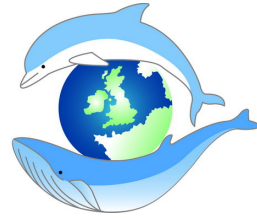


sea watch FOUNDATION



Editorial

With summer well under way and good sea watching conditions in June, high numbers of sightings were reported; these continued into July despite poorer weather conditions for much of the country. In total, 13 species were recorded in these months, thanks to a few surprises, most notably the sperm whale that spent a month around Torbay, South Devon! There were other unusual sightings to report, as well as good numbers of the regulars. Thanks to all who contributed either by directly taking part in the production of this news sheet or by sending in sightings. For further information on Sea Watch activities, visit us at <http://www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk> and keep in touch via Facebook.

Gemma Veneruso, Sightings Officer, SWF



Sperm whale

© Paignton Pleasure Cruises

NEWS**SWF contributes to Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership report card by assessing the effects of climate change on marine mammals**

The UK government's Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership (MCCIP) launched its latest annual report card on 15th July 2010 at the Dove Marine Laboratory in Newcastle, at a meeting of environment ministers, providing the very latest updates on how climate change is affecting our seas. Almost 100 scientists from 40 leading UK science organisations contributed to this peer reviewed report, which covers 30 marine and coastal topics. Dr. Peter Evans, Director of SWF, in collaboration with Professor Ian Boyd, Director of SMRU, and Dr Colin Macleod of the University of Aberdeen reviewed and assessed the effects of climate change on marine mammals in and around UK seas.

The impact of climate change on marine mammals is poorly understood as evidence is very difficult to obtain, particularly since these impacts are not easily distinguished from impacts of human activities such as those that cause prey depletion, incidental capture in fishing gear, pollution and disturbance. However, the review came to the following conclusions:

- In temperate waters, some species of toothed whales and dolphins are clearly showing shifts in distribution, which may be linked to increasing sea temperatures
- In future, the most likely impacts will be via changes in prey distribution and abundance
- Species that have relatively narrow habitat requirements (e.g. shelf sea species like the harbour porpoise, white-beaked dolphin and minke whale) may be the most affected in future years
- Predicted reductions in plankton availability may directly affect some baleen whale species
- The threat of increased coastal flood risk could affect seal haul-out and breeding sites in low-lying areas and caves.

You can access the MCCIP Annual Report Card 2010-2011 at www.mccip.org.uk/arc. The full review on marine mammals (Evans, P.G.H., I.L. Boyd & C.D. Macleod (2010) Impacts of Climate Change on Marine Mammals in MCCIP Annual Report Card 2010-2011, MCCIP Science Review, 14pp. www.mccip.org.uk/arc) can also be downloaded from www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk.

SWF in media spotlight including features in the Times and BBC Panorama

July was a busy time in terms of media attention for SWF in the build up to National Whale & Dolphin Watch. SWF featured in numerous articles and radio interviews throughout the country. In addition Simon Barnes from the Times joined us in New Quay on the 8th July and came onboard a survey to see the Cardigan Bay bottlenose dolphins for himself. We were lucky enough to spot a known dolphin, Moneypenny

and her new born calf that was no more than three weeks old within the first ten minutes of the survey. A double page spread was featured in the Saturday Times on July 17th. A few days after the visit from the Times, BBC Panorama came to New Quay to discuss the issue of loss of biodiversity and to join us on survey. Again Moneypenny and her newborn calf, now named Tuppence, made an appearance as well as a few other known individuals. You can watch us on Panorama on August 30th at 20:30 on BBC 1.

SIGHTINGS SUMMARY JUNE-JULY 2010

An impressive 13 species were recorded in British and Irish waters in June and July. As usual, harbour porpoise were the dominant species found off much of the UK and Irish coastlines. Bottlenose dolphin sightings were regular in the usual haunts but there was a surprise sighting of these animals in the Dee Estuary off Hilbre Island on 12th July. The sighting has sparked interest as it appears to be the most easterly record for this species in the Irish Sea. Calm sea conditions enabled local watchers to



view the dolphins, who were found to be travelling west in a number of small sub groups totalling around 30 individuals. Another four animals were spotted here once more on the 24th. Bottlenose dolphins are known to range around the waters of the Irish Sea, and have been seen a few times on the North-east coast of Wales coast

in recent years. However, this is not common and we would expect any sightings to be in the winter months.

There were good numbers of killer whale sightings around Shetland in June and July and these animals were also recorded on a number of occasions in the Hebrides and across the west coast of Ireland. The high numbers of killer whale sightings off Caithness in May subsided with just three sightings in the north of the district. Long-finned pilot whales made a return in north east Caithness however, with three being reported off Wick on 12th July.



Also in northern Caithness, short-beaked common dolphins continued to be reported, with a number of records in both months. Sightings of this species this far north used to be rare, but in recent years have become an increasingly regular

occurrence. Common dolphins were well represented at other parts of the country too, and were recorded off Dartmouth in South Devon, Bull and Baggy Point in North Devon, off Swansea (Gwent), Pembrokeshire, and the Inner Hebrides, as well as Counties Kerry and Mayo in Ireland.



White-beaked dolphins were reported on a few occasions during these months. Of offshore sightings, the species was seen at East Hinder, off the Kent coast in the North Sea and in Outer Lyme Bay where a group of ten animals put on a great display whilst they were socialising. It was the land based watches, however, from Collieston and, in particular, Souter Head by Cove in Aberdeenshire that proved most

fruitful. Whilst on watch at Souter Head, Kevin Hepworth counted around 75 individuals within three sightings!

A species sometimes confused with white-beaked dolphins, the Atlantic white-sided dolphin, was recorded swimming up the Effirth Voe in Shetland on 26th June. This species is more often seen offshore but on this occasion three animals entered the voe and became trapped at low tide. Luckily, a couple of days later the animals were no longer there so must have successfully travelled back out to sea.

