

Manx Marine Megafauna

Jen Adams, Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch



MWDW work year-round to ensure the safeguarding of cetaceans and basking sharks in Manx territorial waters, through scientific research, public engagement and education programmes

Our work includes:

- Effort-based boat and land surveys
- Photo-Identification
- Public Sightings Network
- Visitor Centre
- School's Education Programme
- Public Sea Watches
- Outreach Events



Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch

Founded 2006



A person wearing a black jacket and a brown cap is seen from behind, leaning over the railing of a white boat. They are looking out at a vast blue ocean under a clear blue sky. In the distance, a low mountain range is visible on the horizon. A red lifebuoy is mounted on the side of the boat.

Land-based surveys

Long term land-based survey studies across 6 survey sites to measure:

- Spatial and temporal movements of each species
- Relative abundance and distribution of each species
- Social and behavioural interactions of individuals
- Vessel behaviour around marine animals

Boat-based surveys

- To collect sightings information and photograph animals for photo-identification purposes

Public Sightings Network

- To collate opportunistic sightings of cetaceans and basking sharks from members of the public.
- Averaging 500 cetacean reports per year
- MWDW took over the running of the Basking shark sightings scheme in 2022

Photo-Identification

Catalogues exist for Risso’s and Bottlenose dolphins.

We have discovered regular Irish Sea movements of Bottlenose between Cardigan bay and Isle of Man, as well as matches to Inner Hebridean Population

We have an extensive Risso’s dolphin catalogue, one of the biggest in Britain.
Regional matching project was updated in 2024 by intern Rose Pollard.

	Total Risso’s dolphins in Manx catalogue: 240
Matches with North Wales	28
Matches with Scottish Isles/Orkney	0
Matches with Shetland	0
Matches with Brittany	0
Matches with Cornwall	3 (last matched 2015)



