

sea watch FOUNDATION



Editorial

This newsletter covers two strongly contrasting months. We had August with the National Whale and Dolphin Watch and its boom in sightings followed by unfortunate bad weather in September and an inevitable decrease in reports. Although some species cropped up reliably in all the expected places, we also had a few unexpected sightings of sei and sperm whales in the Hebrides, some interesting strandings around the UK and fascinating bottlenose behaviour in Cardigan Bay. All this goes to show that sheer determination pays off and by being in the field as much as possible you eventually end up being in the right place at the right time...

Danielle Gibas
Sightings Officer



I'd like to thank all of our observers and regional coordinators who braved the sometimes uncooperative weather and sent in sightings thick and fast throughout the NWDW weekend and the rest of the season. Keep up the fantastic work!

NEWS

D Day for 10th National Whale and Dolphin Watch

As you all know, we celebrated our 10th annual National Whale & Dolphin Watch (NWDW) on 5th to 7th August this year. Watches were held all around the country and we reached 434 sightings of cetaceans throughout the event and the week that followed. The event was a great success and we'd like to thank all our regional coordinators and observers who organised watches and events and submitted their sightings and effort data to us.



The 2012 NWDW will be held on **27th to 29th July 2012**. If you are interested in organising a watch for next year's event or simply would like to find out how to get involved, contact our sightings officer Danielle danielle.gibas@seawatchfoundation.org.uk or visit the NWDW page on our website.

Cetacean Surveying Course held in New Quay



© Colin Bird

Sea Watch's annual Cetacean Surveying Training Course was held in New Quay on 10th and 11th September. Lectures were given by Sea Watch Director - Dr Peter Evans, Monitoring Officer - Gemma Veneruso, and Sightings Officer - Danielle Gibas. This year, despite our best efforts, the dolphins out-shone us and the fieldwork overshadowed the lectures. Not only were we treated to leaping dolphins against a huge rainbow during Saturday's

land watch but participants in Sunday's field trip were also witness to behaviour which had not yet been recorded in Cardigan Bay (see next news item for more details)! Needless to say, training course participants and Sea Watch staff and volunteers were all delighted with the weekend! The dates for next year's course have been set for the **8th and 9th September 2012**. Booking forms and more information on the course can be found on the Sea Watch website

<http://www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk/education.php?uid=39>.

Newborn bottlenose dolphin calf repeatedly tossed into air by its mother

While hosting the Cetacean Surveying Training Course in New Quay, the Sea Watch team witnessed a surprisingly violent action by an adult bottlenose dolphin upon its calf.



The unusual event occurred late in the afternoon on Sunday, 11th September just off New Quay in Cardigan Bay, West Wales. At the time, several members of the training course were onboard the research vessel, Dunbar Castle II, with Sea Watch staff and volunteers. Others also witnessed the event from a watch post on land. Soon after leaving the harbour, the boat encountered a group of seven to eight dolphins and stopped to perform photo-identification of the individuals. The dolphin group consisted of several adults, an older calf, and a newborn calf that may actually have been only a few days old.

The group demonstrated primarily social behaviour, involving belly-up displays, physical contact with one another, and tail thrashing and slapping. Then, the newborn was nudged out of the water by an adult. Approximately five minutes later, the animal was tossed repeatedly right out of the water three to four times.



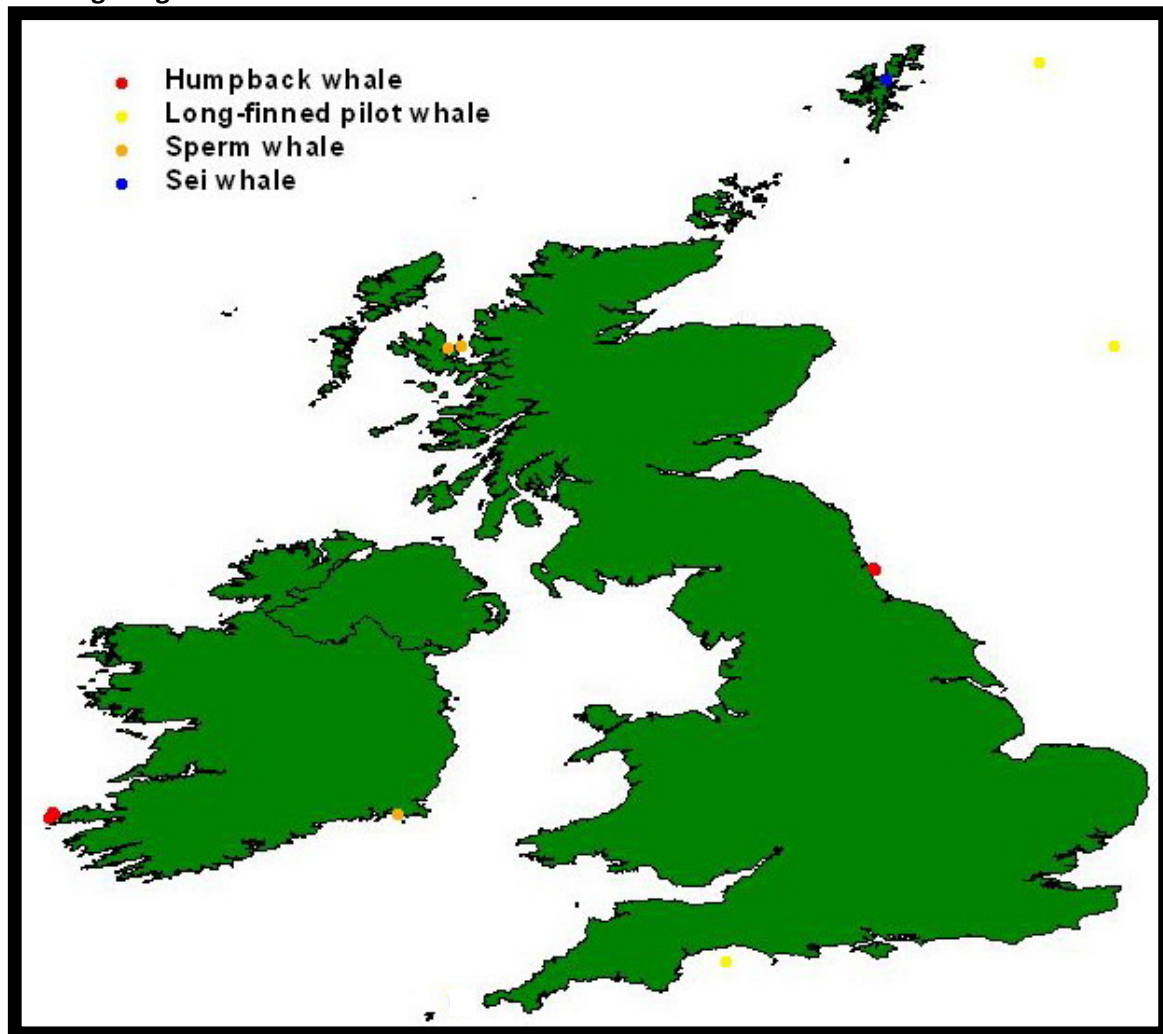
Although other adults came close to the mother and calf, the photographs revealed that the actual tossing was done by the calf's mother. She was an animal recognised by Sea Watch researchers as Tamara, a female who had last given birth to a calf three years ago. The phenomenon of aggressive behaviour against porpoises sometimes leading to death has in the past been attributed by some scientists to misdirected infanticide by male dolphins since young dolphins have been observed attacked by adults, generally presumed to be males.

In this particular instance, photography made it possible to establish that the apparently aggressive behaviour was conducted by the mother rather than a male dolphin as might otherwise have been inferred. Reasons for this cannot be known for certain. She may have been simply playing with her infant. Alternatively, she could have been scolding her young one for wandering too far from her, so as to ensure the infant did not come too close to either a hostile male dolphin or to the survey vessel. Earlier, she had repeatedly nudged the infant along in a particular direction away from a group of other dolphins.

All individuals in the group were later observed feeding, throwing fish into the air, and engaging in normal swimming behaviour, so the calf appeared to be completely unharmed, though presumably a lot wiser for its experience.

SIGHTINGS SUMMARY, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2011

Rare sightings



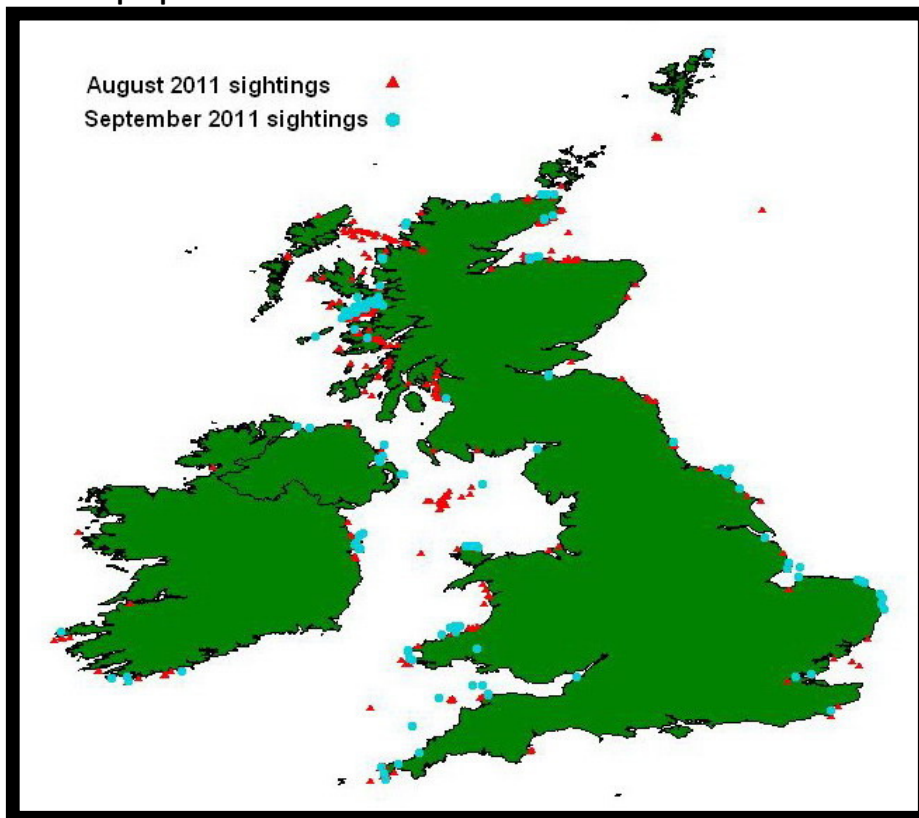
There were a number of very interesting sightings during August and September. The most unusual of these was the sei whale which was seen on 1st and 3rd September off Mossbank, Shetland. Sei whales are rare in the Eastern Atlantic with most sightings reported between June and October. Some excellent photos were taken of this particular individual (see regional round-up).

Single humpback whales were seen in two different locations: Whitburn Coastal Park on 6th and 7th August during a couple of very busy landwatches and off Clogher head on 23rd, 24th and 28th August and again on 20th September.

Sperm whales were seen once off in Ballyteige Bay, Co. Wexford on 18th August and twice in the Sound of Raasay (17th and 24th August).

