a full report from Ros. Kidman Cox!)

Sunday 19th September marked the Festival's Whale-watching Regatta, with HWDT's research & education yacht "Silurian" and Sea Life Surveys' small "fleet" of cetacean-watching vessels....

"When the four boats set out, I convinced myself that the sea was relatively calm, the crew were experienced and wouldn't take me out into the stormy bit, even if there were minke whales there. I had a coveted place on the Silurian (you can actually sleep on it, should you want to), and once our sails were set, we were off at speed, two harbour porpoises racing alongside. Though the porpoises turned out to be our one and only cetacean sighting, none of us minded. All thoughts of sickness and awareness of being drenched were expelled by the exhilaration of being aboard such a dolphin-like boat, tuned so perfectly to the sea." Rosamund Kidman Cox, Former editor, BBC Wildlife Magazine

HWDT SIGHTINGS:

HARBOUR PORPOISE:

Most of the recent HP sightings have been from boats, thanks to the brave souls who are still looking out to see when they're on the ferry!

Two groups of 6 HP were spotted off the West of Mull, probably feeding together, on 1/09/04 and 10/10/04 off Ulva Ferry. There was also a lone HP seen on 11/10/04 from the Oban – Craignure Ferry, leaving the boat behind as it travelled back towards Oban. And on 25/10/04, hardened enthusiasts afloat in the Sound of Mull were treated to at least 4 HP milling around their dive boat. Over the wreck of the Hispania, these cetaceans were spotted from the surface; after a dive, alas!

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS:

Our single reported bottlenose dolphin sighting for September was on the 9th from Mull, when a group of 9-10 BND were spotted from the Tobermory Lighthouse path, travelling NW fast, towards Ardmore Point. However, limited sightings reported in September were consoled by a bounty of October sightings!

From land-watchers:

On 8/10/04, 20+ BND were spotted North of Loch Ranza on the Isle of Arran, only 100m off-shore; On 10/10/04, 2 adult BND were seen West of Eigg (one of the Small Isles, north of Mull); And on 19/10/04 off Drimnin/Morvern, 25-30 probable BND were "spectacularly observed swimming fast, leaping, splashing and feeding, very close to the beach at two locations!

From the sea:

The Islay – Kennacraig Ferry crew have been keenly scanning and reporting plenty! Interestingly, the crew have included water depth on all their sightings and these BND were all within 13-18m of water, showing this species preference for shallower, coastal seas:

On 23/10/04, at 10am, approx. 10 adult BND with 3-5 juveniles were spotted off Port Ellen, Islay, playing & porpoising around the boat as it left the bay. Then at 2.35pm that same afternoon, south of Port Askaig in the Sound of Islay, approx. 14 adult BND with 6 juveniles were seen porpoising close to the boat, bow-riding and then playing in the boat's wake!

Approaching Kennacraig on 27/10/04, at the entrance to West Loch Tarbet (on the Kintyre peninsular) approx. 30 BND were observed bow-riding briefly and swimming fast before disappearing.

Finally, on the 28/10/04 in the Corran area, approx. 20 BND approached the ferry from ahead, swimming fast, before splitting into two groups to pass the boat on both sides.

From the mainland:

On 29/10/04 at 11.30am, one sharp-eyed sailor was working on his boat at Ardfern marina, and spotted an estimated 20 BND on the far side of the Loch opposite! Lots of leaping and charging about was obvious to this experienced observer, even from approx. half a mile away!

At mid-day on 30/10/04, 15-20 BND were spotted in the Sound of Mull, off Fiunary (Morvern), milling and feeding, leaping and splashing, believed to be heading south.

There have also been sightings of a lone BND seen from the boats travelling between Iona & Staffa, for a few weeks during October. Just goes to show that these animals are still active around the coastal waters of the Hebrides' small islands, even if most of the tourists have gone home for the winter!...

MINKE WHALE:

Local boat operators have still been running limited trips out to sea at this time of year – and with successful results! An evening cruise off Tobermory Lighthouse on 7/09/04 spotted a MW blow, swimming slowly. The whale surfaced again, close to the boat, and was identified by the Sealife Survey crew as “Nick”; one of HWDT's sponsored Minke whales! This individual was first identified in Hebridean waters in May 1992, and has been seen every summer since, with the only exceptions being 1996, 2000 & 2001 – a total of almost 30 times!!