June and July seemed to be the months for whales to be found in 'unusual' places. First came the extraordinary sighting of a sperm whale at the end of June that was seen repeatedly very close to shore at various points within Torbay, South Devon. The individual was last sighted 21st July. This animal, the largest of all toothed whales, is a deep diving species and tends to feed on deep sea squid and fish beyond the edge of the continental shelf in the North Atlantic. It is rare for these animals to come onto the shelf into shallow waters, although they occasionally have ventured into the western English Channel. However, it is very rare for the animal to travel as far east as this in the Channel, and to come so close to shore. There are fears that this animal, being so far from its natural habitat, will strand eventually.

At the almost opposite corner of the UK, in Thurso Bay, three northern bottlenose whales were spotted by regular observer, Karen Munro, on the 11th July. The two adults and one juvenile were reported to be splashing only a few hundred metres off Scrabster harbour pier. Despite the great diversity of cetaceans regularly seen in Caithness waters, it is very rare to see this species here alive.

These beaked whales are another deep water species mainly found in the North Atlantic in water of greater than 1000m depth. They spend a lot of time over submarine canyons and adjacent to continental shelf edges although they sometimes enter shallower waters 300m or less. There are a number of sightings in

British waters in the summer months (mainly in August) but sadly some of these animals are likely to have become disorientated whilst on their migration route and become lost. In shallow waters these whales are at risk of dehydration and starvation due to the lack of suitable prey, causing them to be at high risk of stranding. There have been five strandings of northern bottlenose whale since August 2009. However, happily there have been no stranding reports of the Caithness animals and it is thought that they had travelled back out to sea.

Then on the 23rd July, the crew aboard the Manx Basking Shark Watch research vessel spotted a humpback whale. In recent years, humpback whales have been regularly seen off western Ireland, around Shetland, North West Scotland, southern Irish Sea and the Western approaches to the English Channel. However, this species is very rare to Manx waters with just a couple of sightings known to exist in the past - see Tom's round-up on the Isle of Man for further details of the sighting.

Just three days later a humpback whale calf was found without its mother off Godrevy Point in Cornwall. The animal remained in the area for a couple of weeks but was sadly found dead on the 15th August. See Dan's review below for more information.



Humpback whale

© Dave Jarvis/BDMLR

There was a rare whale sighting of a minke whale in Cardigan Bay on the 27th July, off Criccieth in the north.

Minke whales have been spotted in Cardigan Bay a handful of times but it is certainly not regular as they do not normally travel so far inshore in this area.

And last but not least, there was a possible sighting of a sei whale off the west side of Aukerry in Orkney on the 31st July. Sightings of sei whales are relatively rare in UK waters. The last sighting in Orkney was in July 2008, a few miles east of Stronsay. Before that no sighting of the species has been reported since July 1980 where an animal was seen in almost the exact same locality.

Send in all cetacean sightings to sightings@seawatchfoundation.org.uk or via our online reporting form found at <http://www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk>.

Gemma Veneruso, SWF

REGIONAL ROUNDUPS

SHETLAND

Eleven sightings were reported in the region for the month of June. The most common species seen was killer whale, with four encounters. The largest pod totalled ten individuals, which were seen on the 23rd ten miles south of the Magnus platform. There were also three minke whale sightings during this month. On the 7th and 8th, individuals were spotted off Mousa Island. On the 26th, three Atlantic white-sided dolphins swam up the Effirth Voe. They became trapped at low tide but thankfully after a couple of days they successfully travelled back out to sea. There were only two sightings of harbour porpoises reported during June. One sighting of two animals took place on the 27th west of Fair Isle, and the other was of an individual on the 30th in the Bay of Quendale.

Killer whales were even more abundant in July, with 14 sightings of this species alone. Group sizes ranged from two to seven, and five of the sightings took place in Yell Sound. There were also three sightings of Risso's dolphins for this month. In Uyeasound on the 21st and 22nd, groups of eight were spotted. The largest group was seen on the 3rd in Garderhouse Voe, and numbered 15 individuals. Two lone minke whales were sighted on the 23rd and 28th, of Fetlar and in Mousa Sound, respectively.

**ORKNEY & NORTH SCOTLAND**

Written by Colin Bird, Regional Coordinator for North East Scotland

There were 59 reported sightings of five species in June.

Three orca sightings were recorded by Ivor Thomas of the John O'Groats Ferry, which runs between John O'Groats and Burwick, South Ronaldsay, Orkney. Colin Ewen also reported three animals between Eday and Faray, Orkney on the 6th.



There were 12 minke whale sightings reported from Strathy Point in North Sutherland by Paul Castle, Karen Munro and myself. Karen also spotted a single animal in Dunnet Bay and another in the main stream of the Pentland Firth from Thurso, Caithness.

The 11 Risso's dolphin sightings were all spotted along the North Scottish coast, with five of these encounters reported by Karen Munro from Thurso Bay.

Graeme Reid spotted one group of 15 common dolphins in Thurso Bay on the 10th, and the John O'Groats Ferry spotted a group three miles north of John O'Groats on the 15th.

Most harbour porpoise were seen along the North Caithness coast and at Strathy Point, with 26 reports, as well as one sighting from Orkney sent in by Lorna Whittle who saw five animals at Hoxa Head on the 15th.

The weather during July goes a long way to explain the drop in sighting numbers, with 27 reports. This month was windy and the cloudiest July on record. However, five species were seen once again. The species recorded were all the same except there were no killer whale records this month. Instead, was the unusual sighting of northern bottlenose whales.

This rare inshore sighting was seen at Thurso when a friend of Karen Munro contacted her to report that there were whales just outside Scrabster Harbour. Karen, who lives in a house that overlooks the bay, quickly spotted the whales and recognised them as northern bottlenose whales from the chocolate brown colour and large forehead. There were two adults and a juvenile observed splashing just outside Scrabster Harbour. At first, it was feared they may strand but fortunately they left the bay travelling into the Pentland Firth.

There were seven minke whale reports from Strathy Point this month, as well as one seen by Claire Bailly between Swona and South Ronaldsay.



Strathy Point also saw three of the Risso's dolphin sightings, in addition to two sightings from Caithness. Ten animals were seen by Graeme Reid in Thurso Bay on the 25th and on the same day three Risso's Dolphins

were spotted by Ivor Thomas at Duncansby Head from the John O'Groats Ferry.