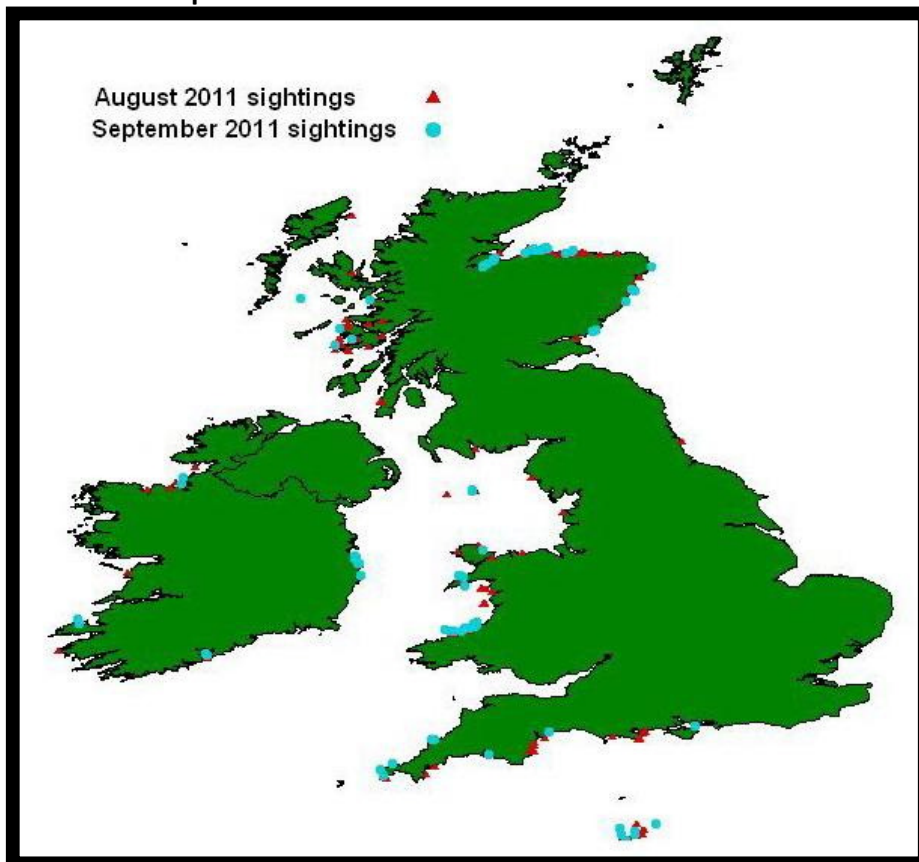
Finally, long-finned pilot whales were sighted twice offshore NE Scotland on 1st and 5th August and once in Lyme Bay.

Harbour porpoise



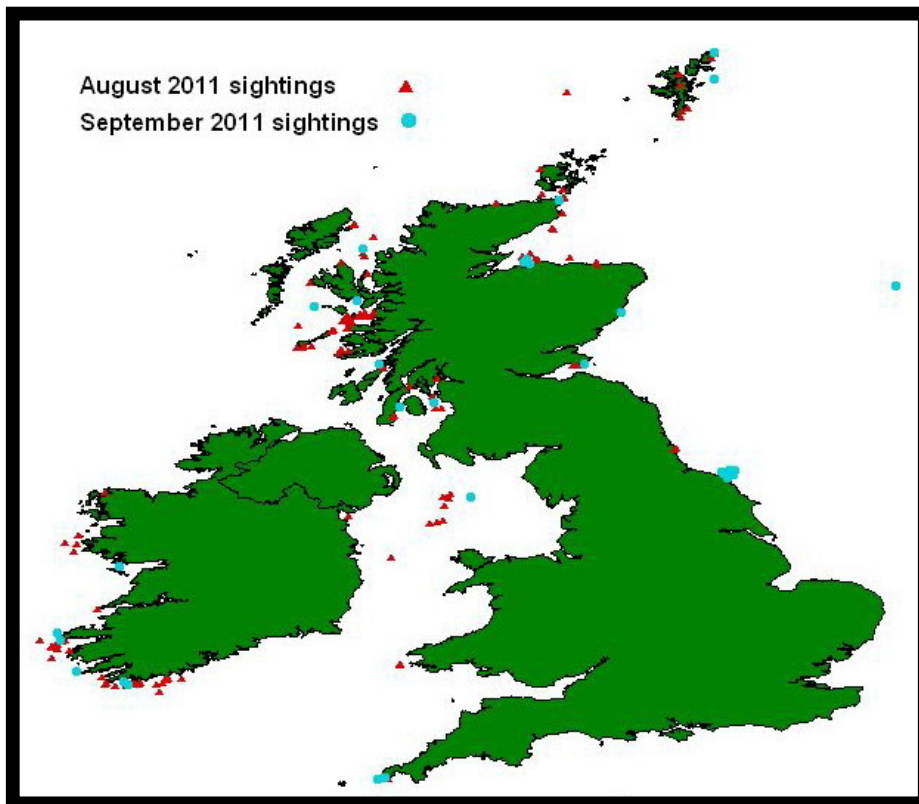
Harbour porpoise were the most commonly sighted species in the UK, with almost 1000 records. Sightings were widely spread across the British Isles. The majority of these animals were spotted in groups of up to ten individuals. However, in four percent of sightings occasions, group size exceeded ten animals.

Bottlenose Dolphin



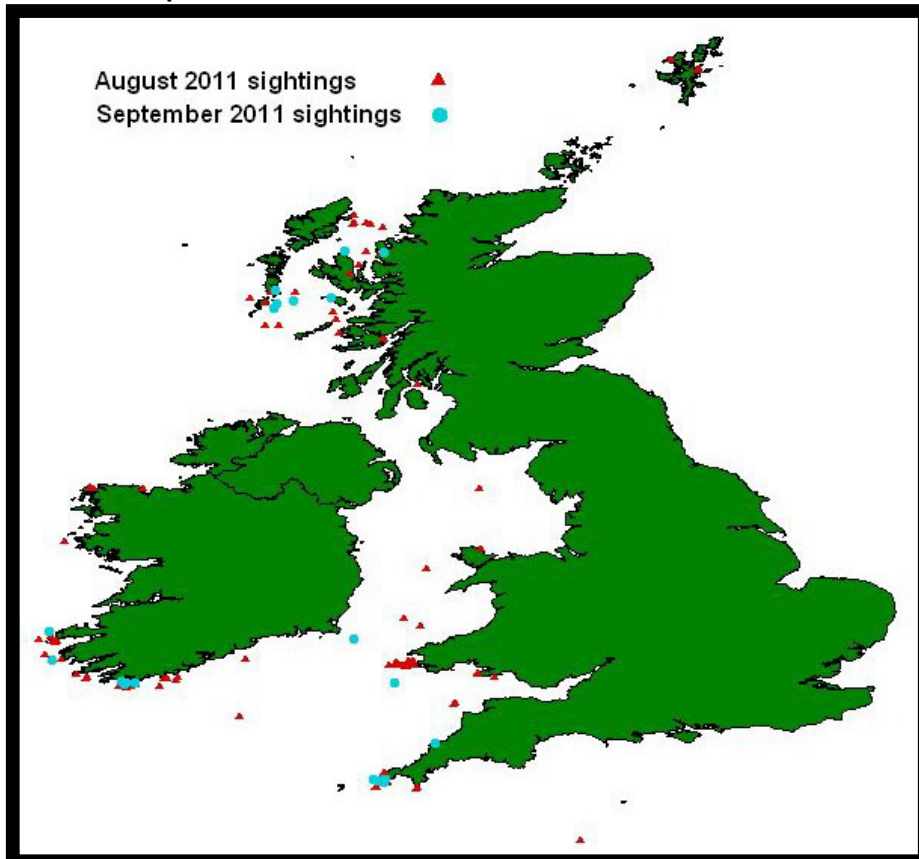
Bottlenose dolphins were seen 624 times in August and September. Distribution of these sightings was very similar to that of previous months with concentrations around hotspots which are home to our resident populations.

Minke whales



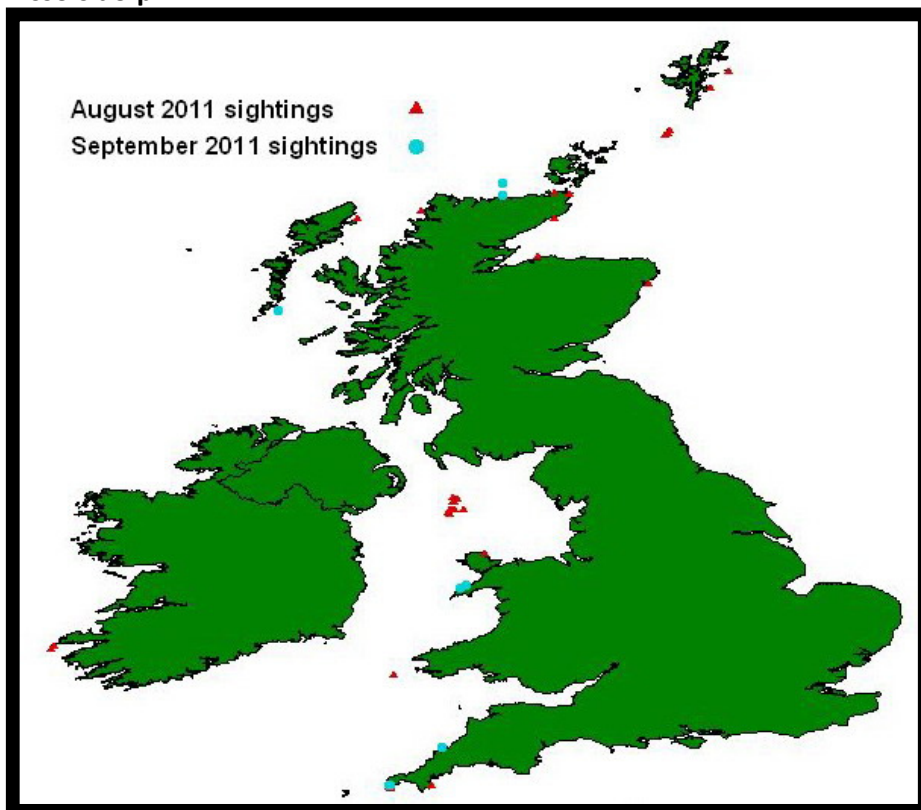
There were 210 sightings of minke whales during August and September. Although the majority of these sightings took place around the coasts of Scotland and Ireland, minke whales were also seen in the Irish Sea and off North-East England.

