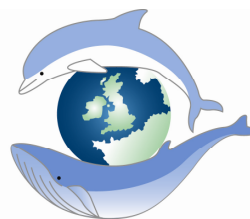


sea watch FOUNDATION



Editorial

Welcome to the (newly reinstated) July edition of the Sea Watch Foundation News Sheet! This issue provides updates of all the major news relating to SWF and sightings highlights over June and July including news of an ASCOBANS award for SWF and the initial results of National Whale & Dolphin Watch in 2009. Thanks to those regional coordinators and observers that have been involved in producing this news sheet. For those of you that haven't participated in this issue, please write to me if you would like to contribute in any way such as by writing a piece for the news sheet or by sending in photos. Any suggestions for improvement or other feedback are also welcome.

Best wishes,

Gemma Veneruso, Sightings Officer (gemma.veneruso@seawatchfoundation.org.uk)



Bottlenose dolphin

© SWF/Gemma Veneruso

SWF ANNOUNCED AS WINNER OF THE THIRD “ASCOBANS OUTREACH AND EDUCATION AWARD”

ASCOBANS (the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, Northeast Atlantic, Irish and North Seas) has given an award to SWF in recognition of its efforts to further the conservation of small cetaceans in northern Europe. ASCOBANS is an international agreement involving governments across northern Europe to promote close cooperation amongst Parties with a view to achieving and maintaining a favourable conservation status for small cetaceans. A conservation and management plan obliges Parties to engage in habitat conservation and management, surveys and research, pollution mitigation and public information.

During the meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee on 20-24 April 2009, comprising government representatives of the various NW European countries as well as representatives of UNEP and non-governmental organisations, SWF was voted winner of the triennial award. There are many large organisations that are dedicated to the conservation, education and outreach of small cetaceans, so it really is an honour for Sea Watch to be recognised as an organisation that makes a significant impact on the conservation of cetaceans in the region. The award will be presented at the UN Campus in Bonn September 2009 by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species under UNEP. Further details of the award ceremony will be reported in the September-October issue.

Gemma Veneruso

NATIONAL WHALE & DOLPHIN WATCH 2009

The eighth annual National Whale & Dolphin Watch (NWDW) organised by the Sea Watch Foundation occurred between the 18th and 26th July 2009. NWDW aims to increase public awareness by involving the public in data collection. The event also provides a snapshot distribution of UK cetaceans and may help inform scientific debate on changes in the range and distribution of species. 45 land based manned sites were advertised to the public as well as 13 boat operators. However, watches were recorded from 180 locations throughout the UK and more than 500 observers participated in the event. To date, 439 sightings of whale, dolphin and porpoise have been reported during the watch, nine species were seen totalling 2137 individual cetaceans. For the second year running, bottlenose dolphins had the highest number of reports with 191 sightings submitted totalling 966 individuals. Harbour porpoise sightings were the second highest followed by minke whales. Figure 1 shows the distribution of cetacean sightings that were recorded during NWDW. The event highlights the importance of maintaining an active sightings network that can provide information on the distribution, habitat requirements and ranging movements of cetaceans. For further details on the results of NWDW 2009, see the full report posted on the website. A big thanks to everyone who was involved in the event and to our sponsor, the BG Group.

Some highlights of the watch included:

- A number of bottlenose dolphin sightings were reported further south on the east coast than in previous years including Sunderland, Scarborough and Withernsea Sands, North Humberside. This is believed to be the most southerly record of the east Scottish population that we have to date.
- One humpback whale- off Scalloway, Shetland
- Eight killer whales off Eshaness, Shetland
- 40 common dolphins- Swiney Hill, Lybster, Caithness
- One possible humpback whale- Swiney Hill, Lybster, Caithness
- 30 white beaked dolphins-six miles of Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire
- 200 common dolphins-off Grassholm Island, Pembrokeshire
- One killer whale- numerous reports of this animal throughout the Isle of Man
- 50 common dolphins- off Isle of Skye
- Four killer whales- off the Summer Isles, Ross & Cromarty
- 20 common dolphins- in the North Channel, Belfast Lough

Gemma Veneruso

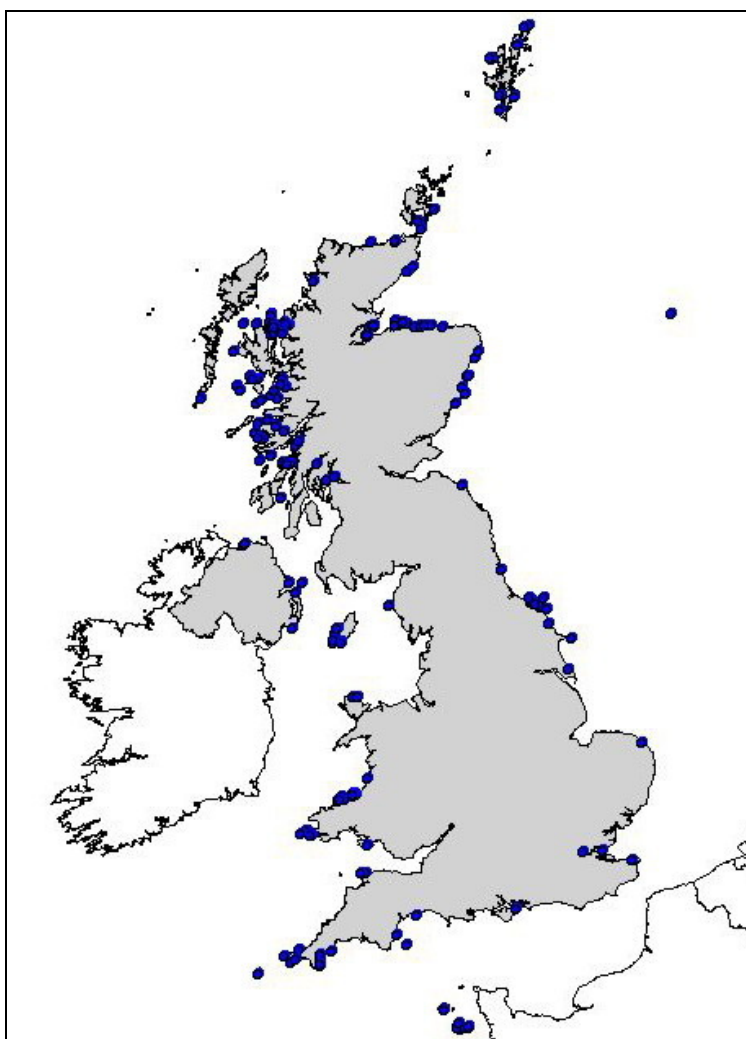


Figure 1: Distribution of all cetacean sightings reported during NWDW 2009

NWDW: Hitting the headlines

This year, following the tragic and sudden death of Clare Dickins last year, Wendy Nekar was joined for part of the National Whale and Dolphin Watch Media Campaign by Julie Albray, a journalist and PR professional with nearly 20 years' experience.