On 10/10/04, at 1.0pm on North Uist, at least 1 adult MW (possibly 2) and 1 juvenile were spotted from Balranald RSPB Reserve!, 200 yards out from the rocks at low tide.

On 25/10/04, at 3pm, near Little Colonsay, on return to Ulva Ferry from Staffa, 1 MW was seen from the boat, swimming slowly and surfacing twice before diving (probably feeding, with associated gulls), heading East.

RISSE'S DOLPHINS:

15/09/04, 3.15pm, 9 Risso's spotted from a RIB-ride down the Sound of Sleat, heading south.

ORCA:

4/09/04, off Glengorm, N. Mull, Sealife Surveys' crew identified one male Orca and one female Orca spotted together as “John Coe” and “Lulu”; two of HWDT's sponsored whales. “Lulu” has been positively identified in Hebridean waters by HWDT / SLS crew since May 1994 & in 1995, September 1998, & May 2004. “John Coe”, however, was first identified in September 1992, and is believed to be one of the dominant males of the resident Hebridean pod. He has been identified again, amongst a group of between 2 and 6 Orca, up until the summer of 2000, but we have had no positive sightings of him recorded for the past few years, so HWDT were particularly delighted to hear of this recent confirmation!

6/09/04, north of the Cairns of Coll, Sealife Surveys' crew identified male Orca “Kinky” with an un-identified female. “Kinky” was first identified in the same pod as “John Coe”, “Floppy Fin” (- another prominent male, with a highly distinctive, curled over dorsal fin) & 2 other named males, and a named female Orca, in September 1992.

7/09/04, 3 adults swimming NW, spotted from boat travelling towards Staffa, 1.5miles from Scarinish (Old Harbour).

8/10/04, a group of 3 orcas, including male “Floppy Fin”, another of HWDT's sponsored whales, spotted from a boat trip from Ulva Ferry to Staffa.

15/09/04, 2 pm, 2 orcas spotted off Muck (Small Isles) heading south.

BASKING SHARKS:

The very clear, flat-calm day we had on 7/9/04 seems to have been THE perfect day for BS sightings!

- At 1pm, no less than 12 BS were observed slowly swimming around the Treshnish Islands;
- At 2pm, across the entrance to Calgary Bay, on the West coast of Mull, 4 BS were seen swimming slowly, close to the shore; and
- Between 2-4pm, NW of the isle of Coll, 6 BS were spotted just off-shore.

8/09/04, a single BS was spotted feeding, from a RIB-ride between Ardnamurchan Point and Tobermory harbour, Mull. This last sighting must mark the end of the local plankton bloom, these Basking Sharks now apparently sieving nutrient-rich waters off different shores.

And here are some extra-special sightings of the last two months!!...

LEATHERBACK TURTLE!!

7/09/04, 1pm: Identified by experienced crew on a boat trip between Staffa & Ulva Ferry, this amazing creature was described as having a 6ft diameter shell by an excited passenger! The turtle swam slowly at the surface, diving when the boat approached, but then re-surfaced several times.

9/09/04, 11 am: Spotted from the ferry to Eigg and Muck, nearer to Mallaig, in the direction of Ardnamurchan. (described by the sharp-eyed passenger as having a 3' x 2' reddish-brown shell & flippers.)

SIGHTINGS FROM A SINGLE, RATHER FORTUITOUS BOAT TRIP!!

And the award for the most eclectic sightings on one boat-trip goes to:

Lucky passengers aboard the 10.30 am "Turus Mara" expedition from Ulva Ferry to the isles of Staffa and Lunga, on 7/09/04. A grand day's total of 14 filter-feeding basking sharks, 2 common dolphins, 8 harbour porpoise, AND 1 leatherback turtle, all before 5.00 pm!!

SIGHTINGS REPORTED FROM AIR!!!

Our FREEPHONE Sightings Line received a recent call from a pilot to report cetaceans...

7/09/04 – 3pm: Observed whilst flying light aircraft at 600ft, between Arinagour, on Coll & Glengorm, N. Mull. 25-30 whales, estimated to be longer than 40ft (using nearby fishing boat to judge scale), were observed feeding along a tide line of pink plankton, stretching over 1/2mile long...