Common dolphins



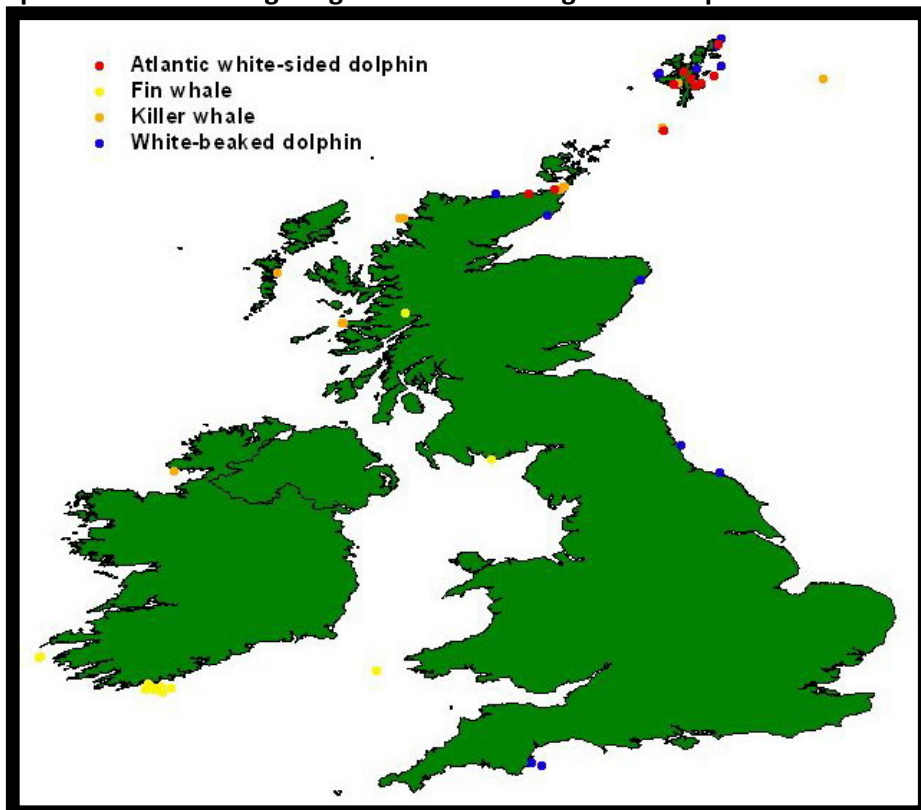
Common dolphins were seen 168 times with all sightings taking place on the western side of the British Isles. The largest pods numbered between 100 and 250 animals and were spotted off the Irish or Welsh coasts and around the South-West of England.

Risso's dolphin



The distribution of Risso's dolphin sightings was predictably patchy. The UK had 59 sightings of Risso's dolphins in August and September, scattered around the coasts of Shetland, North-West and North-East Scotland, the Isle of Man, North Wales and Cornwall.

Species with 10-25 sightings in UK waters August and September



Atlantic white-sided dolphins, white-beaked dolphins, killer whales and fin whales were all spotted between ten and 25 times throughout August and September. The majority of these sightings were concentrated in the north of the British Isles, with the exception of fin whale sightings off Southern Ireland and west of Pembrokeshire, and white-beaked dolphins off the Southern English coast in Lyme Bay.

Strandings**18 metre fin whale washes up on the Devon coast near Lynmouth (with additional notes from Chris Blackmore)**

On the morning of 9th August, the body of a dead fin whale was found washed up on a Devon beach near Lynmouth.

Fin whales are the second largest animals in the world, after the blue whale, and can reach up to 24 metres in length. This stranded individual appeared to be nearly 18 metres long.

Members of the British Divers Marine Life Rescue reported that the whale had extensive cuts over its body and was missing part of its tail. It was well preserved and an autopsy was carried out on the beach by Paul Jepson from the Zoological Society of London whose initial findings pointed to the whale dying of starvation and possible infection. A bizarre footnote was added to the story when, after removal of the carcass, the whale's jaw bone mysteriously went missing. After further publicity, including the proposal that the preserved jaw bone could be put on display in Lynmouth, it just as mysteriously reappeared.

Stranded Sowerby's beaked whale euthanased on Norfolk Coast

A young female Sowerby's beaked whale stranded along the Norfolk coast on the morning of Monday 15th August and was later euthanased due to her poor condition.

The whale, which weighed 450 kg and measured close to four metres, was found on a stretch of marshland in Thornham, near Hunstanton, Norfolk. She appeared to have beached herself and was unable to return to the sea as the tide rapidly went out.

Members of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust observed that the whale was covered in blood and was clearly distressed and suffering from her struggle to return to sea. It is likely that she was dehydrated and undernourished as well.

It was determined that the whale had a low chance of survival, because of her poor condition and her distance from the sea, and that there was no way to safely refloat her without causing further injury. Representatives from the RSPCA attended the scene with a vet and decided to euthanase the whale.

Rare stranding of sperm whale in Waterford, Ireland

A sperm whale stranded on a beach in Dungarvan, County Waterford on Thursday 18th August and died the following day. The whale had been sighted swimming close to shore and was tracked for 100 miles along the coast before it beached itself. The 11-metre adult male appeared distressed and in poor health. Members of the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) speculated that the whale may have suffered from disease or starvation. The whale was

determined to have a very low chance of survival because of its condition and distance from deeper waters and refloating it was not attempted.

Naturally inhabiting deep waters worldwide, sperm whales are rarely seen in the shallow areas near the coasts of Ireland and the UK.

Fin Whale rescue at Immingham: Initial success is followed by sadness

© Robin Petch – Fin whale

Sea Watch trustee and Yorkshire coordinator, Robin Petch was soon on the scene following the stranding of a young fin whale (not minke as the press reported) at Immingham Docks on 6th September. The rescue operation was led by Rocky Clark of British Divers Marine Life Rescue who arrived shortly after the alarm was raised by a passing

ship at around 8 am. Rocky was assisted by Cleethorpes RNLI, Humber Rescue and around 15 Fire and Rescue personnel with many more onshore as well as RSPCA, Coastguard and others.

The whale was on its side in the mud and attempts were made to dig it a trench to help it refloat as the tide came in. It often slapped its tail in distress but was gradually turned to face away from the shore as more water began to partially refloat it. It soon became apparent however that drastic measures were going to be needed as the tide was not high enough to fully refloat it and the Humber Rescue boat made repeated fast turns to create waves to break the suction.

It was at this point that Robin arrived in the water to assist and he was part of the team that finally helped the whale to break free (that's him in the orange suit!). Once swimming, the whale turned and re-stranded but was once again turned to face open water and after much dangerous thrashing of its tail, just before 3 pm it swam off at speed. The tired but happy team crawled through the mud to the shore, to clean off and head for a de-brief and well deserved drink! Rocky, by then, had been in the water around seven hours! It had been a magnificent achievement and team effort.



© Robin Petch

Sadly, the whale re-stranded off Cleethorpes two days later and was pronounced dead at the scene. Press reports of a circling mother were never confirmed and we will probably never know why it stranded or if it could have survived following the rescue. The team was immensely proud, however, to have given it a chance.

Sei whale stranding in East Yorkshire

Sea Watch trustee and Yorkshire coordinator Robin Petch was once again on the scene



© Sei whale – Robin Petch

following the stranding of what was first reported to be another fin whale in the Humber. It was originally seen swimming in shallow water near the village of Skeffling around lunch time on 23rd September but then stranded on a mud bank shortly after, around 800m from the shore.

"When I first arrived at around 4 pm, the whale was partially afloat thrashing about and splashing in its

efforts to escape. We had hopes that if the rescue equipment could be brought in time and we could manage to get out to it, we could refloat it at high tide."

High tide was scheduled for 3 am that night! The rescue mission was once again led by Rocky Clark, Yorkshire coordinator for British Divers Marine Life Rescue, but unfortunately just after Rocky and Robin had discussed a possible plan, the whale stopped moving. It was observed through a telescope continually for half an hour but made no further movements. As it was so far out in the river, and with night falling, it would have been too dangerous to approach over the salt marsh and mud flats so it was agreed between Robin, Rocky and Andy Gibson of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to abandon the rescue and the animal was pronounced dead.

REGIONAL ROUNDUPS

SHETLAND

(Including sightings data kindly forwarded by Shetland Sea Mammal Group)

August and September tallied a total of 57 sightings compared with 39 sightings during June and July. These comprised eight different species.

August

Minke whales came out top with ten sightings in August. All records were concentrated around either the northern or southern tips of the Shetland Isles with the exception of three sightings at Lamba Ness, off Whalsay, and the Outer Skerries respectively. The animals were observed as lone individuals or groups of two on all but one occasion when an aggregation of ten animals was sighted in Balta Sound on the 23rd.

August in Shetland had more sightings of Atlantic white-sided dolphins than anywhere else in the UK for both months combined. Sightings were scattered around the entire Shetland Isles and Fair Isle, with dolphins seen in relatively large groups of up to 50 animals. Bressay Sound was witness to the smallest groups of animals with three sightings of only two animals.

White-beaked dolphins were spotted seven times throughout August around Shetland and Fair Isle.

Harbour porpoises were reported seven times around Fair Isle. Porpoise were mainly seen in the latter half of the month in groups of two to 17 animals.

There were also five reports of a single common dolphin off Vidlin.

Risso's dolphins were sighted in August but not in September. Groups of four to six animals were reported off Fair Isle by the bird observatory warden, Dave Parnaby. Two further reports of groups of two Risso's dolphins were also recorded to the east of the Shetland archipelago.

Finally, with the lowest sightings rate for the month of August, killer whales were spotted once on 16th August by Karen Hall. The pod of three was in Sanda Voe at the time.

September

As might be expected, September saw reports of harbour porpoise (1st and 4th September, Fair Isle), killer whales (1st and 20th September, Fair Isle and offshore to the east of Shetland), minke whales (13th and 15th September, at Outer Skerries and Lamba Ness), white-sided dolphins (13th September, in Bressay Sound) and white-beaked dolphins (8th September, at Fair Isle). A little more unexpected, however, were two reports of a single sei whale seen off Mossbank! Onlookers were treated to this rare sight on 1st and 3rd September and managed to take some fantastic photos of the animal.

A further interesting sighting was that of a pod of long-finned pilot whales comprising 40 individuals, which was spotted on 14th September at the Ninian Field, 80nm north-east of Shetland.

NORTH SCOTLAND AND ORKNEY

Written by Colin Bird, Regional Coordinator for North East Scotland

August

August weather only allowed for 17 days for sightings. During those days, 45 sightings were reported made up of six different species plus two unidentified dolphins.

There were 19 sightings of harbour porpoise spread along the north coast of Scotland from Strathy Point, North Sutherland through to Duncansby Head, Caithness, and one report was received from Herston Head in Orkney. All the sightings were of groups of between one and six animals.

There were six reports of Risso's dolphin. Four sightings were recorded from Strathy Point by Phil Evans who came for his annual holiday of intensive sea watching along the North Coast. The other two reports came from the John O'Groats Ferry and from Highland Ranger, Paul Castle, who saw the largest group of 12 animals off Scarfskerry.

Up until August there were few minke whale sightings and we were starting to think that perhaps minke whales were avoiding the area. During August, however, seven reports were received. The largest group was seen at Marwick Head, Orkney where Cathy Coleman saw six minke whales. Also in Orkney, at Herston Head, a single minke was seen by John McCutcheon; the rest were single minke whales seen passing through the Pentland Firth.

White-beaked dolphins were recorded six times at Strathy Point by Phil Evans who was having a fantastic week of cetacean watching. He saw groups that varied in size up to 12 animals.

There were three reports of killer whales prowling the Pentland Firth. The first was reported by the Orkney Bird Group; the second was reported from a fishing boat shortly after leaving Scrabster and the third was seen by Stewart Fulton - a single animal that surfaced next to the creel boat on which he was working just west of John O'Groats Harbour.



© Bill Aspin - Killer Whales

Two reports of Atlantic white-sided dolphins were also received in September. Karen Munro saw six very late in the evening of the 2nd in Thurso Bay, Caithness, and a single dolphin was seen breaching in Gills Bay, Caithness very close to the shore.

September

September gave us just ten days during which 17 sightings were reported from the North Scotland mainland.

There were ten harbour porpoise sightings. Three of these reports came from Strathy Point, North Sutherland; three from Scarfiskerry, Caithness; two from Dunnet Bay, Caithness; and two from Gills Bay, Caithness where the annual gathering of harbour porpoise was much later than last year. I counted 24 porpoises on the 14th, and 13 on the 25th.