The campaign began in earnest in March and we secured a satisfying high level of coverage at local and national level and in print, radio, or TV as well as on web-based sites, and this opened the way for further coverage later in the year.

In summary we:

- issued national and regionally-tailored press releases, achieving widespread coverage;
- set up local radio and TV interviews with co-ordinators and the Sightings Officer Gemma Veneruso;
- achieved national coverage on BBC Radio 5 Live, The Times (Saturday), The Independent, Sky News, Aquila magazine (aimed at children); consumer magazines such as BBC Countryfile, specialist websites such as Wildlife Extra, the animal lovers' Pet Smiles and the family-orientated Green Parent;
- secured on-going interest from BBC Countryfile and Sky News, both of which, are hoping to feature Sea Watch's work;
- worked with sponsors BG to promote NWDW to their staff and explored options for involving their Milford Haven staff further
- established Sea Watch's first downloadable educational resources for schools through a link-up with teacher and volunteer Sarah Langford and promoted these through educational publications.

Our thanks go to Sightings Officer Gemma Veneruso and all those local co-ordinators who took time out to take part in radio or TV interviews, and to Howard Loates who hosted a visit by Saturday Times writer Simon Barnes which resulted in some excellent coverage.

It was also great to hear positive feedback from a number of areas (Devon, Cornwall, and Scotland in particular), where visitors specifically cited local coverage as the reason for their attendance at watches.

Chris Blackmore in North Devon reported a number of people stopping by the NWDW banner that he was displaying, but was still surprised by the numbers of local people unaware of the marine mammal life in their area, so clearly there is more work to do!

In addition, drawing/painting competitions in Cambrian Life and the Devon Herald and Express inspired children, attracting large numbers of entries, and helping to raise awareness amongst families of NWDW as well as encouraging children to visit the Adopt-a-Dolphin web site.

Although the weather was once again not on our side, the media, by and large, were!

Wendy Nekar

SIGHTINGS HIGHLIGHTS JUNE-JULY 2009

The great weather in June meant a successful month in terms of sightings for many parts of the UK. Unfortunately the weather conditions deteriorated for most parts in July which was reflected in the sightings in many regions. However, the month still provided some interesting results.



Bottlenose dolphin reports were high as normal, if not greater than previous years. They were recorded regularly in the usual haunts such as the Moray Firth in Northeast Scotland, Cornwall, and Cardigan Bay in West Wales, including a SWF survey during which we recorded more than

40 bottlenose dolphins from different encounters in less than six hours! This summer, however, continues to show a significant increase in sightings of the species further down the east coast of Britain than previously recorded, at least in recent times. We expect to see high numbers of bottlenose dolphins in the Moray Firth and Grampian coastline but these animals were regularly spotted at locations where they are normally only occasional visitors, and even at sites where they have never been seen before! In May of this year, repeated sightings of dolphins occurred on the east coast of England. Until 2009, Northumberland was the most southerly point on the east coast that the dolphins ventured. However, this year, June and July brought regular reports of bottlenose dolphins as far south as Whitby, Flamborough Head and even Withernsea Sands. An animal that was photographed from Whitby on the 31st May has been confirmed as a dolphin from the Moray Firth catalogue. This animal has been photographed regularly in the Moray Firth since 1990 but has also been seen in St Andrews Bay, Fife and North Tyneside. We also saw unusually high numbers of bottlenose dolphins in Southeast Scotland, in East Lothian and the Firth of Forth. On the 1st July, there was estimated to be as many as 75 bottlenose dolphins off North Berwick, East Lothian! And they seemed to be staying in the area, as regular reports of these animals in relatively large group sizes were still coming in.

Short-beaked common dolphin sightings have been relatively high this summer and have been seen in large numbers in Northwest Scotland and Pembrokeshire, including a group of more than 200 off Grassholm Island during NWDW, and more than 500 seen off Rumps Point,



Cornwall. They are also becoming increasingly regular visitors to the north-east coast of Scotland. As usual, they have been regularly seen at the opposite end of the country in North Devon and Cornwall whilst a group of 100 individuals were observed in South Devon! More than 60 common dolphins were surprise visitors to the Gower coastline where they remained throughout June and July.

There have been some impressive killer whale sightings this summer mainly off Scotland. The highlight must be the pod of 100 killer whales that were spotted by the crew of Shetland Coastguard Helicopter Search on the 4th July 100 km west of Vaila, off Shetland. The next day, two pods of killer whales were seen almost simultaneously off the west coast of Ireland. These pods were photographed and were identified as members of the 'west coast community' that mainly inhabit Hebridean waters. Some members of this group have been photographed by Sea Watch staff since the 1980s and are often seen particularly around the Inner Hebrides. It is thought that all nine members of the 'west coast community' were present in those two sightings making it the first time all individuals of the pod have been known to leave Hebridean waters. One week later, five members of this pod had returned home and were seen off the Isle of Skye. Killer whale sightings were also reported around the Isle of Man.



Other interesting sightings must include the spate of great whales that have visited our waters in recent months. One particularly unusual encounter was that of a probable sei whale off Northumberland on the 21st June. Fin whales, the second largest animal on the planet, have been making appearances sporadically throughout the country. Sightings of the species have been recorded in the Pentland Firth in Northern Scotland, west of St Kilda, and even off the Dublin coast as well as close to the south coast of Ireland near Cork. Of the great whales, humpback whales have been the most common this summer. Eight sightings of humpbacks were reported over June and July. Locations included repeated sightings off Shetland, in Northeast Scotland, Pembrokeshire, Northwest Scotland and Southeast Ireland.

Harbour porpoises remain pretty widely distributed throughout the UK, but with highest densities of reports from Pembrokeshire, South and North Devon, and East Anglia. On the other hand, some regions such as the southern Moray Firth appear to have had lower numbers of porpoises than in previous years. Several minke whale

sightings have been made throughout the UK, with hotspots occurring in Northwest and Northeast Scotland. We also saw many reports of Risso's dolphins mainly in Northern and Northeast Scotland, and the Isle of Man. White-beaked dolphins made an appearance in July off the south Grampian coastline. The first and only report of the summer so far of Atlantic white sided dolphins came during NWDW off Shetland. This species seems to be shifting its range further north – possibly a consequence of warming sea temperatures.