HWDT were also sent photographs by the enthusiastic airmen, but unfortunately these were too distant to identify the species of whale seen – but never-the-less exciting stuff!

Erika Hearn

HWDT Sightings and Research Project Assistant

[North-west England and South-west Scotland: Report from Norman Hammond – regional co-ordinator for the Solway Firth and NW England](#)

September - October: Generally confined to harbour porpoises and grey seals with, during September, a fine southward passage of basking sharks, which ran into the second week of October.

Harbour porpoises are now well spread out throughout the whole of our survey area, generally as singles or mother and calf. This should remain the case now into late January when we could see the coming together of larger groups on feeding expeditions anywhere in our survey area.

A very welcome few pairs of Risso's dolphin came onto the scene in October with one pair quite close into Blackpool South Shore and clearly seen from the promenade and Blackpool Tower.

Winter lecture programmes, featuring the work of SWF and our survey generally, commenced with much interest from audiences of natural history societies in Maryport and Keswick plus a workshop in conjunction with our friends at the Morecambe Bay Partnership AGM & Conference in Morecambe.

Wales: Report from Fernando Ugarte and Helen Bates – regional co-ordinators for Wales

September – October: The bad weather from July and August continued throughout September and October, making the last months of summer fieldwork rather difficult for those working with cetaceans in Wales.

Harbour porpoise - Harbour porpoises were seen throughout most of the Welsh coast. Since May, bottlenose dolphins dominated sightings in New Quay Bay. However, the first sighting of porpoises by the harbour wall occurred in October. This may be an early sign of a winter shift from bottlenose dolphin to porpoise as the dominating species in New Quay Bay.

Common dolphin – Common dolphins were abundant off the Pembrokeshire coast.

Bottlenose dolphin – As during the previous months, bottlenose dolphins were seen pretty much on a daily basis, weather permitting, feeding in New Quay Bay and off the headlands in the Cardigan Bay cSAC.

Other species - Risso's dolphins were observed off Pembrokeshire.

Unusual strandings – On September 23, a large fin whale stranded in Bride's Bay, Newport, Cardiff. A few days later, on September 27, a man who was walking his dog reported a live dolphin stranded close to Ynys-Lochtyn, Ceredigion. Two of our volunteers rushed to assist with the dolphin rescue, but the dolphin turned out to be a Sowerby's beaked whale (positive identification was difficult because the animal lacked teeth). The whale was eventually re-floated, only to strand again one and a half hours later a few miles south, in Tresaith. This time the whale was rescued and re-floated by another man who was walking his dog. The animal was found dead the following morning at Newport, Pembrokeshire.

Sea Watch in Wales - Helen Bates carried out her first two education sessions of this season in primary schools.

The end of October saw the last land based observations and the last dedicated distance sampling boat surveys of the "summer" season, which started in March. Preliminary estimates of the densities of harbour porpoises and grey seals during 2004 were similar to those obtained in 2003. In 2004, there were 0.20 seals / km² (95 % CI = 0.12–0.31) and 0.49 porpoises / km² (95 % CI = 0.31–0.77) in the inshore waters of the Cardigan Bay cSAC. Based on the number of dolphins identified, the minimum population size is 119, and an estimate based on the number of animals with conspicuous marks identified, and the percentage of those in the population, suggest a number of 138 (SD=0.41) bottlenose dolphins in the Cardigan Bay cSAC.

The T-PODs of New Quay, Ynys Lochty, and Aberporth were lifted at the end of October and, as I write, Malene Simon is analysing the data.