The single common dolphin sighting of the month was seen and filmed by Andrew Macleod on the 23rd while out in his boat. The estimated 50 dolphins raced alongside his boat in the usual animated way that common dolphins swim.

The 11 reports of harbour porpoise were relatively well spread within the region. Two of these sightings were recorded from Orkney, with Lorna Whittle spotting a single porpoise at Mull Head on the 15th, and 40 animals seen spread out by Kenny Sinclair of Sea Orkney in Deer Sound on the 30th. Off the mainland coast, there was also a sighting at Gills Bay, one at Thurso Bay, and seven at Strathlyon Point.

Additional Orkney sightings

Written by Chris Booth, Regional Coordinator for Orkney

In June, there were three common dolphins in the Brigs Deep, Hoy and a minke whale off Lyness, Hoy on 6th. Six Risso's dolphins were seen in Birsay Bay on 7th and there were 10 white-beaked dolphins there on 14th. One to six harbour porpoise were seen off Marwick Head between 3rd and 16th, five were off Papa Westray on 6th and 5 in the Brigs Deep, Hoy on 22nd. Four Atlantic white-sided dolphins stranded in the Bay of Holland, Stronsay on 20th but were refloated and another three white-sided dolphins were in the Brigs Deep on 22nd. One to five Orcas were reported from several localities around the islands during the month with a max count of six off the Pentland Skerries on 6th.

There were fewer sightings in July. Six harbour porpoise were reported in Scapa Flow on 10th and on the same day a pod of orcas was seen off the Noup Head, Westray. A minke whale was in Birsay Bay on 28th and a possible sei whale off the west side of Aukerry on 31st.

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND

Written by Colin Bird, Regional Coordinator for North East Scotland

Throughout June, there were 23 reported sightings of four species.

There were 14 reports of harbour porpoise, ten of these recorded at Lybster, two at Achastle, one near Latheron seen from the creel boat of Colin Carter, and one from Noss Head reported by Karen Munro.

Risso's Dolphins were again spotted along the east coast of Caithness, with three sightings from Lybster, and one sighting at Noss by Karen Munro.

The minke whale, noticeable by the lack of sightings along the east Caithness coast compared with 2009, appeared twice, with a sighting by Jane Gunn on the 13th while out with her husband Stevie, creeling off Lybster. The other sighting was made from Swiney Hill on the 16th. The reason that Jane spotted the minke was because her husband had seen common dolphins playing around his creel boat just off Lybster, so he returned for Jane who came out with her camera to get some pictures of the five dolphins. Jane managed to keep her camera in the boat on this occasion and not send it to the bottom of the bay, and was able to send me some pictures.

Two unidentified cetaceans were seen at Whaligoe steps and Lybster; the Whaligoe sighting is thought to be one very distant whale, and the Lybster sighting was of two large dolphin species.

Sightings reports dropped in July, with 14 sightings of four species and one unidentified species. The sea state on the east coast during the first two weeks of the month was very poor for sea watchers because of the direction of the wind which created a choppy sea and a lot of whitecaps; this goes some way to explaining the drop in sightings for this time of year.

There were nine harbour porpoise sightings: eight from Swiney Hill Lybster, and one from the creel boat of Colin Carter.

Lynne Duncan reported three long-finned pilot whales on the 12th, as well as three basking sharks spotted over a very exciting two-day period near Wick.



Grace Carter reported six to seven Risso's dolphins on the 31st when leaving Lybster Harbour to fish for mackerel with her husband Colin. I was at Swiney Hill watching the same group of Risso's dolphins and getting some close up pictures for the Risso's

ID catalogue.

Two minke whales were spotted this month. One on the 27th at the Whaligoe Steps was seen by Dave Nicolson; the other was seen by Colin Carter from his creel boat one mile off Swiney Hill Lybster on the 28th.

A group of eight cetaceans was spotted close to the shore at Clyth by Dave Saunders at 21:10 hrs in poor light on the 31st.

Also worth a mention, I received an e-mail about a group of leatherback turtle reported 12 miles off Lybster in the Moray Firth near the Beatrice oil field, on the 20th.

MORAY FIRTH

Written by Alan Airey, Regional Coordinator for South Grampian

The latter part of the month of May had been good for minke whale sightings, so I was hoping that this would continue into June. However, it took until the 15th for the first confirmed minke whale, but then over the next seven days, I had 11 sightings. They were mostly three to four km north of the Burghead to Lossiemouth coastline, but some were closer, including a juvenile that was seen travelling east very fast 600m out on the 16th. On the 29th, a further minke was seen by the Gemini Explorer in Findlater Bay.



The biggest group of bottlenose dolphins recorded during the month was on the 16th June when a large group was seen in Burghead Bay chasing big salmon. After a while they decided to head east, so, jumping into my car, I headed to Hopeman to intercept them. When I got there, some were right next to the harbour wall whilst small groups were leaping further out much to the delight of the onlookers. Looking back west, I could see a minke was now feeding off Burghead, and as the dolphins had now decided to head west, I followed. Back at Burghead, I counted 42+



dolphins in total, but they were so spread out and fins were everywhere so it was easy to imagine there were hundreds of dolphins and for good measure the minke continued to feed in amongst them. Altogether there were 37 bottlenose sightings in June, including east along the Buckie to Cullen Bay coastline where the wildlife boat, Gemini Explorer, was seeing bottlenose dolphins regularly with groups of ten to 20 been the norm.

There were just four harbour porpoise sightings in June, two off Covesea and two in Cullen Bay.

Minke whale sightings were down in July, with only eight sightings. Five were seen in the Sandend and Cullen Bay area between the 6th and 12th of July, and then on the 17th. Two were seen off Covesea in the morning, and at lunch time one was seen off Hopeman.

There were 34 reported bottlenose dolphin sightings this month, from Chanonry Point and North Kessock all along the coast to Cullen Bay, with the biggest groups of 25+ seen off the Halliman Skerries near Lossiemouth and off Buckie. Most groups seen had one or two calves with them. Fourteen sightings of harbour porpoise were seen at Burghead, Covesea, Buckie and Cullen Bay in ones or twos.