Gemma Veneruso

Please send all sightings to Gemma at:

gemma.veneruso@seawatchfoundation.org.uk

REGIONAL ROUNDUPS

SHETLAND

Compiled by Bryony Manley, SWF volunteer

During June and July, sightings were recorded in a wide variety of locations around the Shetland Islands, with killer whales and minke whales making up the majority of reports. There were four minke whale sightings in June and five in July, and all recorded single individuals. Killer whales were sighted eight times in both June and July, with pod sizes ranging from 1 to 100 individuals. Pods of 15 and 30 killer whales were recorded on the 28th and 29th June respectively, with the highlight undoubtedly being the pod of 100 recorded on 4th July, 100km west of Vaila. During June, there were sightings of 15 Risso's dolphins on the 26th, a pod of 50 dolphins (species unidentified) on the 27th, and three sightings of Atlantic white-sided dolphins in pods of 50-100 individuals. Small numbers of white-sided dolphins and Risso's dolphins were also seen during July, while individual humpback whales were seen on the 15th and 19th July. Harbour porpoises remained relatively scarce, with reports on 1st and 15th July.

ORKNEY

Compiled by Bryony Manley, SWF volunteer

June was a good month around the Orkney Islands with four different species being seen. Between the 9th and 14th, five minke whales were seen around the islands. Twenty killer whales were seen, with the largest group of 12 individuals being seen around Scapa on the 25th. Harbour porpoises were a fairly regular sighting with a total of 18 being seen, including a group of eight off South Ronaldsay on the 10th. Risso's dolphins also made an appearance, with a group of eight sighted in Scapa Flow on the 26th, and a group of 12 seen in the same area on the 27th, 28th and 29th June.

Fewer sightings were reported in July, with only two species being recorded. Harbour porpoises made an appearance again. A total of 20 animals were reported, with regular sightings being made off Hoxa Head on South Ronaldsay. There was also one sighting of a minke whale off Deerness, Orkney on the 21st.

NORTH SCOTLAND

Compiled by Gemma Veneruso, SWF

June on the north coast of Scotland resulted in 22 sightings of six different species. The month kicked off to a good start when on the 2nd June, five killer whales were seen from a ferry between Duncansby Head and South Ronaldsay, Orkney. Sightings of killer whales continued throughout the month including one at Torrisdale on the 26th, two seen from the Pentland Ferry from Gills Bay to Orkney on the 28th, and a pod of ten at Scarfskerry on the 29th.

The top spot in the region must be Strathy Point, North Sutherland, which had six sightings in four days during the month of June. These included a group of eight short-beaked common dolphins, minke whales and harbour porpoises. Porpoises were also spotted at Scarfskerry, John O' Groats and Dunnet Head. Risso's dolphins made an appearance on two occasions in Thurso Bay. The highlight of the month, however, was surely a fin whale sighting in the Pentland Firth on the 9th June.

Strathy Point continued to be an important site during July. On the 1st July within one hour, Paul Castle (Highland Council Ranger for N Sutherland) recorded five sightings, including up to 32 harbour porpoise, three Risso's dolphins, six white-beaked dolphins, and a minke whale! Sightings of harbour porpoise continued at Strathy Point on the 4th, 7th, 25th and 27th as well as six more white-beaked dolphins on the 27th. There were plenty more porpoise sightings to come, with 17 reports, from Torrisdale Bay, Holborn Head, off John O' Groats, Dunnet Head and Bay, the Pentland Firth and Thurso Bay. Thurso Bay also reported two sightings of Risso's dolphin and a minke whale. Another minke whale was reported on the 16th at Scotland Haven.



NORTH EAST SCOTLAND

Written by Colin Bird, Regional Coordinator for Northeast Scotland

Seventeen sightings were recorded in June 2009:

A single bottlenose dolphin was seen by Colin Carter from his creel boat Samar off Clyth Harbour. Bottlenose dolphins are only seen a few times a year along the coast

of Caithness unlike other areas of the Moray Firth. For our region, this was a very good sighting. Whilst fishing off the coast of Occumster on the 6th June, Colin also spotted three Atlantic white-sided dolphins, the first this year for the east coast of Caithness.

The Whaligoe Steps saw two minke whale sightings on the 2nd and 3rd June. Dave Nicolson and I each saw a minke whale. Dave keeps his eyes on the sea whilst maintaining the steps for the public, so they can marvel at the ingenuity of fishermen during the great herring boom of the 19th century. A further two sightings of minke whale were recorded off the coast at Lybster, making a total of four for the month. The Whaligoe Steps also had the only Risso's dolphin sighting of the month. I recorded Risso's dolphins on the 27th with a group of two animals very close to the cliffs.

There were eight records of harbour porpoise during June. Colin Carter and his wife Grace reported four from Colin's creel boat, a further three were seen from Swiney Hill, Lybster, and a single sighting was made at the Whaligoe Steps, Ulbster. There were also two sightings of dolphins that could not be identified.

54 sightings were recorded in July 2009

July produced the best sea conditions seen for many years in my area. This is reflected in the fact that as many as 40 sightings of harbour porpoise were reported during the month. Colin and Grace Carter recorded nine sightings from the creel boat, Samar. I recorded the remaining sightings: four from the Whaligoe steps Ulbster, and 27 from the viewpoint at Swiney Hill, Lybster.

I also recorded six minke whale sightings from the viewpoint at Swiney Hill, Lybster. Three of these sightings were during one watch on the 11th. I also got a rare sighting on the 23rd of a single juvenile humpback whale. Unfortunately this occurred late in the evening when the light was failing. Three Risso's dolphin sightings were recorded, one sighting at the Whaligoe Steps with two animals being close inshore on the 2nd, and two further sightings on the 24th and 25th from the viewpoint at Swiney Hill, Lybster. A group of 40+ common dolphins were seen at a distance from Swiney Hill, Lybster on the 19th July. Again, this was late in the evening with failing light. A single bottlenose dolphin also made an appearance at Swiney Hill on the 23rd. Two unknown species were also recorded, one whale and one dolphin species.

NORTHERN MORAY FIRTH

Compiled by Gemma Veneruso, SWF

June brought plenty of bottlenose dolphin sightings to the northern Moray Firth, ranging in group size from 1 to 25 animals. They were spotted at the usual haunts: Chanonry Point, Fort George, and North Sutor of Cromarty. No porpoise sightings were recorded this month but offshore at oil platforms situated in the North Sea, sightings of 40 either Atlantic white-sided or white-beaked dolphins were spotted on the 29th, and two encounters of a minke whale occurred on the 23rd.

In July, there were even more bottlenose dolphin sightings from Chanonry Point, The Sutors of Cromarty, Fort George, and Rosemarkie Bay, as well as some offshore sightings in the outer Moray Firth, which included a group of 35 animals. During this month, four reports of harbour porpoise were recorded, three of which were seen from Chanonry Point and one in the outer Moray Firth.