Risso's dolphin



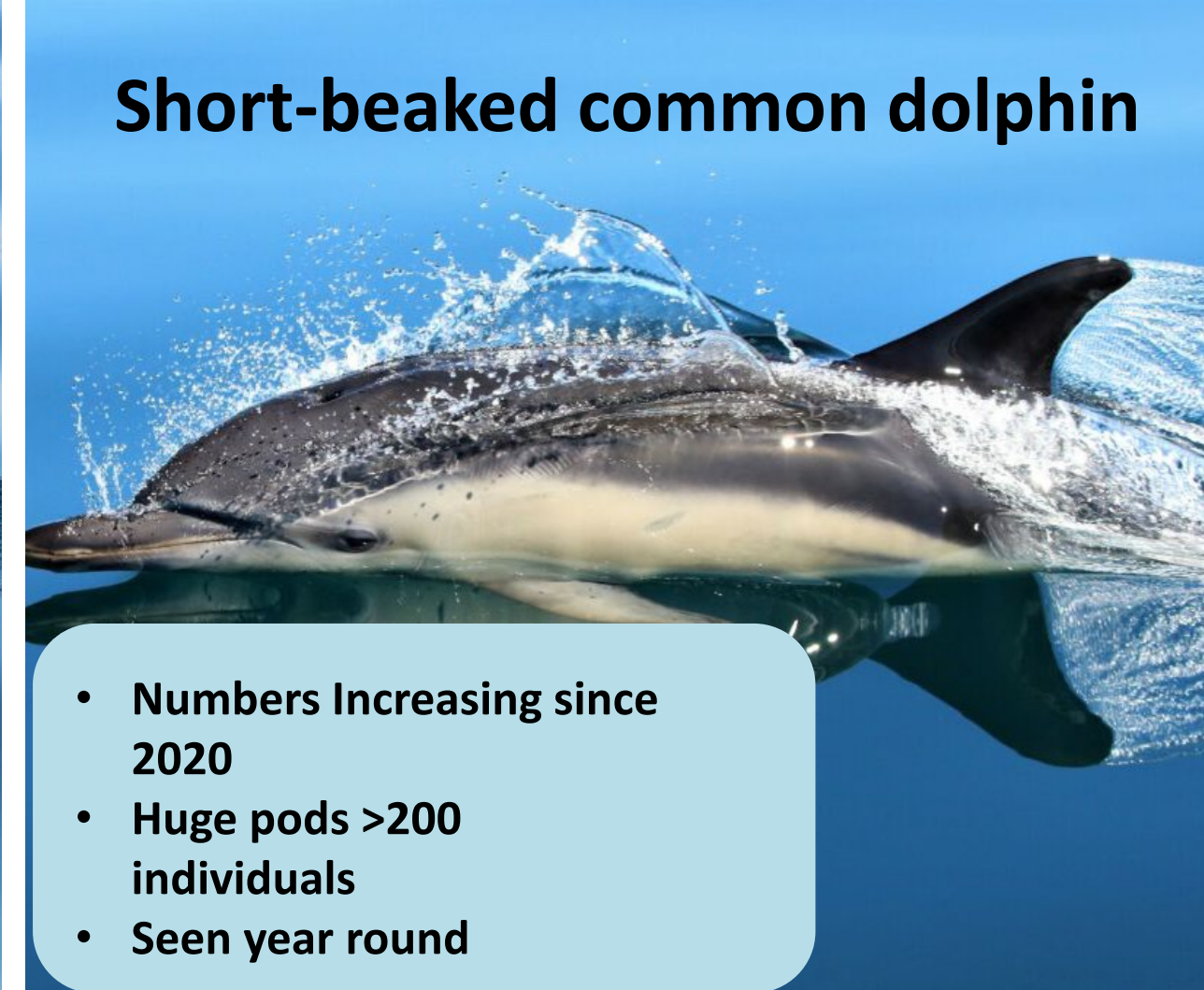
Seen April-September

Harbour porpoise



- Most common Manx cetacean
- Seen year-round

Short-beaked common dolphin



- Numbers Increasing since 2020
- Huge pods >200 individuals
- Seen year round

Bottlenose dolphin



- Winter visitor, seen October-March
- Pods >100 individuals
- Pod of ~30 occasionally seen during summer

Minke whale



- Seen March-November
- Summer- west coast
- Autumn – east coast

Basking shark



- IOM former hot-spot
- Numbers began decreasing 10-13 years ago
- Seen May-August
- West and south coast

Moonlight and Starlight

- Mother-daughter bottlenose dolphins
- Moonlight is from the Moray Firth
- Resident in Isle of Man since Starlight's birth, 6 years ago
- No known interactions with other dolphins
- Behaviours similar to 'social solitary' dolphins
- Becoming increasingly habituated, interacting with swimmers and other sea-users
- Seen most days in shallow, sandy bays

Let the wild, stay wild

PROTECT RESIDENT DOLPHINS

Admire them from a distance



MOONLIGHT & STARLIGHT are a mother-daughter 'solitary pair' of bottlenose dolphins, resident to the Manx coastline. They are extremely confident, swimming close into our bays in very shallow waters.



If you are approached by Moonlight and Starlight in the following situations, please follow these guidelines:



SEA SWIMMING

Remain calm and tread water

Please **DO NOT**

- Crowd around the dolphins
- Reach out or touch them
- Thrash your arms or cause commotion
- Deliberately get into the water to swim with them



KAYAKING/PADDLEBOARDING

Stop paddling or continue slowly, taking care where you place your paddles

Do not surround the dolphins with a group of kayaks



BOATS/JET SKIS

Lower your speed considerably and maintain a steady course, parallel to the dolphins **DO NOT**

- Make any erratic movements
- Surround or force them into the shoreline
- Throw fish to them



For more information visit:

www.mwdw.net/moonlight-starlight



Moonlight and Starlight code of conduct released 2022 with advice from BDMLR and Marine Connection

Unusual sightings in recent years



Swordfish, 2022

The only recorded sighting in the Irish Sea



White-beaked dolphin 2024



Atlantic bluefin tuna

Slowly moving Northwards into Irish Sea

Sightings reported in Manx waters since 2022, averaging 2 reports per year.