SOUTH GRAMPIAN

15 sightings were reported during the month of June. There were five sightings of harbour porpoise, including a group of seven seen off Downie Point on the 11th. Three of these sightings occurred off Stonehaven during a boat survey carried out by SWF Regional Coordinator Ian Sim and Caroline Weir. A single bottlenose dolphin was also sighted whilst on survey. Individual minke whales were seen on the 11th also off Downie Point, and on the 19th off Girdleness Lighthouse. There were a remaining five bottlenose dolphin reports at Stonehaven, Girdleness and Lunan Bay.



Sightings were more plentiful in July, with 24 reported. White-beaked dolphins were seen throughout the month making up nine of the reports. All of these sightings were during land based watches and large groups of animals were watched closer to shore than usual for this species. Ian Sim watched 20 animals feeding off Stonehaven on the 12th and

on the 30th SWF Regional Coordinator Kevin Hepworth had a fantastic watch at Souter Head Cove, where seven encounters took place. White-beaked dolphins numbered 75 in three sightings and harbour porpoise numbered 40 individuals on this day! There were also two reports of harbour porpoise at Stonehaven and three sightings of the species at Collieston Harbour with animals surfing in the waves in numbers of up to 19 individuals on the 28th. Two minke whales and eight white-beaked dolphins were also spotted on this watch. There were five reports of bottlenose dolphins in July spotted at Aberdeen, Stonehaven and Inverbervie.

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND

For this region, there were just three sightings over the two months. In June, bottlenose dolphins were seen in the River Tay on the 10th and 12th. Three animals were seen feeding on the 10th, and eight animals were spotted doing the same thing on the 12th. On the 15th of July, four bottlenose dolphins were seen in Crail Harbour, Fife.

NORTH EAST ENGLAND

There was just one sighting for each month in this region, and both were of harbour porpoise. On June 26th a lone porpoise was seen in Bridlington harbour, East Yorkshire. On July 18th four porpoise were seen feeding in South Bay, Scarborough.

EASTERN ENGLAND

Four sightings were reported in June along the east coast of England. Three of these were of harbour porpoise spotted off Goresfont Pier in Norfolk, Felixstowe Ledge, Suffolk, and off Leiston in Suffolk. The remaining June sighting was offshore at East Hinder off the Kent coast of three white-beaked dolphins.



Harbour porpoise

© P Evans/ SWF

There were seven harbour porpoise sightings reported in July. Again, these were relatively well spread. Three individuals were seen off Great Yarmouth in Norfolk. Sightings of porpoise

were also recorded in the Rivers Nene, Colne and Blackwater.

SUSSEX

Written by Steve Savage, Regional Coordinator for Sussex

Sightings

There was one sighting in June when a solitary bottlenose dolphin was reported off Selsey Bill by a fisherman on the 17th via the Sussex Sea Fisheries District Committee. In July, a bottlenose dolphin was reported once again by the Shoreham Angling Squad on Thursday 8th July outside the Brighton Marina. The dolphin was slowly passing west to east. The fisherman had been catching pollock, wrasse, and a small amount of bream and bass in the area

A common seal was reported near Brighton on 22nd June. This may be the seal we have spotted in the past, which also swims several miles up river on the River Ouse (East Sussex) and the River Adur (West Sussex). We have been able to confirm that one particular seal does frequently visit this area, including rivers, by its unique spot markings. A common seal was also observed at Lancing (West Sussex) on 8th July, firstly at 10:00 and again at 19:00 hrs.

Events

A major event in our calendar was the Adur World Oceans Day Event (5th June) which took place just off Shoreham High Street on the bank of the River Adur. This provides an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of local sea mammals and of course promote National Whale and Dolphin Watch, especially as our manned watch site would also be in Shoreham. The focal point of my display is a life sized inflatable bottlenose dolphin model, with pictures of local sightings and information about dolphin natural history and biology.

There were many other displays about local marine wildlife, aquarium tanks, strandline displays and activities for the children. I also took along my One World One Ocean display (Ed the Bear) which highlights threats to the World's Oceans and dangers including those specific to sea mammals as well as celebrating local and global marine wildlife.

**DORSET**

(Including sightings data kindly forwarded by Durlston Marine Project)

There were a total of ten sightings in June. The majority of reports were of unidentified dolphin species in groups of eight to 18 animals. These were reported at Swanage, Portland Bill, Lulworth, Bowleaze Cove in Weymouth, and Hengistbury Head. Three sightings of bottlenose dolphins were recorded in June, two of which were seen off Portland. The largest group numbered 16 animals, which were seen off of Old Harry Rocks, Studland on the 23rd.

There was just a single sighting reported throughout July, and that was of eight unidentified dolphins on the 6th in Durlston Bay, Swanage.

On 20th June, ten or so bottlenose dolphins were sighted at 17:00 off Archirondel on the north east coast of Jersey. This was most likely the same group of eight animals seen at 16:00 just to the south at Gorey. At the same time another group was seen between Gorey and the Normandy port of Carteret 20 kilometres to the east. These were the only sightings of this species recorded in June.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

Written by Bertram Bree, Regional Coordinator for the Channel Islands

On 30th June five common dolphins passed between Jersey and Granville in Normandy, an increasingly regular species to this region.

There were seven reports of bottlenose dolphin in July. These animals were seen at Grouville Bay RAMSAR reserve, St Catherine's breakwater, Noirmont, the north east coast of Jersey and off the Isle of Herm which is east of Guernsey.

On 2nd July three Risso's dolphins passed between the south west tip of Jersey and the north coast of Brittany to the south. And on 20th July 20 probable common dolphins were seen from the ferry between north Guernsey and Salcombe.

The area around the Channel Isles is rich in fish and plankton so is a great feeding area for many marine mammals and minke whales are sometimes noted off North West Guernsey in late July with observations continuing into early August. Hopefully they will be seen again this year.

Satellite tagging of harbour seals has revealed the great distances travelled by these animals. Both Atlantic grey seals and harbour seals are found to the south of Jersey near the Chausey Isles. These animals have been tracked to the Isle of Wight and south east England. And on 19th July, a harbour seal was tracked 400 kilometres away up the Loire River in France.