SOUTHERN MORAY FIRTH

Written by Alan Airey, Regional Coordinator for Moray Firth (Kessock/Inverness to Cullen Bay)

June's weather in the Moray Firth was generally not too bad, but we did lose several days due to stormy weather or thick sea fog. Bottlenose dolphins were sighted as usual virtually every day somewhere along the coast from Inverness to Cullen, with Fort George, Burghead, Spey Bay, Buckie, Findochty and Portknockie producing most sightings. The size of the bottlenose dolphin groups ranged from 2 to 30+, but the average sighting was usually of 12-15 animals, usually with 2 calves.

After some fabulous minke whale sightings at the latter end of May in the Moray Firth (when we had seven minkes on one night off Burghead), it was reassuring to continue to get sightings in June. At Burghead, single minkes were seen on 4th and 22nd June, followed by three on the evening of 23rd June. Off Findochty, minkes were seen on the 28th, 29th and 30th. Mackerel have been particularly abundant along the coast and no doubt the minkes were taking their fair share.



Harbour porpoise seemed scarcer than usual. We say that every year, but there definitely seems to be less about. Porpoises that were seen were off Burghead, Findochty, Portknockie, and Cullen Bay where three were frequently seen. Two dead porpoises - the victims of bottlenose dolphin attacks, were picked up from beaches at Lossiemouth and Spey Bay in early June by the Scottish Agricultural College.

Common dolphins are becoming more regular visitors to the Moray Firth, and we had two sightings on the 28th and 29th off Findochty, both of a group of 10+.

Less usual visitors to the south Moray Firth coast are Risso's dolphins, but we had one sighting of 4-5 Risso's on 20th, again off Findochty.

The prize for best evening cetacean watching must go to Peter Macdonald at Findochty, who on the 29th had seven good sightings of minkes, bottlenose and common dolphins in a flat calm sea on a sunny evening from the back of his house.

I had high hopes for good sightings during July, and it got off to a good start when

on July 1st, at Burghead, I was watching a lunge feeding minke, a bottlenose dolphin and two porpoises at 7.20am before I started my day's work. But the month did not continue quite as well, again thwarted by sea fog or stormy weather, with the latter totally negating any sightings during the second week of July.



Minke whale

© SWF/Pia Anderwald

When the weather was sufficiently suitable for watching, then groups of bottlenose dolphins were seen all along the coast, almost daily at some locations. The bottlenose's usual haunts of Fort George, Burghead, Lossiemouth, Spey

Bay, Buckie, Findochty and Portknockie produced the majority of the sightings. Group sizes again were usually 2-30, with 12-15 being the average, but on the 25th, during NWDW week, 40 were seen of the Skerries at Cove sea, near Lossiemouth.

The aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious paid a rare visit to the Moray Firth anchoring off Lossiemouth, and on 5th July it was interesting to watch a minke whale feeding among rafts of sea birds close to the aircraft carrier as Royal Navy personnel went about their business between the parked Harriers on the flight deck above. The local newspaper also carried a photograph of the aircraft carrier with bottlenose dolphins passing in front. After that first minke sighting of the month on July 1st at Burghead, a minke was seen again there on the 4th, and a further two on the 24th. At Findochty on the 3rd July, two minkes were feeding so close in to the shore that their breath could be smelt. The same day, a minke was also seen in outer Cullen Bay, and a further two the following day either side of the local wildlife boat, Gemini Explorer.

Harbour porpoise sightings were again quite scarce, but a few were observed off Fort George, Burghead, Portknockie and Cullen Bay.

NWDW took part in July this year, and only three species were observed compared to five last year, but we still managed to have sightings everyday despite the inclement weather. A serious question that was put to me on a wet watch during NWDW after not seeing anything, "Do the dolphins not like coming to the surface when it's raining in case they get wet?"

SOUTH GRAMPIAN

Compiled by Gemma Veneruso, SWF

June kicked off to a good start with 13 sightings being reported on the 1st! These reports included the three main species: six sightings of bottlenose dolphin, five sightings of harbour porpoise and two minke whales. All sightings on this day were reported from either Donmouth or Stonehaven. Throughout the month, 26 sightings of bottlenose dolphins, often reaching large group sizes of up to 40 individuals, were reported from Stonehaven, Aberdeen, Girdleness, Johnshaven, Donmouth, Inverbervie, and Catterline. There were also seven reports of harbour porpoise from

mainly Donmouth but also from Peterhead Bay and offshore of Hackley Head. On the 14th June, there was a report of two probable white-beaked or Atlantic white sided dolphins approximately 5 miles southeast of the Skares.

Numbers of sightings diminished significantly in July, with just 11 sightings recorded. This month was dominated by sightings of white-beaked dolphins. Two offshore sightings of the species were reported on the 15th and 25th off Crawton Ness and Stonehaven respectively. However, this species was also spotted on four more occasions from land based watches. Three of these sightings were at Collieston and another at Slains Castle, Cruden Bay. Just two reports of bottlenose dolphin were recorded in July, at Inverbervie and Stonehaven on the 18th and 19th July respectively, as well as two harbour porpoise sightings at Girdleness on the 18th and 25th.

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND

Compiled by Zoë Allen, SWF volunteer

June was a quiet month with just two sightings of bottlenose dolphins, both off Arbroath. The first sighting was of one individual on the 1st, and a pod of five animals on the 19th.

July started off well, with a large group of approximately 75 bottlenose dolphins on the 4th, feeding over a large area off Gullane Beach, East Lothian. Three more sightings of bottlenose dolphins were recorded towards the end of the month with a total of 39 animals. These sightings were at Angus and East Lothian, and the dolphins were most commonly fast swimming and feeding. Two harbour porpoises were seen off Abb's Head in Berwickshire on 18th July.

NORTH EAST ENGLAND

Compiled by Zoë Allen, SWF volunteer

Only four sightings were recorded during June, and all of these occurred at the end of the month. The most unusual sighting was of a sei whale, recorded on 21st June, at Cresswell, Northumberland. All other sightings for June were at Whitby, North Yorkshire. Two harbour porpoises were sighted on 20th June, whilst one minke whale and one white-beaked dolphin were seen on the 28th.

Many more sightings were recorded during July, but again, most of the sightings occurred towards the end of the month. The only sighting at the beginning of July was a minke whale on the 4th. The predominant species recorded was the harbour porpoise, of which there were 16 different sightings and a total of 33 individuals. Bottlenose dolphins were recorded on the 19th, 22nd and 24th July, with group sizes of 1, 11 and 20 respectively. A further two sightings recorded an unidentified cetacean species and an unidentified dolphin species. The majority of sightings for July in the region were made at Whitby and Cowbar Nab in Yorkshire.