I visited Strathy Point on 4th September and recorded five separate pods of Risso's dolphin, the largest group being of six animals.

Just a single minke whale was seen by the John O'Groats Ferry north of the Ness of Duncansby on 3rd September.

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND

Written by Colin Bird, Regional Coordinator for North East Scotland

August

August was a disappointing month for sightings with just six days during the month when sightings were reported. In total there were 30 sightings of three different species.

Harbour porpoise made up 23 of the sightings. The first sighting of the month was at Whaligoe Steps, Ulbster when two porpoises were seen on the 5th. The following day provided excellent observing conditions at Swiney Hill, Lybster. There were 7 groups of porpoise seen over a wide area and on the same day porpoises were reported at Whaligoe Steps, Ulbster and at Trinkie in Wick. There was also a report from William Thompson at Proudfoot, Wick. There were further sightings at Swiney Hill on the 7th, the 13th, the 17th and the 27th. Boat sightings were made by Colin Carter from his creel boat *Samar* on the 14th off the coast of Latheron, and by *Gemini Explorer* on the 18th. Finally, George Campbell sighted two animals on the 22nd off Ellens Geo, Ulbster.

Minke whales were recorded on four occasions during the month: one was sighted at Trinkie, Wick on the 6th, two other sightings were made from Swiney Hill on the 17th, and a single animal was reported south-east of Lybster on the 18th.

There was only one Risso's dolphin sighting reported during August and that was at Swiney Hill, Lybster on the 6th.

September

© Peter Evans – White-beaked dolphin

September was not a good month with just three days of sightings during which two species were recorded. The majority were boat sightings by Colin Carter who reported harbour porpoises off the coast of Shelligoe, Lybster and Forse, Latheron on the 5th and Swiney Hill, Lybster on the 30th. George Campbell, who moved from Wick, recorded six porpoises near his new home near Ellens Geo at Ulbster on the 5th.

The most exciting report was from Colin Carter who had 15 white-beaked dolphins bow-riding his boat while travelling between Forse and Occumster on the 5th.

MORAY FIRTH

Written by Alan Airey, Regional Coordinator for North Grampian

August

August is often not the best of months for both weather and cetaceans in the Moray Firth, but this year sightings were pretty good. At Chanonry Point, however, which is regarded by many as one of the best land-based dolphin watching sites in Europe, I heard rumblings that the bottlenose dolphins were present in smaller numbers and were a lot less active than in past years.

Luck was on my side, for at least one day of NWDW. Saturday 6th August started out as a beautiful flat calm day. I was able to do a drive along the coast from Burghead to Cullen Bay amassing a total of 19 sightings of bottlenose dolphins, minke and porpoise before I had to turn around and return to Burghead for the advertised NWDW event. Unlike previous years, I had a good turnout at the event which meant it was virtually impossible to speak to everyone, let alone look out to sea! Unfortunately, the wind had picked up just as the event started but on the brief occasions that I got to scan the sea, I saw some porpoise and then we were all rewarded with a group of 13 bottlenose dolphins just before it was time to leave.

Sunday 7th of the NWDW weekend was so wild and wet that I thought it would be impossible to see anything. It looked like there could be a brief lull in the weather at about 4 pm, so I headed to the coast and was immediately rewarded with six passing bottlenose and one, possibly two, feeding minke in the distance.

There were 38 reported sightings of bottlenose dolphins east of Burghead in August and 26 reported sightings between Inverness and Chanonry Point, varying from a single dolphin to a group of 30. The *Gemini Explorer* saw good numbers from Buckie to Logie Head, Cullen, and Diane McLeish spotted them often off Burghead.

In total, minke were recorded on 26 occasions, including 21 sightings from Burghead, three from Covesea, and one from Portknockie. The best minke sighting of the month came from Bill Whyte who saw six minke off Tarlair, Macduff on the 14th.

There were 29 reported sightings of harbour porpoise, seen in ones or twos from Chanonry Point, Burghead, Covesea, Lossiemouth and outer Cullen Bay.

Finally, off Burghead on the very last day of the month, I saw two dolphins in the distance which I suspected may have been Risso's dolphins. Later, another dolphin appeared much closer and, judging by its shape and behaviour I was pretty sure that this individual was a Risso's, which would be my first definite identification of Risso's dolphins off Burghead, although I have seen them elsewhere in Scotland.

22nd August was the sort of evening I wish that I'd have more often. Between finishing work at 4.30 pm and 8.30 pm, I saw four minke whales, 30+ bottlenose dolphins, six porpoise and a basking shark in a beautiful flat sea. The German tourists who stopped by at Burghead that night will no doubt have travelled back to Germany and told friends what fantastic marine life there is in the Moray Firth. If only the weather was like that all the time to enable us to see it!!!!

September

September was a very windy month with very few days of calm seas. Only a few days at the beginning of the month were calm enough to produce minke sightings, with one minke seen off Burghead on the 1st, 2nd and on 4th.

What the month lacked in minke sightings, it made up for with sightings of large groups of bottlenose dolphins. On the 3rd, 35 were seen off Burghead heading west, 35 were also seen off Alturlie Point, near Inverness on the 10th. Off Covesea, Lossiemouth, 50 bottlenose dolphins were seen on the 5th, 43 on the 12th and 31 on the 13th. The



Gemini Explorer saw a group of 28 off Portknockie on the 4th. As well as these larger groups, many smaller groups of between two and 17 bottlenose dolphins were seen during the month from the mouth of the River Ness, Inverness to Findochty. In total, there were 30 reported bottlenose sightings.

As expected, harbour porpoise numbers were up on August. A group of 15 was seen off Covesea heading west on the 1st, and 12 were seen off Burghead on the 4th. There were also 12 other porpoise sightings off Burghead comprising between one to four animals.

A large whale was reported off Burghead on the 26th by Dianne McLeish, but I've been unable to find out more information.

SOUTH GRAMPIAN & SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND

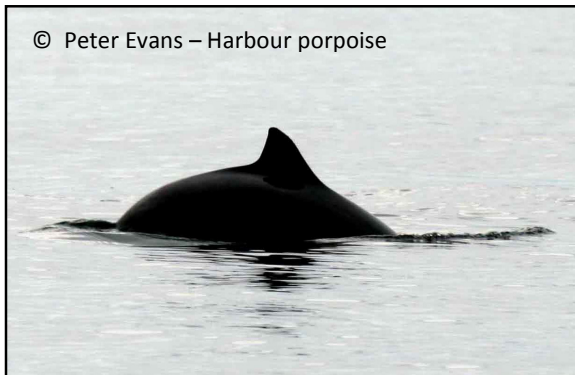
Written by Kevin Hepworth, Regional Coordinator for North Grampian

August

August is typically the month when white-beaked dolphins are regularly seen off Aberdeen, but surprisingly this year, they were only reported once on 19th August (three animals about a mile offshore) from Collieston. However, given that it was the summer holiday season, that it was National Whale and Dolphin Watch (!) and that the weather was pretty poor all month with prevailing strong to gale force southerly or south-easterly winds, it's hardly surprising that more weren't reported. In the end, largely due to a herculean watch effort from the 24th to 29th August, there were 44 reports of cetaceans in the region. The lion's share of records was of bottlenose dolphins, and 23 of the 26 received were from the 'hotspot' that is Aberdeen Harbour. The harbour is about the only location that is impervious to the vagaries of the British weather and as usual came up trumps. Indeed, this year it seems that as long as you drive along the beachfront or around Girdleness, then you will be rewarded with sightings of up to a dozen or so animals with little or no effort involved.

The bottlenose dolphins were recorded in numbers ranging from singles to fifteen individuals, primarily adults, although a juvenile was reported with an adult from Torry Battery on the 3rd of the month, and a deformed animal was present on its own on 26th August. Away from Aberdeen, there were 12 animals reported from Stonehaven on 7th August, 10 animals from the same location on the 30th August, and four reported off Blackdog on 22nd August.

Harbour porpoise were recorded from the 'usual' spots, with two animals off Girdleness on 25th August and a single on 26th August, up to four animals off Collieston on the 25th, and groups of four and seven animals on the 26th. Unidentified cetaceans were seen on the 26th from Collieston, with a dolphin species and possible minke whale both reported. An unidentified dolphin was reported from Torry Battery on the same day and also from Stonehaven on 27th August



© Peter Evans – Harbour porpoise

There was a single sighting of four pilot whales further offshore near the Arbroath Platform on the 28th reported by Jay Inwood.

Unusually, following the very productive sightings of July, there were relatively few reports of harbour porpoises or minke whales, but both these species rely on better viewing conditions and had there been more opportunity for land based watching or flatter seas, I am sure these species would have been recorded much more often. The weekend of the NWDW was pretty poor, although the first watch on the Friday from Bullars of Buchan was not too bad as the sea was calm close in, despite the strong to gale force south westerly. The Sunday watch at Girdleness was virtually impossible and a total washout. The sea was pretty rough, but it was the torrential rain that did for us. Nevertheless, both watches were conducted in their entirety, although only one regular volunteer put in an appearance.

September

In September, the weather improved for cetacean watching and whilst the number of records was still relatively low at 19 reports (a reflection of the low number of dedicated watches rather than anything else), the species variety was enhanced by a fair amount of harbour porpoise activity and the presence of both Risso's dolphin and minke whale.

On 2nd September, harbour porpoises were observed twice at Collieston in groups of one and two, and four times off Girdleness in groups of between six and nine animals. On the same day, a pod of three Risso's dolphins was seen travelling south and then north past Collieston approximately one mile offshore. A minke whale was observed once on 23rd September off Stonehaven.

Bottlenose dolphin sightings were made from Donmouth (seven animals) and Aberdeen Harbour (15 animals) on 3rd September, and Stonehaven (15 animals) on 8th September. On 9th September, two animals including the deformed juvenile made an appearance at Aberdeen Harbour. The following day saw this small group swell to eight, with the mother and deformed juvenile still present. There was then a lean spell until the 19th, when half a dozen animals were seen in Stonehaven Bay. This was followed by yet another gap of a week until four dolphins were reported from Collieston. By the end of the month, ten animals were back off Aberdeen Harbour, this time with two calves.

SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND

There was a significant rise in sightings in South-East Scotland between August and September (16 sightings) compared to June and July (two sightings). Minke whales, harbour porpoises and bottlenose dolphins were all spotted.

August

Harbour porpoises were the most commonly spotted species this month with two separate sightings of two on each occasion. The first two were spotted at Kinraig Point, Fife on 6th August. The second sighting was at St Abb's Head, Berwickshire.

Lone minke whales were seen on two separate occasions at Kinraig Point, Fife on 6th and 27th August, and once at Elie Ness, Firth of Forth on 7th August when an animal surfaced in front of a yacht, and then again, 10 metres to the side to look at the crew who got sprayed by its blow!

Two bottlenose dolphins were recorded on 13th August at Broughty Ferry, Dundee. The dolphins followed a small boat to the mouth of River Tay for 20 minutes where one performed a full breach out of the water.

September

There were relatively few sightings reported in September. mostly of harbour porpoises. Five were spotted on 4th September at Wardie Bay, Edinburgh. This pod comprised four adults and one juvenile. Two more were seen at the same location on the 28th September, both adults.

A lone minke whale completes the records for September; this one being observed at Cellardyke, Fife on 24th September. This 25-foot whale was seen to surface at least three times before diving.