List of groups carrying out cetacean fieldwork in Wales during summer 2004:

Group: *Marine Environmental Monitoring*

Area: whole Wales

Target species: all cetaceans

Type of study: strandings

Contact: <http://www.strandings.com>

Group: *Marine Awareness North Wales*

Area: Anglesey

Target species: harbour porpoise

Type of study: boat and land based surveys

Contact: <http://www.saveourseas.co.uk>

Group: *Institute of Environmental Sciences, University of Wales, Bangor*

Area: North Wales

Target species: harbour porpoise and other cetaceans

Type of study: boat and land based surveys, T-PODs

Contact: <http://www.bangor.ac.uk/ies/ies.html>

Group: *University College Dublin*
Area: Anglesey
Target species: harbour porpoise
Type of study: T-PODs and land based survey
Contact: <http://www.ucd.ie/zoology/marinbiodiversity.htm>

Group: *Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS)*
Area: Bardsey Island
Target species: harbour porpoise, Risso's dolphin and bottlenose dolphin
Type of study: boat and land based surveys, photo-identification
Contact: <http://www.wdcs.org>

Group: *Friends of Cardigan Bay*
Area: Cardigan Bay, close to Aberystwyth
Target species: bottlenose dolphin
Type of study: boat and land based surveys, photo-identification
Contact: www.friendsofcardiganbay.org (after Christmas 2004)

Group: *Ceredigion County Council*
Area: Cardigan Bay, Ceredigion coast
Target species: bottlenose dolphins
Type of study: land based
Contact: <http://www.cardiganbaysac.org.uk>

Group: *Cardigan Bay Marine Wildlife Centre / Sea Watch Foundation*
Area: Cardigan Bay cSAC
Target species: bottlenose dolphin and harbour porpoise
Type of study: boat and land based surveys, photo-identification, T-PODS
Contact: cbmwc@tiscali.co.uk

Group: *Sea Trust South & West Wales*
Area 1: Cardigan Bay south (Strumble Head)
Target species: harbour porpoise
Type of study: land based survey
Area 2: Cardigan Bay south and St. George's Channel
Target species: common dolphins, harbour porpoises, other cetaceans
Type of study: ferry survey
Area 3: Pembrokeshire coast
Target species: common dolphin, harbour porpoise, other cetaceans
Type of study: boat based surveys and photo-identification
Contact: <http://www.seatrust.org.uk/>

Group: *Sea Watch Foundation / University of Wales, Bangor*
Area: St George's Channel
Target species: common dolphins and other cetaceans
Type of study: boat based survey, acoustic survey
Contact: <http://www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk>

Group: *South Wales Porpoise Project / Gower Marine Mammals Project*
Area: South Wales
Target species: harbour porpoise
Type of study: boat based surveys, T-PODs
Contact: <http://www.gmmp.org.uk/>

North-East England: Report from Andy Tait – regional co-ordinator for Northumberland, Tyne and Wear

The bottlenose dolphin that was sighted in the river Tyne moved to the river Wear a few miles south at the beginning of September and delighted many onlookers next to the boat marina, being very easily seen every day until the end of the month. 20+ dolphins were seen on the 5th coming into the river Wear, with another sighting of nine offshore at

Souter Lighthouse. Four minke whales were seen feeding together in a massive shoal of mackerel east of the Farne Islands. A single minke was seen 3.5 hours later in the same area on the 4th. Later in the day, harbour porpoises were seen at South Shields and again on 5th, 10th and 17th September, whilst the species was also seen off Souter on the 11th. A single porpoise was seen feeding off the reef at Cresswell. Three harbour porpoises were seen at Souter on 27th, with five there an hour later and one in Marsden Bay. 9-12 bottlenose dolphins were seen one mile east of Lizard Point going north on 27th. On the following day, 20+ dolphins were seen going north at Whitburn.

October sightings started on the 1st, with four harbour porpoises seen off Souter Light on the 4th. Two were seen in Marsden Bay on the 5th. Four harbour porpoises were seen off Blyth beach, with a dead stranding on the evening of the 10th just south of Blyth. Four bottlenose dolphins were seen in a very rough sea off Whitburn Point on the morning of the 11th, leaping just offshore.

A group of between 8-10 harbour porpoises (including two calves) were seen between Marsden Rock and Souter Light on the 14th with two further sightings of seven off Lizard Point, with a single animal off the Tyne pier. A single harbour porpoise was seen in Marsden Bay on 15th with another four off Souter on the same day. Groups of two, four, and three animals were seen on the 18th off Lizard Point. Three harbour porpoises were seen off Souter on 24th, and one on the 25th off Lizard Point. Also a single animal was seen only five metres off the sand bar at Cresswell. The last sighting was on the 29th when a group of five harbour porpoises were seen off Souter Light in the early evening.