EASTERN ENGLAND

Compiled by Gemma Veneruso



Thirteen harbour porpoise sightings were reported in Eastern England in June, and eight in July, as well as a possible dolphin species on the 11th July. Group sizes were of up to three animals. Porpoises were spotted at a number of locations in

Norfolk, such as Mundesley, Hopton on Sea, and especially Walcott. Sightings also occurred further south in the River Blackwater in Essex, West of Tilbury, Thames river mouth, and Westgate Beach, Kent. Two sightings, including the unidentified dolphin, were reported from Pakefield Coastwatch Station, Suffolk.

SUSSEX

Written by Steven Savage, Regional Coordinator for Sussex

June & July: A disappointingly quiet couple of months for dolphin sightings in Sussex with only three confirmed sightings of bottlenose dolphin. The first sighting occurred off the Brighton Marina on 15th June and the second sighting occurred a day later off Lancing/Shoreham a few miles west. It is possible (but not definite) that these reports were the same animal. However, solitary dolphin sightings are quite common off Sussex. Sadly this year, I was unable to organise a manned watch site during the NWDW event. Even though we were unable to organise one, I did encourage my volunteers and others groups that send me sightings to keep an extra eye out for cetaceans, but no extra sightings were received. I did, however, unfortunately receive details of a dead



common dolphin at the mouth of the Cuckmere River in East Sussex. The only live sighting during NWDW was a (third) probable bottlenose dolphin in the Solent.

Seal Tagging Project

As Sussex County recorder for Sea Mammals (as well as regional coordinator for Sea Watch), I have been working on a project monitoring the common seals in the Solent and south east English Channel. The main leads in the project are the Wildlife Trusts South East Marine Programme and Chichester Harbour Conservancy (the latter is the site of a small resident population of



common seals). The first step has been to collate all the currently existing seal sightings from various sources including my records as Sussex County Recorder. Common Seals have recently been made a Biodiversity Action Plan Species because their numbers in the UK have declined dramatically in recent years. A major focus of the project is a small resident population of approximately 15-20 harbour seals that live in the Solent area and are considered regionally unique and therefore very important. Very little is known about the Solent seals.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

Sighting summary compiled by Gemma Veneruso, SWF

All sightings in June from the Channel Islands came from Jersey and were all bottlenose dolphin reports. Eleven reports of these animals reaching group sizes of 27 animals were recorded in June with all sightings coming from the east and southern coasts of the island.

Seventeen sightings were recorded in July again all from the usual haunts in Jersey and all bottlenose dolphins apart from an unidentified cetacean from St Martin's Point, Guernsey on the 20th. This animal was reported as a possible pilot whale but this could not be confirmed.

Written by Bertram Bree, Regional Coordinator for the Channel Islands

In the European Channel Isles we are now working towards a relationship with the Sea Watch Foundation and five local groups which I am co-ordinating from Jersey where I hope to promote a new research centre of marine biodiversity, (thankfully backed by Dr Simon Bossy of our Government Environment Department of the Jersey Government), for our four RAMSAR reserves here in Jersey.

Our Interpretation Centre at Gorey pier, called Discovery Pier, is expected to close in September 2009 due to poor numbers of visitors. But we hope soon to have a marine research centre in Jersey to support the local RAMSAR reserves here with a 12 metre rise and fall in tide and a movement in and out of tide of up to three kilometres, with some of the strongest currents in the world of up to 10 knots. We would like a marine nature reserve stretching from the Cherbourg headland to the Bay of St Brieuc on the French coast of Brittany backed by the French and local independent Governments of Jersey and Guernsey.

In Guernsey the Biological Records Centre at web address:- <http://www.biologicalrecordscentre.gov.gg/> lists all Channel Isles biodiversity including from Chausey and Jersey, but in Jersey we have the Soci   Jersiaise Marine Biology Section website at:- <http://www.societe-jersiaise.org/sections/marinebiology>

I also represent in Jersey the regional group of the MNHN the Museum Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle in France, studying mammals, including cetaceans, who have

done pioneering work on our local bottlenose dolphin population of between 250 and 300 animals in the 1970's, which has been continued in the last five years by Al-Lark at:- <http://www.al-lark.org>. They have a photo identification catalogue of 250 bottlenose dolphins in our area taken from over 20,000 photos over the last five years.

From my home in Grouville Bay at Le Hurel slip, I am normally based using a thirty times magnification telescope to watch the marine life in the RAMSAR reserve at La Rocque in Grouville Bay. I have seen Risso's dolphins, minke whale, harbour porpoise, killer whales, and almost daily in June and July, groups of up to fifty bottlenose dolphins coming close in front of Le Hurel slip to feed on the huge abundance of fish in the RAMSAR reserve just offshore. Even basking sharks, five species of turtle, and sunfish are seen offshore of Jersey.

I have provided Masters Degree student Megan Woolvey at Plymouth University with turtle details for her research on turtles in the Channel. I also work with CRMM at La Rochelle University (founded by Dr Duguy), and with Celine Vincent as the GMN representative here in Jersey on satellite tracking projects of marine mammals, particularly seals which we track around our islands. We also radio-track other marine animals here as part of our research. We have links with the GMB or Groupe Mammalogique Breton and the SEPNEB in Brittany who have links with colleagues doing marine research who offer boat trips to see the marine mammals like dolphins such as at:- <http://www.santguirec.com> and <http://www.al-lark.org> who offer RIB dolphin cruises to members of the Al-Lark group for a few Euros for a few hours trip watching dolphins from Cancale near St Malo. We hope soon to be able to offer the possibility to adopt our local dolphins to let people know the movements of the individual dolphin they adopt! More details on Jersey at:- <http://www.jersey.com>

Everyone is welcome to visit Jersey to go on Dolphin cruises with South Coast Cruises, or Tara de Jersey at Guernsey RIB Dolphin Cruises, or contact me at:- bbree@localdial.com to arrange to watch from the coast at my home at Le Hurel slip for free!

DORSET

Compiled by Gemma Veneruso, SWF

June was relatively good in terms of cetacean sightings for the Dorset coastline unlike July during which only one sighting of three dolphins of unknown species was recorded on the 13th. There were 14 reports of unidentified dolphins throughout June. The two species that were successfully identified were the bottlenose dolphin that was reported 11 times over the course of the month, including a group of 30 animals off Chesil Cove, Portland on the 20th. Six short-beaked common dolphins were recorded offshore in the English Channel on the 22nd June.

SOUTH DEVON

Compiled by Gemma Veneruso, SWF

Two species of dolphin were reported in South Devon throughout June. The highlight of the month happened on the very first day when approximately 100 short-beaked common dolphins passed Berry Head near Brixham. Common dolphins were not seen again until the 21st June when seven individuals were spotted between Teignmouth and Torquay. Bottlenose dolphins were also in the area with the first report on the 5th June off Drake's Island in Plymouth Sound. This species was seen another four times in four different locations at Maidencombe Beach, Salcombe harbour, Sandy Bay and Teignmouth.