SOUTH DEVON

Written by Lauren Davis, Devon BRC (Including sightings data kindly forwarded by Devon BRC)



The sightings along the south Devon coast during June and July sparked off pure excitement amongst marine conservationists and also a media frenzy!

Of course, I am talking about the sperm whale that was spotted on June 28th in Torbay by a fisherman out on his daily routine, which was a very rare occurrence. The majority of

cetacean activity seemed to be in Torbay over these months, with the sperm whale being reported six more times in June moving between Babbacombe and Berry Head.

There were also five sightings of bottlenose dolphins seen within Torbay in June. Ashley Lane from Paignton Pleasure Cruises regularly spotted these animals reaching a group size of up to 20 individuals including a number of calves and juveniles.

Two hundred common dolphins were recorded on the 26th June off Slapton Sands near Dartmouth and, two days later, Genevieve Leaper reported ten white-beaked

dolphins seen by Richard Palmer in Outer Lyme Bay whilst sailing in race around Britain and Ireland.

The sperm whale was reported a further three times in the same area in July until the 21st. Paignton Pleasure Cruises continued to regularly see groups of bottlenose dolphins of up to 25 animals off Paignton, and a group of 20 was reported between Daddyhole Plain and Thatcher Rock by Rick Driver on the 30th.

CORNWALL

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

Sightings

What a difference a couple of months can make! After the improved, but still generally sparse showing during April and May, the following two months more than made up for the rest of the year with what seems like hundreds of sightings totalling seven species reported.

The usual small pods of harbour porpoises were seen mostly in the west of Cornwall, with sightings around Cape Cornwall, Sennen, the Isles of Scilly and Porthgwarra, while further east along the south coast they were also at Coverack, the Manacles reef and off Falmouth. Similar areas were also favourable for bottlenose dolphins, as they were seen at Pendeen, Porthgwarra and Porthcurno, but up the north coast they also put in several appearances around St Ives Bay and on 16th June a larger group of 15 were seen off Newquay. Back on the south coast Marazion, Praa Sands, the Manacles and Falmouth also clocked up some more sightings of this species.



Bottlenose dolphins

© D Feingold/ SWF

Common dolphins continue to be found in decent numbers, especially off Padstow and Newquay where on 18th June up to 50 were attracted to a dive boat and about a week later at least 80 were off Padstow. Other sightings were sent in from Crackington Haven, St Agnes and out at Wolf Rock between Land's End and the Isles of Scilly. There were two reports of Risso's dolphins during this period, with a group of 5 near Cape Cornwall on 23rd June and then 4 were seen at Porthgwarra on 26th June, so it could potentially be the same pod moving around the Land's End peninsula and making the most of the popular feeding areas around there. Groups of unidentified dolphins were observed at Newquay, Chapel Porth, Sennen, Porthcurno and Fowey. Getting bigger, a lone minke whale was reported lunge feeding off Zennor, between St Ives and Pendeen, on 3rd June and the next day

a pod of three killer whales was observed off Nanjizel, near Porthgwarra. Basking sharks were in the area when the orca pod was seen, so perhaps they too were foraging as many years ago a killer whale was reported attacking a basking shark in the same area. The last identified whale species was a humpback whale off Godrevy, an extremely rare record for SW England with the last one being photographed at the Isles of Scilly in 2008. However, this latest record has a very sad story attached to it, which you can read about a little later in this article. One last sighting, an unidentified whale, was spotted by keen observers on the Isles of Scilly.

Seawatch Southwest survey sightings

(Sightings data used with the kind permission of Dr Russell Wynn/Seawatch Southwest www.seawatch-sw.org).

As reported last year, a research team have been monitoring marine wildlife activity off Gwennap Head every day from dawn until dusk between 15th July and 15th October for the Seawatch Southwest project over the last few years. The team have just returned for their 4th season and in the first couple of weeks had some really exciting sightings to share. Harbour porpoises have been seen in small numbers almost daily, while bottlenose dolphins and basking sharks have been relatively frequent visitors to the reef as well. Not quite so common were common dolphins and ocean sunfish, while single observations were logged of Risso's dolphins (two breaching on 28th July), white beaked dolphins (five breaching near the Risso's dolphins on the same day!), and a minke whale (feeding amongst common dolphins and gannets on 31st July). White beaked dolphins are another rare species for SW England, but recent survey work now appears to suggest there could be a small population off the south coast, particularly in Lyme Bay, Dorset. This sighting in the overall context also means it is the eighth species recorded in June and July for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

News and events

As mentioned above, the humpback whale seen at Godrevy had a sad story to tell, and this is it. British Divers Marine Life Rescue (www.bdmlr.org.uk) were alerted to the presence of the whale at the end of July as it had been seen over the course of



the previous couple of weeks in exactly the same place, next to the cardinal buoy marking the Stones reef some way off Godrevy Point. A team was dispatched in the rescue RIB 'Josh' and quickly located the animal. It was a maternally dependent calf that was evidently separated from its mother and had no way of fending for itself alone. The 20ft

animal was visibly starved and its behaviour was also of concern as it had apparently

adopted the cardinal buoy as its new mother, seemingly convinced by the noise of the fog warning device inside it that did indeed sound similar to a large whale breathing every time it rolled on the swell. The little whale surfaced every four minutes next to the buoy and then weakly submerged again to 'hide' in its shadow, following a fixed pattern that could be timed almost exactly. Three days later a team including vets went out again to make a full assessment and decide on how to proceed in the best interest of the whale's welfare, but it had gone. On 15th August a decomposing whale carcass was spotted in St Ives Bay but didn't strand, making it difficult to confirm the species. The body actually became entangled in equipment belonging to the Hayle wave hub development and had to be towed off. The following evening it was seen again and this time the wave hub support vessel was able to tow it into the shore at Porthkidney beach, Lelant, where it stranded overnight. At first light the next day volunteers from the Cornwall Wildlife Trust Marine Strandings Network (www.cwtstrandings.org) were able to confirm it as the humpback whale calf. Photographs, measurements and samples were taken, and hopefully DNA testing may reveal where this poor animal came from. Notably, the animal had numerous whale lice around its upper jaw and along its back, and it was also confirmed to be maternally dependent, as the baleen plates had not started to form yet. Personally, seeing this animal out at the reef when it was alive, and then later dead, was the first time I've ever seen a humpback whale and it's certainly an experience I'll never forget for all the wrong reasons.