NORTH EAST ENGLAND (Berwick upon Tweed - Tees mouth)

Written by Rosalind Reilly, Regional Coordinator for North-East England

There are a number of sightings to report from the North-East area for August and September. These include a number of land-based observations made by Chris Thompson and Paul Hindess at Whitburn Coastal Park, and Alan Leatham's observations from the Farne Islands. Numerous land-based watches have also been conducted, mainly from the north pier at Tynemouth but unfortunately there were no sightings. I have heard that there was a baby seal stranding on Tynemouth Long Sands during the summer period but as yet do not have any information on this.

August

The month of August started off with four reports of harbour porpoise in the Farne Islands made by Alan Leatham. A single animal and a group of three were seen on the 1st, and single animals were seen on the 3rd and the 4th respectively.

The 6th and 7th were days full of action at the Whitburn Coastal park. There were sightings of minke whales (two animals on the 6th and one on the 7th) and most excitingly, of a humpback whale. On top of these whale sightings, a group of ten bottlenose dolphins was seen on both days and a single harbour porpoise on the 7th.

On 13th August, one adult harbour porpoise and one calf were observed off Whitburn. On 14th August, Chris spotted a large group of 25 adult white-beaked dolphins including five calves. One of the dolphins gave a spectacular performance, jumping out of the water 12 times consecutively. Chris believes that he also observed feeding during the sighting. Six adult harbour porpoise were also recorded that day.

September

Most of September's sightings took place on the 4th. Two sightings of unidentified cetaceans were made. Unfortunately, these animals were just too far away to identify. However, it was not a disappointing day as ten adult harbour porpoise were also observed along with two juveniles. An additional unidentified dolphin in the Tynemouth area was also reported on the 13th.

EASTERN ENGLAND – NORTH AND EAST YORKSHIRE

Written by Robin Petch, Regional Coordinator for Eastern England

August

For the first time in ten years, Kris and I were not in the UK during the National Whale and Dolphin Watch, nor in fact for most of August. Fortunately, Stuart Baines continued to send in porpoise sightings from Scarborough: a total of 58 porpoises in 36 sightings. John Saltmer added another sighting of three animals to this list. Almost half of these sightings took place on the 7th with dedicated watches during NWDW, which gives some indication of how important the bay is to our Yorkshire porpoises. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's Anthony Hurd added four more sightings, from Flamborough Head on the 5th, and Dave Miller reported a sighting of eight more on the 7th.

Other porpoise sightings were contributed by Andy Shearer from a kayak near Saltburn Pier on the 5th, Kevin Doherty from Whitby Pier on the 6th, and John Huntriss from Hunmanby Gap on the 20th.

Just before we left for our holiday, we visited Whitby on 1st August for voyages on *Specksioneer*. During this time, we saw 15 porpoises in four separate sightings and an unidentified small cetacean which may have been a dolphin. We also received three sightings from *Esk Belle II*, a total of 11 harbour porpoise. In a sign of things to come, the angling boat *Shy Torque* reported seeing a minke whale, our first of the period.

Herring shoals have always migrated down the east coast during August and September. These fish were once followed by a huge fleet of Scottish fishing boats, dropping off their catches in East Coast ports throughout the season. The fishing boats have largely gone, but the baleen whales which take advantage of these huge shoals of spawning fish remain. These whales are predominantly minke but I have always believed that amongst them a few sei, fin and humpback lurk. The events of this season, and last are beginning to prove this.

September



© Kris Simpson - Minke whale

We began logging minkes in numbers off Whitby from 1st September. The final days of August saw poor weather and sea conditions, but we believe that sightings began earlier in the month, possibly on 17th August, while we were still away. Unfortunately, I have not been able to gather the data on this before writing the newsletter entry and there is still quite a bit to add into the sightings database. However, from that point on, almost every trip on *Specksioneer*, sometimes twice a day

throughout the week, encountered minkes. Sometimes only two or three sightings were made, but usually many more, with possibly as many as eight to ten being seen! Sightings were sometimes as close as three miles from land but usually between five and nine miles offshore. The best encounters were on days when we could “mark” herring on the echosounder. One such shoal was around $\frac{3}{4}$ mile across to a depth of around 40m! At least three different minkes, probably five or more, were feeding all around us as we drifted through. Sometimes the first sign was very satisfied seals lounging in the centre of what turned out to be a large shoal. On one occasion (the 9th), the trawler *Anne Scott*, acting as guard ship for an exposed newly laid pipeline, reported a mother and calf simply lounging around and rubbing on the hull!

Amongst the minkes, there were occasionally some animals which kept their distance. Sometimes, larger blows than expected were seen. Other times, unusual dive sequences were noticed. Often, even the minke blows were more noticeable than is generally the case and the herring were sometimes so close to the surface that the classic minke surfacing/diving sequence was unnecessary – they had simply to skim along the surface in a relatively flat trajectory. However, there was a feeling that there were other larger species present – sei and fin in particular. We are still ploughing through the photographs for more conclusive proof but there are certainly some images which suggest this may be the case. Sadly, the real evidence comes from two strandings further south in the days which followed, but more on this later.

Whilst clearly not marine mammals, we were also delighted to encounter first a porbeagle shark thrashing on the surface and then a basking shark cruising the coast during one of the best days of minke encounters on 4th September.

What we have been able to do is photo-ID nine individual minke whales with distinctive fins, and begin to suggest that we have seen in excess of 20 different whales during this period, perhaps many more. "Chip Fork" seemed to show an increasing interest in our activity and "Base Notch" was a regular for much of the month, actually returning to us at Whitby after being seen by Bryan Clarkson, *Specksioneer's* skipper, with at least six other minkes off Scarborough on 20th. The trawler *Mistress* also reported sighting two minkes in this area on the same day. Most of the whales by this time seemed to have left Whitby presumably to continue the journey south with the herring, and we saw only small numbers and declining frequency of encounters from this point on and into October.

We are absolutely thrilled to have begun developing our own regional minke catalogue of nine+ whales and, once our photo analysis is complete, we will publish this through Sea Watch and also on www.dolphinspotter.co.uk and www.whitbycoastalcruises.co.uk. Whilst not as spectacular as the return of "our" humpback from last year that we had hoped for, in many ways, this is even more exciting as we have many more whales to watch for next year!

Sadly, our belief that sei and fin may also be in the area was confirmed when first a young fin and then a female sei stranded in the Humber, both of which I attended (see news item)

Porpoise sightings from Stuart Baines at Scarborough also continued during the month, 27 porpoises being seen during 14 sightings. The very last day of September brought what must have been the most spectacular sighting of the period when a number of residents and visitors to Staithes were treated to the visit of a "super pod" of an estimated 100+ dolphins, thought to be white-beaked. Many apparently came very close to the harbour, with two actually entering it!

All in all, a very exciting end to our season once again. We will continue to log sightings whenever we can, and already have a few for October, but once the minkes leave, it usually goes pretty quiet. Unless, could we find some orca hunting around our seal colonies? I wonder

EASTERN ENGLAND – LINCOLNSHIRE

Written by Dave Miller, Regional Coordinator for Lincolnshire

August

Sightings for this report are all from volunteers watching from land. As yet, we do not seem to be able to engage with many boat users here on the Lincs coast. There were regular sightings of harbour porpoise over the two months, starting on 2nd August with one seen during an early morning watch by Tim Bagworth from Gibraltar Point.

The weekend's watches for NWDW were starting to look barren. After ten hours, nothing had been spotted, although we did get a lot of positive feedback from the public and the RSWT's fish petition gained over 200 signatories. Finally, at 2.05 pm, from Winthorpe Tower, there was the first sighting of a porpoise heading south. During that afternoon, a further six to seven animals were spotted from the Tower.

Further sightings were reported on the 17th and 30th by Richard Lorand at Humberston; on the 23rd and 25th, by a regular birdwatcher at Gibraltar Point, John Nicholson; and on the 28th by Brian Hedley at Mablethorpe.

September

September provided single sightings of harbour porpoise from Gibraltar Point on the 7th, 17th and 18th, whilst on a personal note I saw my first porpoises since April with a brief glimpse of two heading south from Winthorpe Tower on the 22nd. Richard Lorand also made three reports of harbour porpoise on the 2nd, the 22nd and the 25th all from Humberston.

EAST ANGLIA AND SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

Written by Dave Powell, Regional Coordinator for East Anglia

As expected, harbour porpoise dominated the sightings in the East Anglian region. Once again, it is Norfolk that provides the lion's share, but sightings from Essex have picked up sufficiently to give Norfolk a run for supremacy. Disappointingly, Suffolk sightings are few and far between.

August

In Norfolk, Mundesley was the place to be in August, with harbour porpoise present on the 7th and the 11th. At the other end of the county, Paul Simpkins found a single harbour porpoise that had ventured up the river Ouse at King's Lynn on the 24th.

In Suffolk, a single harbour porpoise was seen by Colin Offord at Orford Island on 29th August.

Essex fared much better with five harbour porpoise sightings. Single animals were seen on the 1st and 3rd by Janet Russell between Harwich and River Crouch, and by Colm O Laoi off Clacton, whilst a group of four was reported by Pete Merchant in the Thames on the 24th. Three days later, Andrew Excell spotted a lone porpoise in the mouth of the River Colne, and the last sighting of the month took place on the 28th in the Thames, reported by Pete Merchant.

September

The highlight of the Norfolk sightings in September was undoubtedly the minke whale seen off Cley-next-the-Sea at 07:42 on the 12th. In addition to this, there were seven sightings of harbour porpoise, either as single animals or groups of two individuals throughout September.

It is good to note that records have been submitted from all around the county, from Hunstanton in the north-west to Great Yarmouth in the east. This highlights the fact that there are more cetaceans in our waters than people would imagine.

In Suffolk, three harbour porpoise were reported by Jim Mountain from Ness Point, Lowestoft at 12:00 on 5th September. Unfortunately, this is the only sighting received from the county in September.

The increase in sightings in the Essex area is due particularly to the efforts of Pete Merchant. Pete has been great at sending me information. I am glad that he is being rewarded for all

his hard work, with sightings in the Thames where groups of two harbour porpoise were reported three times during this month, twice on the 28th and once on the 29th.

NORTH KENT

Harbour porpoise were seen twice in August in North Kent. Two were seen off Hythe on the 12th and a group of 12 was seen off Dungeness Point on the 27th. A further porpoise sighting was reported in September when Maggie Barker saw three animals off Greatstone Beach on 2nd September.

SOUTHERN ENGLAND

Written by Steve Savage, Regional Coordinator for Southern England

It was rather a quiet couple of months despite the hot weather and calm seas.

August

I received two bottlenose dolphin sightings via a contact at Sussex Ornithological Society who was undertaking watches for migrating seabirds

The first sighting was early morning on 26th August at Marine Gardens, Worthing, West Sussex. The observer reported a group of at least seven bottlenose dolphins moving westwards. The dolphins frequently breached, which the observer described as 'enthraling'. The dolphins were about 500 metres from the shore and were visible for some time.

They reported a second sighting on 28th August at the same location. The dolphins were first spotted at 8.15am, with a small group of three to four bottlenose dolphins again heading west. The dolphins seemed to be in much more of a hurry this time, and were viewed for a maximum of seven minutes. This sighting was observed by telescope, and fins and head were visible as well as one breach.