Eastern England: Report from Robin Petch and Kris Simpson – Regional Co-ordinator for Eastern England

Kris and I have not had a great deal of success ourselves this year, our local sightings being limited to only brief glimpses of harbour porpoise. On a more positive note, however, we are receiving an increasing number of casual sightings through our "Dolphin-spotter" postcard scheme, supported by The Deep in Hull. As a result, awareness of porpoises and other cetaceans in the Humber and the Yorkshire/Lincolnshire coast continues to grow. Sightings of particular note include a group of at least 12-15 seen near the Humber Bridge in July and a minke whale off Staithes North Yorkshire in early September. As a result of the Sea Watch Whale & Dolphin Watch, we also received a report and photographs of two striped dolphins washed up at Sewerby Steps near Bridlington in March. Further developments in our relationship with "The Deep" are under consideration - watch this space!

Essex, Suffolk & Norfolk: reports from Gary Mead & Mark Iley – Biodiversity Project Officer for Essex, and Helen Nott, Norfolk

The only sightings reported from the area for the period September – October were a single harbour porpoise seen at 11:40 hrs on 4th September at 52° 018' N, 1° 28.0' E, and four bottlenose dolphins seen off RSPB Titchwell, Norfolk on 7th September.

North Kent: Report from Jon Bramley – regional co-ordinator for North Kent

Three harbour porpoises seen from shore off North Foreland the Isle of Thanet on 4th October.

East Kent: Report from David Walker – Regional Co-ordinator for East Kent

The following sightings were made from Dungeness:

Harbour porpoise: one on 25th September, one on 6th October, one on 7th October, and one on 12th October.

Bottlenose dolphin: about 12 on 1st September, and one on 26th October.

Sussex: Report from Stephen Savage – Regional Co-ordinator for Sussex

Three sightings reported from East Sussex: on 2nd September, a bottlenose dolphin was seen at Seven Sisters, and on the same day a bottlenose dolphin (possibly the same individual) was seen moving east near Telscombe Cliffs. On 3rd September, two bottlenose dolphins were observed together moving east off Telscombe Cliffs (Observer: Dave Howey).

Dorset: Report from Jo Wharam (Durlston Marine Project) – Regional Co-ordinator for Dorset

After the flurry of summer sightings, September was a relatively quiet month with 5-6 bottlenose dolphins seen from Durlston on two occasions. In October, the sightings began to pick up with pods of up to 10 animals being viewed from Portland Bill on three occasions. The pod of 8 animals that we have been studying since early spring moved between Hengistbury Head and Anvil Point, Durlston. The last sighting of the month was on 19th when six bottlenose dolphins were seen playing around a catamaran off Bournemouth Pier.

Devon: Report of Sightings and Strandings between April and October by Gavin Black, Devon Wildlife Trust

Sightings: Although the weather this summer has not been great for seeing marine mammals, there have been an abundance of bottlenose dolphin sightings between April and October.

Bottlenose dolphins were particularly evident, with at least two pods present, between May and October. With 27 separate sightings from both coasts. In North Devon, where groups were of up to 10 individuals (generally about 6), there were 7 sightings between the end of May and the beginning of October. Most of these occurred off Hartland and east of Morte Point. In South Devon there were 24 sightings of groups of between 5 and 20 individuals (generally 6-8) between the beginning of May and the beginning of September, occurring from Plymouth to Lyme Regis but mostly in the Tor Bay area. This doesn't include the 22 unidentified small cetacean sightings, many of which are also likely to be bottlenose dolphins.

We've only received 5 records of harbour porpoise, which is a worryingly small number, but there are more about, particularly in north Devon where effort-related surveys by David Jenkins confirm their regular presence.

In early August there was a very exciting record of between 8 and 10 white-beaked dolphins in the middle of Lyme Bay. Initially their identity was unknown but the observers had got the encounter on videotape and kindly sent it in solving the mystery, and giving an unusual record. It shows how valuable photographic and video records are. So if you see something you're not sure of and if you can, please take a photo and send it in.

There were two sightings of long-finned pilot whales on 31st August, probably of the same pod, that was first seen near Hands Deep and then 6 hours later much closer to the coast being sighted 1.5 miles south west of the Mewstone at Wembury.