Salcombe harbour continued to be a popular spot for the bottlenose dolphins in July as group of seven dolphins were seen there on the 1st and again on the 10th July. Eight reports of harbour porpoises, involving up to five animals, were seen from Berry head during NWDW watches.

CORNWALL

Written by Dan Jarvis (sightings data reproduced with kind permission of Ray Dennis/Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Sequest Southwest project www.ercis.co.uk/wildlife_recording/sequest_southwest.htm and Gemma Veneruso, Sea Watch Foundation www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk).

Sightings

For the last couple of years the weather in summer down here has become much more varied, making casual observations a bit hit and miss. Nevertheless, there have still been a lot of sightings reported.

The usual three cetacean species have been in evidence throughout June and July. Starting from the smallest and working upwards, harbour porpoises were reported from a few locations: Newquay, Pendeen, Cape Cornwall, Porthgwarra and Lantivet, near St Austell. All of these sightings involved small groups which were not visible for very long as usual, keeping their typical low profile. Common dolphins were more numerous and cooperative, however, with a few smaller groups of up to 25 off North Cornwall (following a boat for several miles), St Ives, Cape Cornwall, Penzance, Falmouth and Lantivet. Much larger groups, occasionally reaching up to 100, were spotted a few times off Falmouth and even an amazing 500+ common dolphins off Rump's Point, near Polzeath, on 4th July too, giving observers a superb spectacle! Bottlenose dolphin groups, like the others, have also been small in number on most occasions when they have been spotted. Reports of up to eight dolphins have come in from Godrevy, St Ives, Pendeen, Sennen, Porthcurno and Penzance, with a couple of larger groups also off St Ives and Sennen as well. Unidentified dolphins were seen at Sennen and Falmouth, and a group of up to 100 offshore in Mount's Bay on June 4th seen from a helicopter. The latter were probably common dolphins.

The National Whale and Dolphin Watch run by Sea Watch recorded several sightings of bottlenose dolphins from St Ives and Falmouth, one a few occasions each, plus another one off Porthcurno and again at Mousehole. Porpoises were spotted near Cape Cornwall, Coverack and at the Isles of Scilly, and four common dolphins off

Dodman Point near Mevagissey. A good week, but sadly no sightings for me at Godrevy Point during my effort watches!

Basking sharks have been ranging far and wide, with reports from pretty much all around Cornwall from Looe to Land's End and up to Pentire Point near Polzeath. The large majority of reports came in from Cape Cornwall around to Porthgwarra, with a further smattering of reports covering the area from Porthgwarra across Mount's Bay and down to Lizard Point. Bigger numbers, occasionally reaching 50 or more, were in the bay at Sennen fairly frequently, but a bigger group of 70+ were offshore from Lizard Point on June 2nd. Ocean sunfish have been few and far between, however, with single animals reported from St Agnes, Godrevy, St Ives, Mousehole, Marazion, Coverack and St Austell. Finally, a lone turtle, probably a loggerhead, was seen off Porthgwarra on June 2nd. Loggerhead turtles are not native to the UK and the climate, even in summer, can be too cold for them to survive. During 2008, a relatively large number of dead or dying loggerhead turtles were washed up around Cornwall, Devon, SW Wales and SW Ireland, the most likely reason being that strong currents in the Gulf Stream had carried them off course from travelling to the coasts of Spain and Africa. A handful of turtles were successfully rescued, rehabilitated by the Blue Reef Aquarium at Newquay and then taken to the Canary Islands to be released back to the wild.

Seawatch Southwest survey sightings

(Sightings data used with the kind permission of Dr Russell Wynn/Seawatch Southwest).

For the last couple of years, a small team led by Dr Russell Wynn from the National Oceanographic Institute of Southampton have been carrying out dawn to dusk seabird and marine animal surveys from Gwennap Head, starting in mid-July and carrying on every day until mid-October. This project is named Seawatch Southwest and has been very successful in the results gathered so far, especially for key species such as Balearic shearwaters and basking sharks. A daily sightings diary of everything that has been seen is kept on their website (www.seawatch-sw.org), but a brief rundown of their marine life sightings includes regular observations of small pods of harbour porpoises, one sighting of three Risso's dolphins (which included a mother and calf), and occasional sightings of common and bottlenose dolphins too. Basking sharks were virtually absent, and only a few were present when there were any at the surface to be seen. Ocean sunfish were a bit more frequent than basking sharks, with two on the same day being recorded on a couple of days.

News

Summer was quiet for callouts for British Divers Marine Life Rescue (www.bdmlr.org.uk). An adult seal with some fishing line entangled around its rear flippers was reported in Newquay harbour during July, and a boat was used to get closer, resulting in some of the line being removed. A couple of days later the line had come off completely. A week later, a net entangled seal pup was then reported at the bottom of a cliff in St Ives Bay. A team used climbing gear to get down the eroding cliffs and were able to capture it before it escaped into the sea. It was taken

to the National Seal Sanctuary (www.sealsanctuary.co.uk) for rehabilitation due to a severe laceration around the neck caused by the net.

Dead stranded marine animals were also relatively quiet, with a handful of grey seals, a porpoise and a common dolphin, but also notably a bottlenose dolphin and striped dolphin being recorded by the Cornwall Wildlife Trust Marine Strandings Network (www.cwtstrandings.org). A number of Portuguese Man-O-War were brought ashore by the tides and currents from warmer climates, causing a hazard to bathers due to the powerful sting they can give when touched.

Cornwall Seal Group (www.cornwallsealgroup.co.uk) members are now involved in surveys at a few locations on a regular basis, with a monthly survey being held on Looe Island with members of the local Voluntary Marine Conservation Area group taking part. These have been very successful and a few individual seals have now been photo-identified on more than one survey, potentially giving the local people a better idea of which seals might be around at certain times of the year.

Events

A series of talks were given at a well-attended and informative evening at the BSAC dive club building on Albert Pier, Penzance, on the eve of Seawatch Southwest's first day of 2009 surveys. Russell Wynn from SWSW was the keynote speaker, giving an overview of what has been found out so far and what would be happening this year. A talk was given by BDMLR to various Harbour Authorities, Police, Customs and Excise and officials from other similar organisations at the National Maritime Museum in Falmouth in early June, particularly focusing on live dolphin strandings in light of the major mass stranding incident in the Fal estuary area in 2008. Afterwards, those who attended, showed a good deal of interest in how to prevent disturbance incidents towards marine animals, so copies of the Wildlife Safe (WiSe) DVD were given to them for their staff and members to learn from. A dolphin rescue demonstration was also held at Praa Sands for kids from the local Council play scheme, which they thoroughly enjoyed taking part in.

Emergency numbers:

For dead cetaceans, seals, turtles, sharks 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 and sends trained volunteers to tag, measure and photograph all carcasses.