DORSET

(Including sightings data kindly forwarded by Durlston Marine Project)

August

In August, there were 11 reports of bottlenose dolphins spanning the western corner of Poole Bay, from Bournemouth round to Anvil Point. Group sizes ranged from two to ten animals. There were also nine reports of unidentified dolphins (quite probably bottlenose) which ranged over a similar area.

September

There were no sightings in September.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

Written by Bertram Bree, Regional Coordinator for the Channel Islands

First I would like to thank you for all the emails which are great to receive to stay in regular contact.

August

There were 21 reports of bottlenose dolphins in August. On 1st August, off Portelet Bay on the south-west coast of Jersey, a group of around 15 bottlenose dolphins was seen feeding. On 4th August, at La Coupe on the north-eastern tip of Jersey, three bottlenose were also noted. They are frequently seen in the early mornings of most days in the spring, summer and autumn and to a lesser extent in the winter when the sea mammals move offshore into

deeper waters where the fish concentrate. The following day, during the early morning, 15 bottlenose dolphins were seen in the middle of Grouville Bay by the Giffard buoy on the south-eastern part of Jersey's coast. That afternoon, only three dolphins remained in the area. Later on, a group of six were also seen from the ferry off St Heliers.

On the following day, 6th August, 20 or so bottlenose dolphins were present for the entire morning feeding in Grouville Bay, south of the rich feeding ground off the Gorey pier and around the submerged sandbank, the Banc du Chateau which is a fishing hotspot for



both dolphins and humans. Again, on 10th August, off Gorey, 20 to 30 dolphins were observed. GECC reported two sightings of dolphins on the 15th around the Chausey Isles in groups of three and 30 animals respectively. The 17th saw dolphins off the Minquiers and Ecrehous reefs. On 20th and 21st, 20 bottlenose were observed including many young off the Ecrehous over the submerged Ecreviere sandbank. Three more animals were seen by GECC around Chausey on the 21st, and the following day a group of 15 was seen further south.

GECC also had two interesting records, with 20 common dolphins between Brehat and Guernsey on the 8th, and five Risso's dolphins off St Brieuc on the 11th.

September

On 1st September, ten bottlenose were seen at St Catherine's breakwater. On 15th September, five bottlenose were seen off Chausey and then around midday a further three off Plemont headland on the north-western headland of Jersey. On 22nd September at around 13.30, 30 or more bottlenose dolphins were seen on their usual route past St Catherine's breakwater. The next day, South Coast Cruises saw eight bottlenose dolphins south of St Brelades Bay off the south-western part of Jersey near the Corbiere.

On 27th and over the next two days, 20 bottlenose dolphins were seen in Grouville Bay feeding at the exact same state of tide on all three days. Five animals were also seen on the Ecrevieres Bank on the 28th.

SOUTH DEVON

Written by Ellie Knott, Devon Biodiversity Records Centre

August

There were five reports of bottlenose dolphin in August. Matthew Mcleod reported a group of eight animals off Berry Head on the 4th. The following day a larger group of approximately 20 bottlenose dolphins was seen off Budleigh Beach followed by another sighting of 20 bottlenose dolphins between Teignmouth and Babbacombe on the 6th. Teignmouth had dolphins again on the 8th when a group of three was spotted. Three days later, Roz Buckley was lucky enough to spot 15 animals off Goodrington Sands, Torquay.

Two harbour porpoises were seen off Berry Head on 4th August. On the 6th, three were seen off Sharkham Point, and two were seen at Berry Head.

NEWS SHEET

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2011

White-beaked dolphins were seen twice in August. Three were seen off Sharkham Point on the 6th, and another five were seen 10 nm off Berry Head on the 21st.

The most interesting sighting for August came from Andy Corry who reported a group of ten pilot whales from his sailing boat on the 21st in Lyme Bay.

September

Nothing was reported until the 8th of September, when a grey seal was spotted in the River Exe at Exmouth. On the 15th, a group of five bottlenose dolphins was seen in Lyme Bay, travelling from Branscombe to Budleigh, Salterton. After that, single bottlenose dolphins were reported twice on the 15th: once south of Sidmouth and the second time off Drake's Island, Plymouth Sound.

Thank you to everyone who has sent in sightings

CORNWALL

By Dan Jarvis (including 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)

August and September

Well, it was going to be hard to beat last time's bumper crop of species and sightings. However, August and September really do pale in comparison! Five cetacean species were recorded but the overall number and distribution of sightings are fairly underwhelming considering the time of year.

Harbour porpoise were seen 48 times in August and 14 times in September, but only in the very far west from Pendeen, around Land's End, Gwennap Head, Porthcurno, and just as far as Penzer Point.

Meanwhile, common dolphins were seen off Treen Cliff, Pendeen, Land's End, Wolf Rock, Gwennap Head, Penberth Cove, Lizard Point and the Isles of Scilly and St Agnes. There were 53 reports in August and 11 reports in September. Despite tallying fewer sightings, September saw the largest groups of commons, reaching up to 100 individuals on the 24th off Treen Cliff and Gwennap Head.

There were 14 sightings of minke whale off Gwennap Head and Porthgwarra in August. September had five sightings off Gwennap Head and one off the Isles of Scilly. All records are of one or two animals.

Bottlenose dolphins were only seen ten times in August and eight times in September, off Padstow, St Ives, Cape Cornwall, Gwennap Head, St Michael's Mount and Nare Head; although a solitary social dolphin that first appeared in Mount's Bay in early September has been sighted numerous times along the south coast of Cornwall and Devon ever since. There has been widespread coverage in the media regarding this animal and the message to please respect it and not to harass it is being given out.



© Liz Foster - Risso's Dolphin -

Risso's dolphins were spotted on nine occasions in August around Land's End, Gwennap Head and Porthgwarra, and five occasions in September off Polzeath, Gwennap Head and Porthcurno. In August, group size ranged between one and six animals whereas the following month all sightings were of two animals, except one report of seven off Polzeath on the 15th.

Other species recorded during this period included ocean sunfish from St Ives, Pendeen, Botallack and Gwennap Head. Basking sharks continued their poor showing this year with small numbers seen from Pendeen, Cape Cornwall, Land's End and Lamorna. Finally, a leatherback turtle was seen from Pendeen on 18th August by some very lucky observers!

Emergency numbers:

For dead cetaceans, seals, turtles, sharks etc, call the **Cornwall Wildlife Trust Marine Strandings Network** hotline on 0845 2012626.

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

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

NORTH DEVON

Written by Chris Blackmore, Regional Coordinator for North Devon

August

NWDW 2011 found Sharron and me on Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel. We had 19 sightings in total which break down as 45 harbour porpoise from 27 sightings, 21 common dolphins in two sightings (including six from MS *Oldenburg* on our return trip), and 46 unidentified dolphins in three sightings. The latter were probably common dolphin, but distance made positive identification difficult.



© Sharron Blackmore

Further North Devon sightings for August included five sightings of a total of 14 porpoise by Dawn Murphy at Bull Point; Dave Jenkins had nine sightings of a total of 28 porpoise also at Bull Point and a single sighting of three porpoise from Morte Point; and finally, Rob Jutsum had three porpoise sightings from Downend comprising a total of 13 animals.

September

September sightings from Sharron and I included 11 porpoise sightings from Capstone Point with a total of 20 animals, and a single sighting of one porpoise at Tunnels Beaches, Ilfracombe. Rob Jutsum had two porpoise sightings, giving a total of five animals at Downend.

We had no sightings of ocean sunfish from Capstone where we would normally expect to see up to half a dozen over the summer. I have also had reports from two other people to a similar effect.

Early August was marked by the sad news of a dead 59ft juvenile female fin whale stranding at Lynmouth (see news item). A further rare stranding occurred in early September when the body of a striped dolphin was found on Saunton Sands. It was a juvenile female in moderate to poor state. She was taken for post mortem by the Institute of Zoology.

There is currently a consultation exercise going on in North Devon, (including Lundy Island), and South Wales on the proposal to site an off-shore wind farm called the Atlantic Array in the Bristol Channel 14 km to the north-west of Ilfracombe and 13 km from Lundy Island which could see up to 417 turbines installed. More information is available at www.npower-renewables.com/atlanticarray. This is a massive undertaking, and has obviously raised many questions, not least the effect on marine and birdlife not only in the proposed area, but also in the Greater Bristol Channel. Various groups have polarised around the “for” and “against” factions, but a lot of detailed investigation will need to be done into the proposals. As things become clearer, I’ll keep the updates coming. Watch this space...

BRISTOL CHANNEL & SOUTH WALES

August

There were only three sightings in August for the Bristol Channel and South Wales. Common dolphins were seen three times off the Gower. A group of 15 animals was seen on two days running, on the 2nd and 3rd, and later in the month a group of 50 was seen off Burry Holm on the 22nd.

September

September was even quieter than the previous month with only two sightings: a harbour porpoise near Sugarloaf Beach, Portishead reported by Charles Murphy on the 17th, and a sighting of 20 common dolphins on 19th offshore in the Bristol Channel.

WEST WALES

Written by Danielle Gibas (SWF), Regional Coordinator for West Wales

August

August was a busy month in West Wales with a total of 193 sightings of five different species.

Bottlenose dolphins came out top in terms of sightings with 136 records all of which were in Cardigan Bay. Eighty-four of these sightings came from land-based watches conducted by our research volunteers, and the remaining 52 sightings were boat-based reports including sightings from Sea Watch dedicated surveys on Dunbar Castle II and reports from New Quay Dolphin Spotting Trips.

The dolphins were seen in all the usual spots including New Quay Bay & Harbour, Cwmtdu, Ynys Lochlyn, Aberporth, Mwnt and Cardigan Island. Average group size was between two



and three animals and the largest group observed was of 12 individuals spotted by *A Bay to Remember* on the 4th. Calves were present in just over half the sightings (70 out of 136) with a maximum of two calves per encounter. There was a noteworthy incident on the 26th when two calves were recorded with just one adult. On all other occasions, there were more adults than calves.

Harbour porpoise were spotted 33 times in August. 13 sightings occurred in Cardigan Bay, including ten off New Quay, two off Aberporth and one off Cardigan. The remaining 20 sightings took place around the Islands of Skomer and Grassholm in Pembrokeshire, and were recorded by Stefanie Rowland onboard *Dale Sea Safari*, with the exception of one animal, which was seen off Porthgain Beacon by Philip Lees. Group size in Cardigan Bay ranged between one and three individuals, whereas it reached nine animals in Pembrokeshire.

Fifteen of August's 16 common dolphin sightings took place in Pembrokeshire around Grassholm and Skomer Island, and were reported by Stefanie Rowland. The group size of these sightings ranged up to 50 animals. The last sighting of the month was impressive, with 250 animals reported in St George's Channel by Mike Harris on the 30th.

There were four sightings of single minke whales, which were again spotted by Stefanie Rowland around Grassholm on the 15th and 23rd.

Last but not least, there was a report of 12 fin whales off the Pembrokeshire coast by the Sea Trust on 19th August.

On top of all this cetacean action, West Wales was a hive of activity for NWDW this year. New Quay hosted a Sea Watch photo exhibition in the New Quay Yacht club who kindly agreed to host the event as well as a stand in the town and the usual land-watches. The intermittent rain helped shepherd members of the public into the photo exhibition and we had at least 111 visitors over the weekend! The dolphins also played their part appearing right on cue when the rain cleared. The whole event was a great success and could not have been managed without the help of our fantastic research volunteers. It was an exhausting but worthwhile weekend! Thanks again for your help!!