A large cetacean of 73 ft was spotted off Berry Head at the end of July. Sadly the observer did not leave any contact details and the record could not be followed up. But if this size is accurate, it could only be a large baleen whale, probably a fin whale.

Strandings: In contrast to the sightings, the stormy weather kept us busy with a significantly higher than normal number of cetacean strandings over the summer.

April saw the last common dolphins washing in from the winter period. These six brought the total number of stranded common dolphins for the winter up to 47 and the total strandings number up to 65. Since then, we have only had one more common dolphin stranding; unusually this was discovered on the north coast in mid October.

The stormy weather saw 11 harbour porpoise strand between April and October on both coasts. Unusually 3 were found on the east-facing coast around Dartmouth, 1 washed up at Sidmouth, 5 stranded on the north coast and 2 in the more usual stranding locations of between Salcombe and Plymouth. Two of the stranded porpoises in North Devon were very young, probably less than a month old and it looks like they were separated from their mothers during the storms in June.

Although regularly seen off the coast, bottlenose dolphins very rarely strand, and yet 2 bottlenose dolphins stranded over the summer in a very advanced state of decomposition... 1 in April and 1 in September and both on south coast. Estimates of the bottlenose dolphin population in the south-west range from 25 to 50 so these two, and another found in Cornwall, represent a significant number.

At the end of October, a dead young fin whale stranded at St Mary's Bay in Brixham. The 15m long animal was quite decomposed and had been seen floating up the coast over the previous week. It may have been a victim of ship-strike, but unfortunately it was too decomposed to carry out an *in-situ* post-mortem so samples were taken and the huge whale towed out to sea and sunk 10 miles offshore.

September and October

01.09.2004	15-20 bottlenose dolphins 6 small unidentified	10-12 miles south of Beer/Budleigh Salterton	alive
02.09.2004	cetaceans	Off Goodrington, Tor Bay	alive
07.09.2004	4 bottlenose dolphins	Eldern Point, North Devon	alive
11.09.2004	6-10 bottlenose dolphins	100m North of Clovelly harbour, Torridge	alive
13.09.2004	1 harbour porpoise	Soar Mill Cove, South Hams	stranding
13.09.2004	1 harbour porpoise	Saunton Sands, North Devon	stranding
16.09.2004	1 bottlenose dolphin	Slipway at Blagdon Shipyard, Richmond Walk, Devonport, Plymouth	stranding
02.10.2004	1 harbour porpoise	Thurlestone Sand, South Hams. North end near footpath and cliffs.	stranding
03.10.2004	1 harbour porpoise	Saunton Sands, North Devon. South end on strand line.	stranding
04.10.2004	1 harbour porpoise	Sidmouth Town beach, East Devon	stranding
08.10.2004	5-6 bottlenose dolphins	Between Marsland Mouth & Welcombe Mouth, Torridge.	alive
12.10.2004	1 common dolphin	Between Marsland Mouth & Welcombe Mouth, Torridge	stranding
19.10.2004	1 harbour porpoise	Portledge Mouth, Alwington, Torridge	stranding
29.10.2004	1 fin whale	South end of St Mary's Bay, Brixham	stranding

Cornwall: Report from David Ball, Silver Dolphin Centre, Porthleven

September and October

01.09.2004	8 unidentified dolphins	Rumps Point, Padstow Bay	alive
01.09.2004	Pod of common dolphins	Hayle	alive
02.09.2004	Pod of unidentified dolphins	St Ives Bay	alive
02.09.2004	1 minke whale	1-2 miles off St Anthony, Falmouth	alive
03.09.2004	1 long-finned pilot whale	approx 21 miles of St Anthony, Falmouth	alive
04.09.2004	1 minke whale		alive
04.09.2004	4 harbour porpoises		alive
04.09.2004	c. 6 Risso's dolphins	off Gwenap Head	alive
05.09.2004	Pod of bottlenose dolphins	off Gwenap Head	alive
12.09.2004	Common dolphins	St Ives Bay	alive
12.09.2004	Bottlenose dolphins	St Ives Bay	alive
24.09.2004	Pod of unidentified dolphins	Falmouth	alive
26.09.2004	6-8 bottlenose dolphins	Newquay	alive
08.10.2004	Pod of harbour porpoises	Porthtowan	alive
20.10.2004	6-8 bottlenose dolphins	Pendennis Head, Falmouth	alive
22.10.2004	1 killer whale	off Peninnis Head, St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly	alive
27.10.2004	7 bottlenose dolphins	Sennen Cove	alive