Hopefully another rescue incident with a happy ending will brighten the tone, as in mid-July an ocean sunfish was found inside St Ives harbour trapped in a pool by a sandbar as the tide was going out. The animal was about a metre in diameter and gave the impression that it was upset at its situation (if a sunfish can do that) as it swam up and down the pool looking for a way out. Medics were able to put it in a large water-filled sack on board a nearby RIB and took it to safe water just outside the harbour where it was released successfully, leaving slimy reminders on the drysuit of the Medic who handled it!

Cornwall Seal Group (www.cornwallsealgroup.co.uk) have been doing some good publicity for grey seals recently, having filmed for the 'Country Tracks' programme and the show is due to air soon. TV presenter Jodie Kidd was especially taken with one seal in particular that came over to check out the boat and the people on board and it is encounters like this that can win hearts and minds in the uphill struggle to get seals recognised by the authorities as in dire need of proper legal protection. Grey seals in particular seem to have been left behind in recent developments in marine conservation zone planning, despite the fact that there are fewer grey seals in the world than there are African elephants! Grey seals are not listed as an endangered species in this country although we are home to more than half the world population, so it should be our duty as a nation to take the leading role internationally in protecting them from the various threats humans pose to them around the world, from the recent proposed massive cull at Sable Island, Canada, to the quiet killer of pollution.

NORTH DEVON

Written by Lauren Davis, DBRC (Including sightings data kindly forwarded by DBRC)

Harbour porpoise were the main species seen, with 12 sightings in June and nine in July, from Hartland, Baggy, Bull and Capstone Points and Downend.

Also in June, two sightings of common dolphins were reported from Bull and Baggy Points. The group seen from Baggy on June 26th comprised about 50 individuals seen in a line moving from southwest to southeast off the Point. Two unidentified cetaceans were seen from Morte Point on the 4th and 5th June. Harbour porpoise was the only species recorded in July with 12 reports including sightings at Capstone Point, Tunnels Beach at Ilfracombe and Downend.

BRISTOL CHANNEL & NORTH WALES

There was a single sighting in June of eight common dolphins four miles west of Worm's Head, Rhossili, reported by Mick Parker on the 22nd.

The following sighting reported was not until the 3rd July, again at Worm's Head. This time, two harbour porpoise were recorded. Another four porpoise were seen on the 22nd at Swansea Docks.

WEST WALES

Written by Gemma Veneruso, Regional Coordinator for West Wales



Bottlenose dolphin

© D Feingold/ SWF

SWF surveys from various platforms including from land, wildlife watching boats and dedicated surveys, produced 117 sightings in June. 108 of these sightings were of bottlenose dolphins and the remaining nine were harbour porpoise. Hotspots for sightings were at the usual haunts in Cardigan Bay including New Quay, Bird's

Rock and Ynys Lochlyn. There were also a number of sightings of bottlenose dolphin at Mwnt, further south in Cardigan Bay, reported by Tony Barber of 'A Bay to Remember' and by Janet Baxter. Mwnt has previously been identified as an important feeding ground for the dolphins and animals can be seen there on most days. Bottlenose dolphins were also spotted from Aberystwyth harbour by Janet on three occasions, in addition to a sighting from the promenade by Elfyn Pugh.

There were a few cetacean reports from Pembrokeshire in June, including a harbour porpoise off Skokholm. Six porpoises were also reported off Turbot Bank by Andy Bowen, skipper at Pembrokeshire Dive Charters.

There were two reports south of Pembroke on the 11th June. The first was a minke whale spotted at midday. A few hours later, an unidentified cetacean was also reported. Twenty-five common dolphins made an appearance on the 14th five nautical miles SW of St. Govan's Head. Slightly further north at Strumble Head, Elaine Edwards spotted eight possible bottlenose dolphins.

The weather significantly deteriorated in July again this year. This meant fewer opportunities for surveys. However, a total of 116 sightings were nevertheless reported in the region, of which 104 were bottlenose dolphin records that were found predominantly at New Quay, Mwnt and Cardigan Island. Dolphins were also seen further



Bottlenose dolphins

© G Veneruso/ SWF

north at Aberystwyth and Aberdovey. There were seven harbour porpoise reports from Cardigan Bay SAC, at New Quay, Cwmttydu, Pembryn and Cardigan Island.

In Pembrokeshire, ten harbour porpoises were spotted in Jack Sound on the 1st day of July. There were also four reports of common dolphin including two sightings of relatively large groups up to 65 animals off St Anne's Head. On the 20th, 12 common dolphins travelled very close inshore to Fishguard Harbour and it was feared that they may strand. Thankfully though, the animals made it safely out to sea. Also on the 20th, six probable common dolphins were seen at Abereddy.

NORTH WALES

Ten sightings of harbour porpoise were reported in North Wales in June, all of which were recorded around the Isle of Anglesey. Hotspots for sightings came from the north of the island, including Bull Bay mainly reported by SWF Director, Dr. Peter Evans, and off Llanbadrig, reported by Mike Thompson. There were five



Bottlenose dolphins

© P Evans/ SWF

bottlenose dolphin encounters in June, including sightings again from the north of Anglesey. On the 20th, Jon Shaw onboard Seekat, encountered a group of 50 animals on two occasions off Amlwch, and a couple of miles east of Point Lynas. Bottlenose dolphins were also spotted at the mouth of the Menai Straits, around the Llyn Peninsula at Trefor and off the St Tudwal islands in northern Cardigan Bay.

There were five more sightings of harbour porpoise in July, again at Bull Bay and Llanbadrig, as well as one sighting half a mile of Puffin Island. Three sightings of bottlenose dolphin were also recorded from the Llyn Peninsula on the 12th and 18th, and on the 26th, five animals were spotted off Aberffraw, southwest Anglesey.