September

With 171 sightings, September was only slightly quieter than August despite having recorded just two species: bottlenose dolphin and harbour porpoise.

Bottlenose dolphins were seen 157 times around New Quay, Ynys Lochtyn, Mwnt and Aberporth in Cardigan Bay. Only 24 of these sightings were made from boats and this is a reflection of September's windy weather and the limited number of boat trips that were able to go ahead. The largest group seen included 14 animals, although, overall, group size was very similar to August with an average of between two and three animals. Sixty-one of these sightings had



© Gemma Veneruso - Bottlenose dolphin

calves present which is slightly lower than August. The most memorable of all these New Quay sightings was the now infamous calf tossing incident that took place on 11th September in New Quay Harbour. (more information in the news item)

There were 14 harbour porpoise sightings: five in Cardigan Bay (Ynys Lochdyn, Mwnt, Aberporth, and Cemaes Head) and nine in Pembrokeshire (St David's Head, Ramsey Sound, and Garland Stone).

A huge "thank you!" to our research volunteers, boat operators, and everyone who has reported sightings during this period and provided support during National Whale and Dolphin Watch 2011.

NORTH WALES

Written by Emily Cunningham, Regional Coordinator for West Wales

Thanks to a number of dedicated observers, we have good coverage of the waters around East Anglesey. We are keen to recruit observers along: the coast of North-East Wales, around the Great Orme, Caernarfon Bay, the north coast of the Llyn Peninsula, and the north of Cardigan Bay down to the Dyfi Estuary. If you are interested in becoming a Sea Watch Observer, or are part of an organisation which may be interested in contributing sightings (sailing clubs, coastwatch institutions, schools or colleges), please get in touch. I am happy to deliver talks and organise land watches anywhere in the region.

August



© Gemma Veneruso - Bottlenose dolphin

We had a busy August, with plenty of sightings reported across the region. Bottlenose dolphins were spotted twice in August; a group of three animals was seen surfacing off Holyhead by David Martin on the 2nd, and a spectacular sighting of 44 animals (including two juveniles and two calves) off Point Lynas on the 8th was recorded by Dave Powell.

An exciting sighting was made on the 6th of a pod of 30 short-beaked common dolphins, 30 miles west of Caernarfon, reported to Dave Powell.

The rest of August's sightings were of the ubiquitous harbour porpoise, which were seen almost daily throughout the first half of August (a testament to our dedicated observers!). Mike Thompson reported sightings of a pair of animals fast swimming in a westerly direction, and later that day a lone animal seen feeding, off Llanbadrig, North Anglesey on the 1st. A lone animal was seen feeding at the western end of Bull Bay, North Anglesey, on the 4th by Peter Evans. The next day produced more porpoise sightings in Bull Bay, with groups of two and three animals respectively sighted in the late evening by Dave Powell. The 5th also saw a report of porpoises offshore, with a single animal seen surfacing by Peter Evans, halfway across the Holyhead-Dublin ferry route. The 6th was the busiest day of the month, with 22 harbour porpoise sightings reported. This was no doubt down to an increase in effort for NWDW. Conditions were perfect for porpoise watching, with low sea states and excellent visibility recorded. The day began with an early morning report of two animals surfacing in Bull Bay, the first of many sightings for observer Dave Powell. His Point Lynas

land watch saw 15 harbour porpoise sightings, with group sizes ranging from single animals to a peak of 14 animals, including a calf, seen surfacing in the early afternoon. Point Lynas continued as a porpoise hotspot, with six further sightings in the late afternoon. Mike Thompson reported groups varying from one to eight animals in size, with a group of five animals featuring both a juvenile and a calf, mostly using the site to feed, although a lone animal was seen fast swimming early on in his watch. The last sighting of the day was by Robin Beckmann, with 14 animals seen feeding close to shore. The following week saw many more porpoise sightings in the north-east of Anglesey. Dave Powell reported a single animal and, later, a group of two animals in Bull Bay on the morning of the 7th, and a group of four animals after that at Point Lynas. Daily porpoise sightings were recorded from Bull Bay between the 8th and 13th, with group sizes ranging from one to four animals, including a calf on both the 10th and 11th.

September

September saw a more diverse range of species and watch sites, with two exciting sightings of Risso's dolphins, and reports from across the region coming in.

Bottlenose dolphins were reported five times during the month of September. A single animal was seen feeding off Penrhyn Du., near Abersoch, by Martin Moore from his kayak! Martin reported two further sightings of bottlenose dolphins, this time from land at Trwyn Porth Dinllaen, with a group of 20 seen on the 15th and a group of six spotted breaching on the 25th. The 15th also brought a report from Trevor Thomas of three adults, including one calf, seen feeding off Nefyn, on the north coast of the Llyn Peninsula. September's final bottlenose dolphin report was from Jon Shaw, on *Seekat*, with 18 animals seen normal swimming 500 m from the shore of Traeth Bychan, near Moelfre, East Anglesey.



© Peter Evans – Risso's dolphin

Risso's dolphins were spotted several times in September. The species was seen regularly in the first half of the month from Bardsey Island by WDCS researchers and the warden of the bird observatory. A group of two adults was seen off Porth Ysgaden, on the north coast of the Llyn Peninsula, on the 12th by Dave Powell. Then on 15th, Peter Evans and staff from Countryside Council for Wales encountered around 50 Risso's

dolphins between Bardsey and Nefyn. Many of the individuals were photographed, and some of these have already been matched with photos of individuals taken in North Wales in previous years. Finally, a group of two adults was seen feeding close to shore from the Trwyn Porth Dinllaen National Coastwatch Institution station, on the 25th by Martin Moore.

Sixteen sightings of harbour porpoise were reported throughout September, from the 1st to the 30th; all from land except a report from Mike Cooke on the 24th of six animals seen from onboard his vessel in Bull Bay. Two animals were seen feeding off Llanbadrig on the 1st by Simon Heys. Later that day, regular observer Mike Thompson reported the first of eight September sightings also from Llanbadrig. Over the month, groups varied in size between one and four animals (often including a calf!), all seen from a number of excellent porpoise

watching sites around North-East Anglesey, including Llanbadrig, Bull Bay and Point Lynas. Porpoises were sighted three times in Bull Bay by Peter Evans, with a group of two adults seen normal swimming on the 5th, a group of three adults feeding on the 19th and a group of 11 animals, including three calves, seen feeding on the 28th. Groups of four and three adults respectively were sighted fast swimming near Amlwch on the 15th and 19th by Steve Burgess. A lone animal was seen surfacing from Point Lynas on the 18th by David Parry.

Over the past few months, Yvonne Radstake has been testing a video monitoring technique in conjunction with Sea Watch and took the opportunity to survey the harbour porpoise population near the Isle of Anglesey in Wales. Yvonne took video and recorded sightings from her observation post near Point Lynas lighthouse over the course of eight days in August. Her sightings from the period totalled approximately 200 porpoises, with up to 50-70 individuals seen on a single day.

Thanks again to all our excellent observers! If you are interested in getting involved in watching for cetaceans in North Wales, please get in touch.

ISLE OF MAN

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

August

Despite the almost continuously windy conditions during August, there were a relatively impressive 43 cetacean sightings comprising five species. As always, the most frequently seen species was harbour porpoise, with 25 sightings, all of relatively small groups, numbering between one and six individuals. Sightings were reported from all round the island, with the majority of sightings being on the west coast, between the Calf of Man and Niarbyl (half way up the west coast).

There were a total of nine sightings of Risso's dolphins during the month. Three of these sightings were of fairly large groups of dolphins, numbering between 15 and 18 individuals. Interestingly, the majority of these sightings were also on the west coast, unusual for a species that is normally seen almost exclusively on the east coast.

We also had our first sighting of bottlenose dolphins of the "summer", with two sightings being reported towards the end of August. One of these sightings was of a massive group of dolphins, probably reaching in excess of 100 individuals. This in itself is not unusual for bottlenose dolphin sightings in Manx waters; however, it is surprisingly early for a species not typically seen in Manx waters until mid-October.

Other species seen were minke whale (six sightings, two of feeding aggregations of five and six individuals in one area off Port Erin on the west coast), one sighting of common dolphin, and an unidentified large rorqual (probably not a minke as the blow was clearly seen).

September

There were a paltry three sightings in September, a month which typically yields around 40 or 50 sightings. As has been the story this year, this was caused by there only being two days with less than 25 mph of wind, when coincidentally, all three sightings were reported. There were two sightings of small groups of bottlenose dolphins (group of four and 14 animals respectively) and one sighting of a lone minke.

NORTH WEST ENGLAND**August**

There were just four sightings in August. Dave McGrath reported harbour porpoise off Ainsdale on the 2nd and off Hilbre Island on the 17th and then he reported a rare sighting of 13 bottlenose dolphin off Hilbre on the 23rd. Arnold Strand also saw two bottlenose dolphins off Sellafeld Shore on 26th August.

September

There was only one report in September which came from Rhona Longmire who spotted six harbour porpoise off Silloth, Cumbria on the 1st.

SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND**Written by Rowan Fraser, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park**

I don't know how it's been for you elsewhere, but around here, September has been a poor month weather-wise, making spotting animals quite difficult. So I would like to give a big thanks to all those who sent in sightings to the Sea Watch Foundation or myself at Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.

August

There were 34 reported sightings in August.

Harbour porpoise were the most frequently sighted species, with 23 records in groups of between one and four animals. Philip Cheek reported five of these sightings, off Seamill, Clyde on the 24th and 25th, twice off the ferry between Rothesay and Wemyss, and once near the Largs ferry terminal. Liz Bruce had five porpoise sightings from her land watch site in Blairmore, Argyll. Stevenstone Point, Ayrshire was also a successful porpoise-watching spot and Jacqueline Boyd had two sightings of two and one sighting of three animals from there. There were a further four sightings from Strone, Dunoon. All of these were of two animals with the exception of Roger Parramore's sighting on the 22nd, which comprised four animals. Other sightings took place in Loch Long, Loch Fyne, east of Wee Cumbræ and Dhorus Mor.

Lone minke whales were reported seven times: twice off Strone, once off Carradale, once off Portavadie Marina, and once each off Davaar Island, Little Cumbræ and Holy Island.

The lone common dolphin which is resident in the area was also spotted twice this month on the 23rd and 25th around Ardlamont Buoy.

September

September was quieter than August with only two species and nine sightings in total.

Harbour porpoises were seen five times, once each off Stevenston Point, Strone and Blairmore respectively, and twice from Innellan, Argyll by the newly recruited observer, Liz Gower.

Minke whales were again observed only as lone animals. James Glidden saw one in the Firth of Clyde on the 4th; Sandra Davidson saw one on the 15th just north of Innellan; and the following day, Andy Cowe spotted one in Loch Long. The final minke sighting for the month took place off Carradale on the 20th.

If you are interested in taking part in our Sea Lochs and Firth of Clyde whale, dolphin and porpoise monitoring project, please get in touch with me by phone 01389 722106, or email me at rowan.fraser@lochlomond-trossachs.org

HEBRIDES

Written by Sandra Koetter, HWDT (Including sightings data kindly forwarded by HWDT)

During August and September, five different species were reported to HWDT and Sea Watch.

In total, 22 bottlenose dolphin encounters were reported. Three of these encounters included 20+ animals. The first sighting off the Ross of Mull recorded 30 animals. Three days later, 20 animals were spotted off Glengorm. Another 20 animals were seen off Uisken Beach a day later.