Channel Islands: Report from Jersey by Bertram Bree

15th September. Just as the weather improved I decided to set up my telescope to scan for cetaceans and surprise, I saw 4 or more bottlenose dolphins immediately I set up my telescope at 13.00 BST at Le Hurel, La Rocque, Jersey. They were feeding and playing around the Cochon buoy and moved around the area about 200m from low water level as the tide was low. They moved towards the Noire beacon and back towards the Cochon then on towards the south of the Cochon buoy, probably feeding most of the time.

26th September I decided to look at the 12 Brent Geese in Grouville Bay with passing skuas and seabirds offshore then started a count of dolphins at 12.30 BST until 13.10 BST at low water when I often see bottlenose dolphins without much effort when the sea is calm. Sure enough, at 12.40 BST I saw at least two adult bottlenose dolphins break the surface once together near La Noire beacon just off the low water area in shallow water.

26th October, at least two adult bottlenose dolphins were seen in Grouville Bay, 500 metres west of the Giffard buoy, moving towards l'Avarison, and feeding over the mussel beds all morning. They were feeding a few hundred metres from the shore at low tide between 09:50 BST when I first noted them immediately I started a watch and were there at 12.20 BST, still circling and feeding in the same area. Also there were many seabirds moving south including good numbers of auks, mostly razorbill, which were pounced upon by little gulls as they surfaced. Two bottlenose dolphins were still there at 18:00 BST, circling and feeding together over the mussel beds.

Channel Islands: Report from Jersey by Nick Jouault and Carol Hansford

1st September 7 bottlenose dolphins were observed for 20 minutes from 15:15 at 49° 10.0 N, 2° 15.0 W, following our boat, a cargo vessel and a pilot boat. They were very playful. Observer: Aaron Chatterley

9th September 11 bottlenose dolphins (including one calf) were seen at 15:00, at 49° 10.0 N, 2° 10.0 W. Observer: Carol Hansford

18th September 2 bottlenose dolphins were observed among boats at 11:00, in Bouley Bay Harbour (49° 12.5 N, 2° 5.0 W). Observer: P.L.Double

31st October 3 bottlenose dolphins (all dolphins roughly the same size) were sighted in St Aubins Bay (49° 10.0 N, 2° 10.0 W) at 09:00; they swam alongside our sailing boat for approx 1 hour and were very lively and playful. Observer: Catherine Ward

31st October 2-4 dolphins (possibly common dolphins) were observed at 10:30 swimming casually around about half a mile from Belcroute Bay (49° 10.0 N, 2° 10.0 W). The underside was very white. They swam close to the boat and one launched itself clear of the water only 10 metres from the boat. They swam towards the boat on several occasions diving under the boat at the last minute. Observer: John Leveridge

Channel Islands: Report from Guernsey by Martin Gavet

1st September Two groups of about 4-5 common dolphins were observed travelling together. They were heading southwards towards Jersey at 7.5 knots when they came past the vessel at 49° 26 N, 2° 08 W (roughly halfway between Sark and France). They remained with the boat for about 10 minutes whilst photos and video were taken. The dolphins would surf in the wake and ride the bow wave occasionally, and were being followed by about a dozen gannets. Sea state was flat calm; weather sunny. Observer: Mark Page

1st September 12 bottlenose dolphins (length 8'+) were observed for 20 minutes bow-riding the MORNING STAR at 15:30, east of the Schole Bank. The tide was running from the south, and starting to rise. Sea: was calm. Observer: B de Carteret

25th September 25-30 common dolphins were observed off the Platte Fougere from the SARNIA. Photos taken. Observer: Will Roger

15th October 2 long-finned pilot whales (c. 15' length) were seen quietly swimming south-west and blowing, from the BON MARIN DE SERK, half a mile west of Bec du Nez, Sark. Weather: squally showers; NW wind; gusting; moderate sea. Observer: J Bougourd

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