On the 27th July, a rare sighting of a minke whale was recorded off Criccieth heading towards Porthmadog. This species is sometimes seen in the Irish Sea but mainly in the deeper central region. It is rare to see this animal within Cardigan Bay, although there have been a handful of sightings in past years.



Minke whale

© J Povey

ISLE OF MAN

Written by Tom Felce (MWDW), Regional Coordinator for the Isle of Man
(Including sightings data kindly forwarded by MWDW)

There were a total of 49 sightings of cetaceans in June. By far the most frequently seen species was harbour porpoise, of which there were 39 sightings. These were reported from all round the island, particularly at Port St Mary and south of the Calf of Man. The average group size was small, three individuals, although there were a couple of sightings of groups of around ten individuals reported from Port St Mary.



Risso's Dolphin

© N Clear/ MWDW

As has been the pattern this year, there were very few sightings of Risso's dolphins (n=5) compared to normal years, although all of these sightings appeared to be of the same group of seven or eight individuals seen in the south of the island. There were also four sightings of minke whale reported, all on the west coast of the island.

Due to very poor weather this year in July, there were only 29 sightings reported during this month. As would be expected, harbour porpoise were the most

frequently spotted species, of which there were 18 sightings. These were all of small groups (less than four individuals), and were seen mainly in the south of the island.

Although there were only four sightings of Risso's dolphins throughout July, all of these sightings were of the same group of around 20 individuals that were seen around the Calf of Man for at least two weeks. There were also four sightings of minke whale, and one sighting of around 40 common dolphins, which were seen associating with some minke whales.

By far the most exciting sighting, however, was a confirmed sighting of a humpback whale on the 23rd July, seen five miles off Peel on the west coast of the island. This individual was certainly not a fully-grown whale and may be the same individual that has been seen off the east coast of Ireland, also in July. Without doubt, this was the first sighting of a humpback whale in Manx waters that has been confirmed by a photograph.



NORTH WEST ENGLAND

Written by Dave McGrath

Sightings of cetaceans along England's NW coastline are at a low ebb in the summer months although certainly harbour porpoises are still in the area.

The weather in June was good for spotting cetaceans, but the only sighting of harbour porpoise in the month along our coastline was of a single animal seen from Walney Bird Observatory, off the southern coast of Cumbria, on 14th June.

In July, the number of sightings increased, despite the deteriorating weather, with a solitary harbour porpoise being seen from Hilbre Bird Observatory in the mouth of the Dee estuary on 5th July. This was followed by



an unusual sighting, a large group of 30 bottlenose dolphins on 12th. It is thought this may be the most easterly record of the species in the Irish Sea. Two harbour porpoises were also seen from the same site on this cetacean filled day.

At South Shore, Blackpool the next day, 13th, a regular watcher saw two harbour porpoise during his lunch break, an hour or so before high tide.

Records from the north of Blackpool are scarce and often involve stranded dead animals as was the case of a report of a porpoise from Morecambe on 17th July.

The next live sighting was again from Hilbre BO, when four bottlenose dolphins were seen once again heading deep into the Dee estuary on 24th.

Finally, the carcass of a long dead harbour porpoise was found at Blackpool South Shore floating on the high tide on 29th July.

Many thanks to the contributors to the Hilbre Island Bird Observatory, Walney Island Bird Observatory, and Heysham Bird Observatory blogs for much of this information.

SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND

In June there was a sighting of 12 possible bottlenose dolphins sighted off Rothesay Bay on the Isle of Bute on the 3rd. Four sightings of individual harbour porpoise were recorded on the 21st of the month north of Colonsay, Crinan and west of Corryvreckan. One Minke Whale was also seen on the 21st surfacing two miles west of Corryvreckan.

Through the month of July there were five harbour porpoise sightings. Three of these were spotted by Micheal Beard on the 20th July at Crinan and near Corryvreckan once more. On the 21st a porpoise was seen northeast of Dunoon and also off Dunoon a possible minke whale was reported by Rowan Fraser on the 23rd.

HEBRIDES

Written by Sightings Officer, HWDT (Including sightings data kindly forwarded by HWDT)

Sightings of minke whales continued to rise in June. Reports were received from a wide area around the west coast with the Small Isles and Skye being particularly good spots to see minke whales at the beginning of the month. There were a few sightings in slightly more unusual locations: two whales were seen from Port Appin travelling past Lismore (Loch Linnhe), a whale was seen in the Firth of Clyde, and there was a third possible sighting of a whale at Strontian, quite near the head of Loch Sunart. Minke whales are occasionally seen travelling up sea lochs as they follow their prey, but we have never received a whale sighting this far up Loch Sunart and we are currently trying to validate this most interesting sighting report.

Sightings of common dolphins are now featuring quite highly on the sightings list; several areas off the Isle of Skye played host to huge groups of common dolphins at the beginning of the month, with group sizes varying between 250 and 500 animals.



Short-beaked common dolphins

© P Evans/ SWF

Bottlenose dolphins were seen on six occasions in June; three of which were around the Isle of Bute early on in the month, with group sizes of between five and 12. The fourth sighting was of four individuals off the north coast of Mull, followed by another sighting off Mull a few weeks later, this time off the south coast at Uisken. Finally a pod of unidentified dolphins have been spotted in Loch Snizort, Isle of Skye, this morning (Monday 28th June).



Harbour porpoise

© P Evans/ SWF

Harbour porpoise sightings were reported throughout June. There were a few sightings from more unusual locations such as Inverary, Loch Long, and off Gourock in the Clyde. We know relatively little about cetacean presence in these areas, so we are really pleased to receive these sightings.

There were a few possible sightings of a lone killer whale around the Isle of Coll. Unfortunately we haven't yet received any photographs from these sightings which would be really useful in confirming these reports. Photographs may also enable us to identify the individual from the west coast community, which appears to consist of just nine animals.

July has been a busy month with a variety of species reported. The month began with a report of a humpback whale off Tiree. Humpback whale sightings off the west coast of Scotland occur annually but are rare. This was the first report of 2010. The month ended with a pod of orca off the Isle of Lewis. Unfortunately we haven't received any photographs of the animal's dorsal fins and therefore cannot identify the individuals. With the west coast community being so small, studying them can be problematic.