Common dolphins were reported 16 times to HWDT and three times to Sea Watch. At the beginning of August, 90 animals were reported to Sea Watch between Ullapool and Stornoway. Eleven days later, another 60 animals were reported off Tiump Head, Isle of Lewis.

Killer whales were seen on four occasions. Three sightings alone were reported from the Ardnamurchan Lighthouse in the space of two days. Another sighting had also been reported off Benbecula, South Uist a few days earlier.

Risso's dolphins were spotted on three occasions. Sightings were reported twice in August (off Tiump Head and Handa Island), and once in September (in The Minch and east of Barra).

Harbour porpoises were again plentiful, with about 100 sightings all around the Hebrides. The Small Isles in particular have had many harbour porpoise sightings.

Minke whales were spotted on 30 occasions. The Small Isles as well as Coll, the Ardnamurchan coast and the Isle of Lewis recorded most sightings.

On 5th September, there was a report of a fin whale off Luig.

NORTH WEST SCOTLAND**August**

Harbour porpoise made up the bulk of the 84 sightings in August, with 64 records. The majority of these sightings were reported in and around the Sound of Sleat and to the south of Skye and in the North Minch. The largest group of animals was a group of 15 reported by



Ian Macdonald on 6th August. Otherwise, sightings ranged between one and six animals.

Common dolphins were spotted seven times. A large group of 30 animals was seen on the 1st and 2nd in the Sound of Raasay. On the 7th, 35 were seen to the west of Longa Island. The 18th was the busiest day of the month for commons

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with four sightings: one in Loch Gairloch and three on the ferry route from Ullapool to Stornoway, including a group of 10 and a group of 30.

Minke whales were spotted six times. A group of two and a group of three were seen off Skye on the 2nd. The following day, a single animal was spotted in the inner Minch. Gairloch had two sightings: one animal on the 7th, and a group of three animals on the 18th. The final sighting of the month was also the largest, with a group of six minke spotted off Neist Point, Isle of Skye.

August had a single Risso's dolphin sighting on the 1st, near Handa Island.

September

September had an impressive 23 harbour porpoise sightings from just three observers. Howard Loates reported ten animals off Skye on the 1st; David and Avril Haines made four reports from Balchladich Bay, Clachtoll and Culkein, Assynt; and Jan Storie submitted 16 records of porpoise between the Isle of Skye and Mallaig.

David and Avril also reported two large groups of killer whales: 12 animals on the 1st off Stoer, and 14 animals on the 4th of Culkein, Assynt.

Minke whales were reported twice. One was seen on the 1st off Eigg by Howard Loates. Later in the month on the 27th, four animals were seen near the Shiant Islands by Jody McNeil.

Forty common dolphins were seen by Chris Thompson on the 15th north of Skye, and the following day, two animals were seen in Loch Gairloch by Kay Thompson.

Finally, there were two reports of a sperm whale in the Sound of Raasay on the 17th and 24th of September which were reported by Callum McAskil.

NORTHERN IRELAND

(sightings data mainly kindly forwarded by the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group)

August

August was a relatively good month for harbour porpoise sightings in Northern Ireland with seven sightings recorded during the month. A very active group of 23 porpoise was spotted near Portmuck, Island Magee, Co. Antrim on the 13th by Ian Enlander, who noted breaching behaviour and that there were five calves present. Smaller groups of two to five were also spotted in Co. Antrim: Whitehead on the 5th, Portmuck on the 13th, Black Head on the 24th and Rathlin on the 25th. A group of three porpoises was seen in River Bann, Co. Derry on the 24th, and groups of nine and five porpoise were seen in Burial Island and Grey Point, Co. Down on the 3rd and 5th of the month, respectively. Joe Fox spotted two unidentified dolphins bowriding and circling under a boat in Belfast, Co. Down on the 15th.

September

September provided eight harbour porpoise sightings plus a sighting of one unidentified dolphin, which was seen on the 7th of the month by Des Clayton in Cushendun Bay, Co. Antrim. Harbour porpoises were seen in Co. Antrim on the 8th (two animals at Whithead), 20th (four animals at Grey Point), in Co. Derry on the 1st (five animals including two calves at Bann), and in Co. Donegal on the 8th (2 animals at Greencastle). County Down had the

greatest number of porpoise sightings with groups of one to ten animals seen on the 8th (two sightings at Grey Point) and 11th (one sightings off Ards Peninsula).

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

(sightings data kindly forwarded by the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group)

August

There was a total of 144 recorded sightings around the Republic of Ireland during August. These consisted of 38 minke whale, 29 short-beaked common dolphin, 21 bottlenose dolphin, 22 harbour porpoise, ten fin whale, three humpback whale, two Risso's dolphin and one killer whale sightings. There were also seven unidentified cetacean sightings, ten unidentified dolphin sightings and one unidentified large whale sighting. In addition to the above, many people reported seeing a sperm whale in Co. Wexford on the 18th of the month. This animal live-stranded on the Cunnigar Spit, near Dungarvan, Co. Wexford on the 19th and died on the morning of the 20th.

Bottlenose dolphins were seen throughout the month in Counties Dublin (Killiney Bay), Wicklow (Bray, Greystones), Cork (Roches Point, Cork Harbour), Kerry (Bray Head and Brandon Bay), Clare (Doolin), Sligo (Ballsydare Bay, Templeboy, Ardbosline Island, Killalla Bay, Lislary) and Donegal (St John's Point). Most sightings were of groups of one to five, but larger groups of ten were seen in Co. Sligo on the 6th and 7th of the month, and a group of 15 adults and five calves was seen in Co. Donegal on the 5th.



The majority of fin whale sightings were reported in Co. Cork, with groups of one to eight individuals seen on eight occasions during the month. Galley Head, Co. Cork was a particular 'hot spot' with sightings on the 5th, 21st, 28th, 29th and 30th. A calf was spotted within the group on the 5th, and lots of minke whale activity took place in the same area towards the end of the month. Two sightings of fin whales were also reported in Dingle Bay, Co. Kerry on the 9th, with one or two individuals being present on each occasion.

Reports of harbour porpoise were common throughout the month, with sightings in Counties Louth, Dublin, Cork, Kerry, Clare, Donegal and Galway. Although generally seen in groups of one to five, a few larger groups were also spotted feeding in Counties Cork and Kerry. Seven animals were seen off Galley Head, Co. Cork on the 6th, a group of 11 was seen off Sleah Head Co. Kerry on the 16th, and 14 animals were spotted around Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork on the 28th.

Clogher Head, Co. Kerry was the place to be for watching humpback whales this month. Nick Massett spent over two hours watching a single individual lunge feeding and tail fluking on the 23rd and 28th of the month, and Peter Bovenizer recorded an individual breaching and pectoral fin waving on the 24th.

A pod of four killer whales was seen by Kevin McCloskey on the 5th of the month near Carrigan Head, Co. Donegal. Images sent to IWDG showed an individual with a large chunk out of the base of the dorsal fin and it seems likely that this was another re-sighting of "John Coe", an individual first identified by Sea Watch in the late 1980s, and last seen on the 29th July 2011 off the Isle of Mull.

Minke whales were the most commonly reported cetacean this month, with regular sightings in County Cork (19 recorded sightings), the majority of which took place off Galley Head and Cape Clear, and County Kerry with most sightings taking place in Dingle Bay (11 recorded sightings). They were also recorded at Loop Head, Co. Clare on the 30th, Co. Galway on the 6th (High Island), 7th and 9th (Inishboffin and Slyne Island), Dunalk Bay, Co. Louth on the 7th, off the Sluga Co. Mayo on the 7th and from a ferry two thirds of the way across the Irish Sea between Holyhead and Dublin on the 5th. Animals were predominantly in groups of one to three, although one group of eight was seen feeding off Galley Head, Co. Cork on the 30th of the month, by Colin Barnes.

Risso's dolphins made a couple of appearances this month. Both sightings were recorded by Nick Massett and Mick Sheeran, with three animals being seen near Sleah Head, Co. Kerry on the 16th, and five animals near the Blasket Islands, Co. Kerry on the 17th. A juvenile was seen within the group on both occasions.

Short-beaked common dolphins were seen throughout the month, predominantly in Co. Cork (17 recorded sightings) but also in Counties Mayo, Galway, and Kerry. Numbers varied from two to a hundred individuals in most cases, but between 250 and 300 individuals were seen feeding off Galley Head, Co. Cork on the 2nd, and in Dingle Bay, Co. Kerry on the 9th. Three calves were spotted within a group of 11 by Michael Cottrell around Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, and another two calves and a juvenile were seen by Peter Evans off the Sluga, Co. Mayo on the 7th.

Many thanks go to Colin Barnes, Michael Cottrell, Jill and Ian Crosher, Nick Massett, Padraig Whooley and Patrick Lyne, who all reported five or more sightings.

September

There was a total of 56 sightings reported around the Republic of Ireland during September. These consisted of 19 bottlenose dolphin, 13 harbour porpoise, eight short-beaked common dolphin, six minke whale, four fin whale and one probable humpback whale sighting. There were also one unidentified cetacean sighting, three unidentified dolphin sightings and one unidentified large whale sighting.

Bottlenose dolphins were the most frequently sighted cetacean this month. A group of three dolphins was seen on 11 occasions between the 2nd, and 26th around the Bray/Greystones area of Co. Wicklow. There were also sightings of one to 12 individuals in Co. Cork on the 15th (Cork Harbour) and 26th (Roches Point), in Killiney Bay, Co. Dublin on the 10th, in Brandon Bay, Co. Kerry on the 8th, 15th and 20th, and in Co. Sligo on the 29th (Lislary) and 30th (off Blackrock Lighthouse).

All the fin whale sightings this month were from Co. Cork, with four to six animals recorded on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 6th.

Harbour porpoises were seen in groups of one to seven in Co. Cork on the 6th, 10th, and 11th and in Co. Dublin on the 1st, 8th, 19th, 22nd, 24th and 26th. Micheal Cottrell reported a large group of 30 porpoise around Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork on the 14th, and Nick Massett observed 12 porpoise feeding near Clogher Head, Co. Kerry on the 13th.

A probable humpback whale was observed feeding by Nick Massett on the 20th at Clogher Head, Co. Kerry.

There were fewer minke whales around this month compared to August. Single minke whales were seen in Co. Cork on the 3rd (Dursey Island), 10th (Cape Clear) and 11th (Mizen Head), and two probable minke whales were seen on the 29th in Galway Bay. One to three whales were recorded feeding around Sleah Head in Co. Kerry twice on the 26th.

Short-beaked common dolphins were seen in Co. Cork (Gascanau Sound, Roaringwater Bay and Kedge Island) on the 2nd, 3rd, 14th and 24th, in Co. Kerry on the 8th (Skellig Island) and 26th (Clogher Head) and in St George's Channel on the 8th. Group sizes varied from two to 150 individuals, with the largest group being seen around Kedge Island, Co. Cork on the 24th. Eight calves were seen within a group of 50 dolphins around Kedge Island on the 14th.

Many thanks go to Justin Ivory, Michael Cottrell and Nick Massett, who all reported five or more sightings.

Unless otherwise stated, regional roundups were summarised by SWF volunteers Nick Walters and Paula Redman. Many thanks to them and all regional coordinators for their contributions to this issue.

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. Keep those sightings coming in!!

See them... Report them... Save them!