Users Guide to Manx Marine Wildlife released 2025

Brought together existing Codes of Conducts for seals, sea birds, cetaceans and basking sharks into one user friendly booklet

Report what you see

Report a sighting: MWDW

Report any sighting of a whale, dolphin, porpoise or basking shark to Manx Whale & Dolphin Watch, noting date, time, location, species and behaviour, by visiting: www.mwdw.net/sightings

Report a seal sighting: MWT

Report any sightings of seals to Manx Wildlife Trust noting date, time, location, species and behaviour by visiting: www.mwt.im/citizen-science/seal-sightings-and-sitters

Report a dead stranding: MWT

All dead strandings of whales, dolphins, porpoises, basking sharks and seals are recorded by Manx Wildlife Trust volunteers. Stranded animals may carry diseases so do not touch and keep dogs away. Visit: www.mwt.im/strandings

Report a wildlife crime: DEFA

It is a crime to recklessly disturb any of the species mentioned in this leaflet. If you are concerned about any behaviour you witness, take as many details as possible including photos or videos, and send them to: fisheries@gov.im

A Users Guide to Manx Marine Wildlife

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MWDW

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Who to contact

01624 610 131
www.mwdw.net
info@mwdw.net

01624 844 432
www.mwt.im
enquiries@mwt.im

01624 685 884
www.gov.im/defa
fisheries@gov.im

MWDW | Eleanor Stone

This guide has been made possible by a generous legacy from the late Neil Barron. A passionate wildlife protector.

How to observe and enjoy marine wildlife safely

Manx Wildlife Trust
Treisht Bea-Feie Vannin

Isle of Man Government
DEFA

MWDW
Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch

Avoid committing a Wildlife Crime, anchor away from sensitive habitats. Find out more about sensitive seabed such as sea grass and maerl by visiting: www.gov.im/mnr

Touching or feeding wildlife is dangerous and prohibited

Slow down, no wake within 300m. Boats, jetskis and yachts stay at least 100m away and keep parallel!

When flying drones maintain minimum height and distance of 50m

Observe, respect & enjoy

Maintain a 50m distance from nesting sea birds

Spend no longer than 15 minutes around wild animals

10m

50m

100m

Sea

Land

Avoid nesting sea and shore birds, look out for agitated adult birds, watch where you step and keep dogs on a lead between April and July

Report Wildlife Crime to DEFA on 01624 685 884

BUS SCALE 10m

What, When & Where:

A users guide to key sensitive areas and how to behave around marine species

SEALS

Seasonality: Year-round, pupping in autumn
Locations: Island-wide
Hotspots: The Sound/Calf of Man, Point of Ayre, Langness, Maughold Head



MOONLIGHT & STARLIGHT (Resident 'solitary' pair of bottlenose dolphins)

Seasonality: Year-round
Locations: Coastal, island-wide
Hotspots: Anywhere within 1 km of the coastline (particularly Peel, Port Erin, Ramsey/shallow sandy bays)



See also the Moonlight and Starlight Code of Conduct, visit:
mwdw.net/moonlight-starlight



SHORT-BEAKED COMMON DOLPHIN

Seasonality: Year-round, predominantly summer
Locations: All around the coast
Hotspots: Peel to Calf of Man



BASKING SHARK

Seasonality: May to August
Locations: Predominantly south and west coast
Hotspots: Peel, Niarbyl, Port Erin and The Sound/Calf of Man



RISSO'S DOLPHIN

Seasonality: March to October
Locations: Southern coast between Douglas and Niarbyl
Hotspots: The Sound/Calf of Man and Marine Drive



BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN

Seasonality: October to March, occasionally in summer
Locations: Predominantly east coast
Hotspots: East coast Ramsey to Langness especially Laxey



MINKE WHALE

Seasonality: May to October
Locations: Spring/summer: west and south, autumn: east
Hotspots: Marine Drive in autumn



HARBOUR PORPOISE

Seasonality: Year-round
Locations: All around the coast
Hotspots: Port St Mary/Baie ny Carrickey and The Sound



NESTING SEABIRDS

Seasonality: Late spring to late summer
Locations: All around the Island
Hotspots: Sugarloaf, Point of Ayre, Langness, Peel, Maughold and Calf of Man



Key Sensitive Areas



Whale and Dolphin



Seals



Nesting Seabirds



Basking Shark



Harbour Porpoise

For information on the Manx Marine Nature reserves, visit:
www.gov.im/mnr



For a PDF version of the leaflet and further information, visit:
www.mwt.im/MarineGuide



MWDW Visitor Centre
31 Michael Street, Peel
Tues-Sat 10-4 subject to change



Thank you!



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[Facebook.com/ManxWhaleandDolphinWatch](https://www.facebook.com/ManxWhaleandDolphinWatch)