Minke whales have been spotted on nine occasions this month - mainly in the waters surrounding the Small Isles and the Isle of Lewis. There have been two unusual sightings near the Corryvreckan and off the coast of Dunure, near the Isle of Arran. We do get occasional sightings from these areas but not regularly.

Harbour porpoises have been seen on numerous occasions throughout the area with the majority of sightings around Mull, Canna and Loch Alsh.

Bottlenose dolphins have been reported on only five occasions this month. A few sightings were made between Canna and Mallaig, with group sizes varying between three and 20. A solitary bottlenose dolphin was spotted in the Sound of Mull and a group of five at Kyle of Lochalsh.

There have only been three common dolphin sightings reported this month, off South Uist, the South of Harris, and Canna.

Risso's Dolphins have been spotted on two occasions: off Dunnet Head (near the Orkneys) and Loch Roag on the Isle of Lewis. In the Hebrides, these dolphins are usually found in deeper shelving waters, as their preferred prey of squid, octopus and cuttlefish can be found there.

NORTH WEST SCOTLAND

Written by Ian French, Regional Coordinator for North West Scotland

The month of June was perfect spotting weather with calm seas and grey skies. During the month there were ten sightings of common dolphins with group sizes of up to 40 individuals. The dolphins were often seen around Longa Island and occasionally Rona Bank and Red Point, Gairloch.

25 sightings of harbour porpoise were reported with group sizes from one individual to eight animals. The first new born porpoise calves of this year were also recorded within Loch Gairloch on the 20th of June. One survey-cruise passenger was rewarded with a sighting of a mother porpoise turning onto her side to feed her calf.

Minke whale sightings were sparse again during this month with only one sighting of a minke whale around Longa Island, Gairloch. No sightings of larger whales or other dolphin species were reported during June.

In July the weather was against us for approximately 11 days with high winds and rough seas.

On one survey cruise we encountered a small group of around ten common dolphins within Loch Gairloch in quite rough seas, thanks to gannets and Manx shearwaters signalling the way. Within the group was a very new born calf with very distinctive foetal folds.

24 sightings of harbour porpoise were recorded which was on par with July's records, and small "family" groups numbering five to eight and up to 11 animals were encountered several times a day.

There was one sighting of two minke whales south west of Longa Island as more and more shoals of sand eels and herring appeared, bringing into the loch large numbers of gannets, shear waters, petrels and auks.

At the time of writing again no sightings were reported of larger whales or other dolphin species within our area.

NORTHERN IRELAND

(Including sightings data kindly forwarded by IWDG)

Three cetacean species were spotted in the month of June. There were two encounters with bottlenose dolphins, one of 19 animals seen in Larne, Co. Antrim on the 3rd and another of two animals off Newcastle, Co. Down. There were six reports of harbour porpoise this month. Two of these sightings occurred at Bloody Bridge, Co. Down but the rest came from various locations in Co. Antrim. A single minke whale was reported from Ramore Head on the 21st.



Bottlenose dolphin

© G Veneruso/ SWF

In July, there were seven sightings of harbour porpoise, which were all but two recorded at various points on the Antrim coastline. The remaining sightings were in Belfast Lough and Bloody Bridge. One bottlenose dolphin was spotted on the 24th off Newcastle, Co. Down. On the 7th, a large whale that could not be identified was recorded feeding at Rathlin Island, Antrim. There were another three sightings of unidentified cetaceans

during this month from Counties Antrim, Down and Derry.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

(Including sightings data kindly forwarded by IWDG)

There were 80 sightings recorded during the month of June, with six different species seen. Bottlenose dolphins were the most abundant, with 30 sightings. The biggest group was 35 animals seen on the 4th off Kilcoole, Wicklow. Harbour porpoise were seen sixteen different times including a pod of 19 seen on the 5th in Killiney Bay, Dublin. There were four sightings of killer whales this month in pods of two to four whales. Two of these sightings came from Co. Mayo at Erris Head and Downpatrick. Other sightings of the species occurred off Co. Donegal and four miles off Baltimore, Co. Cork. Minke whales were seen ten times, including eight animals seen on the 6th off Great Blasket Island, Co. Kerry. There were five sightings of Risso's dolphins in four different counties. There were two encounters off Co. Wexford and remaining sightings were reported from Counties Donegal, Cork and Kerry. There

were three sightings of common dolphins in June. Fifteen animals were seen off Sleah Head, Co. Kerry on the 5th and a single animal was spotted the next day at Ram Head, Co. Waterford. On the 12th 20 animals were recorded by an observer whilst sailing offshore of Donegal. There were also 12 sightings of unidentified cetaceans during this month.

Ninety-four sightings were recorded, totalling seven species, in July. Harbour porpoise were the most abundant species seen in July with 35 sightings, recorded at various locations around Ireland, in particular off the coast of Cork and Dublin. Bottlenose dolphins were reported on 16 occasions. Most of these reports came from the coast of Counties Donegal and Mayo. However the largest group numbering 60 was seen on the 11th off Easky, Co. Sligo. There were a total of 327



Short-beaked common dolphin

© P Evans/ SWF

common dolphins seen in nine sightings, mainly off the Kerry coast. The biggest group was 120 individuals seen off Clogher Head on the 12th. There were three sightings of Risso's dolphin with five animals seen off Puffin Island, Co. Kerry, two animals off Hook Head, Co. Wexford, and ten animals offshore from west Cork.

Of the whales, minke were seen the most, with 12 sightings in July. The majority of sightings were recorded at various points off Co. Cork. But animals were also seen at Downpatrick, Co. Mayo, at a number of points off Co. Kerry, and off the Dublin coastline on a number of occasions. Fin whales were spotted seven times, all off the coast of Co. Cork, apart from an impressive group of 13 seen on the 9th off Ram Head, Co. Waterford. Individual humpback whales were seen on the 14th off the Skerries, Co. Dublin and on the 15th by a kayaker at Ireland's Eye, Co. Dublin. There were also 16 sightings of unidentified species for this month.

Unless otherwise stated, regional roundups were written by SWF volunteers Jenna Peterson and H  l  ne Roger-B  rubet, Kerry Froud as well as by Gemma Veneruso.

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