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

People are advised not to return stranded cetaceans to the water, but to instead keep the animal upright and wet, avoiding getting water in the blowhole, until trained Medics and veterinarians can make thorough health checks and give first aid. Stranded turtles should also not be returned to the water and will need urgent

transport to the nearest suitable rehabilitation centre once Medics arrive to give first aid.

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. Instead, observe from a safe distance and keep other people and dogs well away to minimise distress to the animal until help arrives.

NORTH DEVON

Compiled by Gemma Veneruso, SWF

June's sightings in North Devon were dominated by reports of harbour porpoise of which there were 13. Locations from which porpoises were spotted included Bull Point, Capstone Point, Martinhoe, Woolacombe Bay, Croyde, Saunton Sands and Lundy Island. There were also numerous reports from vessels of short-beaked common dolphins, ranging from 3 to 60 individuals throughout the whole month. A minke whale was seen off Lundy on the 4th June.

Porpoise (22) and common dolphin (4) sightings continued into July with the vast majority of porpoise reports coming from Capstone Point and the area surrounding Ilfracombe, particularly during NWDW. Common dolphins were once again spotted a number of times offshore at the beginning and middle of July. They were seen mainly in the waters surrounding Lundy.

BRISTOL CHANNEL & SOUTH WALES

Compiled by Gemma Veneruso, SWF

June marked the arrival of relatively unusual visitors to the Gower coastline. Groups of up to 60 short-beaked common dolphins were reported repeatedly throughout June and July. These animals were most commonly reported from Worms Head but were also seen at the East Helwick Bank and in Carmarthen Bay. Two harbour porpoises were spotted from High Tor, Foxhole, Southgate near Swansea on the 20th July.

WEST WALES

Compiled by Bryony Manley, SWF volunteer

Three species were reported in West Wales during the month of June, with the majority of these being bottlenose dolphins. Thanks to some very productive vessel based surveys and land watches performed by SWF staff and volunteers, a total of 458 animals were seen in 146 sightings throughout the month, in groups ranging from just one up to a group of 18 seen on the 16th. 44 harbour porpoises were also sighted through the month, in groups of 1-6 animals.

Pembrokeshire had two sightings of large groups of common dolphins: a group of 20 on the 3rd, and a group of 100 on the 27th.

Bottlenose dolphin sightings were high again in July with a total of 546 animals reported from 239 sightings. Due to poor weather, not many vessel-based surveys were possible in July, so sightings came mainly from land watches. The dolphins were most commonly seen in pairs, the largest group of 11 animals being seen in New Quay bay on the 2nd. Nineteen sightings of harbour porpoises were made, including a group of 12 animals off Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire on the 30th. Five groups of common dolphins were seen, with a large group of 200 animals seen off Grassholm Island on the afternoon of the 20th. Observers at St Govan's Head, Pembrokeshire on the 9th were also lucky enough to see two humpback whales pass by just before midday.

NORTH WALES

Compiled by Peter Evans, SWF

During June, bottlenose dolphins were seen regularly in North Wales, with 13 sightings mainly off the north and east coasts of Anglesey. Group sizes were comparatively large for this time of year, numbering up to 40 animals. Porpoises were also observed off the Anglesey coast ten times, particularly around Llanbadrig, with small groups up to six individuals. No Risso's dolphins were reported this month from close to the North Welsh coast, although three were seen 14 miles northeast of Amlwch.

In July, large groups of bottlenose dolphins continued to be seen off Anglesey, with groups comprising up to 25 animals. The species was seen as far east as Rhyl where two animals were spotted on 28th July. There were also six sightings of up to eight harbour porpoises, mainly from Point Lynas off Northeast Anglesey. No other cetacean species was reported from the region, although offshore coverage was limited so that species like short-beaked common dolphin and minke whale may well have been present but unrecorded.

ISLE OF MAN

Compiled by Gemma Veneruso, SWF

The Isle of Man received a large number of sightings in June, with 77 reports of five species! Sightings were reported from 28 locations with a high number from the following areas: Dalby Point, Marine Drive (Douglas) Bradda Head, Ballaghennie beach, Port St. Mary and Calf of Man. Harbour porpoises were the most common cetacean species seen in June, with 37 records from many locations around the island. There were also high numbers of Risso's dolphins seen, with 20 reports received. The Risso's were frequently seen in reasonably large groups including ten animals off Marine Drive on the 10th, ten from Castletown Bay and east of Calf of Man on the 16th, 20 off Langness on the 23rd, and 12 off Fort Island on the 29th. There were also 15 reports of minke whales, spotted predominantly during the first half of the month from various locations around the island. Other species included a report of a killer whale off Little Ness, Marine Drive on the 5th June as well as a pod

of four animals off Peel on the 22nd. A humpback whale also visited these waters on the 22nd west of Fenella Beach, Peel.

The number of sightings reported in July was half that of the previous month, but this was probably due to the bad weather that July brought. Despite this, 32 sightings were recorded, consisting of four species. There continued to be plenty of sightings of Risso's dolphins and harbour porpoise. On the 4th July, two short-beaked common dolphins were seen one mile east of Langness. There were three reports of a single killer whale on the 25th, seen north of Niarbyl Point, north of Dalby Point and off Peel Castle. There were also five records of unidentified cetaceans over the course of the month.



NORTH WEST ENGLAND

Compiled by Gemma Veneruso, SWF

Sadly, no cetacean sightings were recorded in June, and in July there were just two records. On the 5th July, three unidentified cetaceans were seen off Ainsdale, Merseyside and on the 20th four harbour porpoises were spotted during a land based watch from St Bees Head, Cumbria. Coverage in this region remains poor and it is likely that a number of sightings passed unreported.

HEBRIDES

Written by Laura Mandleberg, HWDT Sightings Officer

There have been plenty of sightings of our residents and regulars this June, perhaps boosted by the spectacular spell of settled weather that we have had in the Hebrides.

Minke whales and harbour porpoises have been reported throughout June all over the Hebrides, with regular sightings around the Gairloch area, Mull and the Small Isles.

Common dolphins have been in no short supply, with numerous sightings up and down the west coast. Sightings have been mainly of groups between 20 and 50 individuals, with the exception of a small group of 6-8 dolphins who appeared to have taken up temporary residence in Oban Bay. It is unusual for this species to turn up in a busy, inshore area like Oban Bay, and even more unusual for them to still be there several weeks later. The dolphins appear to be healthy and behaving normally - they arrived of their own accord and will move out of the area when they are ready to do so. We have advised boats in the area to stay far enough away to avoid any risk of injuring the animals – especially as the group includes calves.

The Hebridean bottlenose dolphin group were seen a few times in June. Apart from one sighting of nine individuals west of Loch Gairloch at the start of the month, the group appeared to be in southern Argyll (Arran, Kintrye), and were possibly seen all together in the Kilbrannan Sound. Then reports indicate that they moved northwards up the coast towards Mull in the middle of the month.

There was one sighting each of Risso's dolphins (Gairloch area), white-beaked dolphins (east of St. Kilda), three orca (NW Colonsay), and two fin whales (west of St. Kilda).

June was nicely started and finished with two sightings of a humpback whale. The first whale was seen on the first day of June a mile west of Gairloch. The second whale, possibly the same individual, was seen from HWDT's research vessel, Silurian, at the end of the month. The animal was spotted between South Uist and Coll. Images of the tail fluke were sent to various organisations to see if a match can be found in any of the existing humpback catalogues.

July

With the warm weather continuing into the first part of July, our online sighting page became very busy, with daily sightings of a range of species reported. As the season got into full swing, hordes of jellyfish drifted into the area on the warmer currents originating from the Gulf Stream. Jellyfish such as lion's mane and moon jellyfish could now be seen in large numbers along the coast bringing with them the occasional sunfish, of which there were two sightings this month. Basking shark sightings also rose in number this month, as the plankton supplies reached their peak.

Interesting sightings included two sharks under two metres, almost pup size, and at the other end of the scale, a massive ten metre shark that had been previously tagged here, was spotted from the HWDT research vessel, Silurian, still wearing its tag!

Minke sightings were pretty constant during the settled period of weather at the start of the month. There were even reports of breaching whales and mother/calf pairs circling boats.

The small group of common dolphins continued to be sighted in Oban Bay in July (see June summary for more details). Elsewhere, there were just five sightings of common dolphins reported and all were in the northern part of the Hebrides (Lewis, Gairloch and the Shiant). There was also one sighting of a bow-riding solitary common dolphin in Loch Nevis.

Sightings of the Hebridean bottlenose dolphin group seemed to be mostly of small sub-groups ranging over a large area. Unlike the previous month, there were no sightings reported of the entire group (between 25-40 individuals). In the early part of the month, it appeared that half of the group was in the Gairloch area whilst the rest was in smaller sub-groups scattered around mid-Argyll (Colonsay and Sound of

Mull area). However, there was one probable sighting of a separate, possibly offshore group, between Lundale and Callanish, west coast of Lewis. We receive very few sightings of bottlenose dolphins from this area and are keen to validate this sighting with the reporter.

The Hebridean killer whale group was seen twice in July. A single individual was also sighted at the beginning of the month from the Oban to Barra ferry.

The highlight of the month was a sighting of our Hebridean orcas off the west coast of Ireland. On the 5th July, at almost exactly the same time, two separate pods were sighted about 100 miles apart. The first pod, two males and three females, was sighted off County Mayo. All of the individuals in this group have been matched with members of the Hebridean group (Floppy Fin, Aquarius, Nicola, Lulu and 010). Four individuals made up the second pod, again each was positively matched with Hebridean orca (John Coe, Comet, Puffin and 007). The number of orcas sighted totalled nine, the exact number of individuals currently thought to be in the 'west coast community'. This is the first confirmed sighting of all the killer whales from the area spotted outside Hebridean waters. They obviously don't like being away from home too much though, as a group of five was spotted off the Skye coast the following week!



NORTH WEST SCOTLAND

Written by Ian French, Regional Coordinator or North West Scotland (Mallaig-Cape Wrath)

There were in excess of 1,075 short-beaked common dolphins recorded in the area, mainly in groups of between 30-60 individuals. Some groups contained calves and juveniles in very playful mood.

A small group of bottlenose dolphins was also sighted. Minke whale sightings for the area totalled 79 during June. One minke was observed feeding within 100 metres of the pier in Gairloch. Porpoises were recorded daily, with the first porpoise calves seen in mid June. Other sightings for June include a group of five Risso's dolphins seen during one of our land based surveys. A humpback whale was also reported on 1st June.



July

A group of approximately 15 bottlenose dolphins visited Loch Gairloch on a number of occasions during July.



Bottlenose dolphins
© Ian French, Gairloch Marine Wildlife Centre.

50 plus sightings of minke whales were recorded, along with groups of 30+ short-beaked common dolphins. Porpoises continued to be sighted in small groups of three to five.

The National Whale and Dolphin week proved to be our best for a number of years. Visitor numbers were up and, subsequently, volunteer numbers increased for our land-based

survey. We had five groups of volunteers covering 27 miles of coastline from Red Point to Rubha Reidh. The day's effort paid off with a significant number of cetacean sightings.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Compiled by Zoë Allen, SWF volunteer

During June and July, the majority of sightings were of harbour porpoises and bottlenose dolphins, concentrated off the east coast of Counties Antrim and Down. Fifteen harbour porpoise sightings were recorded, totalling 41 individuals, with the largest group of ten individuals seen at Island Magee, Antrim on 15th July. Eight sightings of bottlenose dolphins were recorded over the two months, with group sizes often being quite large for this species. June saw one group of 15 dolphins, leaping and breaching at Lough Foyle, County Donegal on the 9th, whilst groups of 30 bottlenose dolphins were seen at Dunluce Castle, County Antrim on 21st July, and at St. John's Point, County Down on 29th July. The largest group of 45 individuals was recorded on 4th July at Island Magee, County Antrim. Other marine species recorded during July included a group of 20 common dolphins on the 19th in the North Channel, one minke whale on the 15th off Island Magee, County Antrim, and a pod of 15 dolphins (species unknown) jumping, breaching, socialising and chasing fish off Portsalon, County Donegal on the 30th.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Compiled by Zoë Allen, SWF volunteer

June and July were excellent months for sightings, with eight different species seen around the coast, mostly off Counties Dublin, Kerry, Cork and Donegal. In particular, large numbers of bottlenose dolphins, harbour porpoises, common dolphins, minke whales and Risso's dolphins were recorded. On 4th June, a pod of 20 bottlenose dolphins was seen travelling with a group of 3-5 Risso's dolphins off Valencia Island, Kerry, and on 11th June, 60 Risso's dolphins were seen in a group with long-finned pilot whales and common dolphins at the Fastnet Rock, County Cork. The largest pod of common dolphins was approximately 250 individuals, seen off Sleah Head, Kerry on

22nd July. Five sightings of killer whales were recorded over the two months including two pods on the 5th that were identified as the 'west coast community' that normally reside in Hebridean waters. More unusual sightings for this region were of fin whales and a humpback whale. Two fin whales were recorded, one east of Howth Head, County Dublin on 17th June, and one west of Cork on 16th July. The humpback whale was spotted on 21st June at Hook Head, County Waterford and was later found entangled in some gear associated with lobster pots. It was cut free by Fethard on Sea RNLI.

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.