

## Seaquest Southwest Summary Report 2014

### Seaquest Ad-Hoc Sightings

**'Ad-hoc sightings' are casual records of marine life, reported as-and-when animals are observed. This is in contrast to 'effort-based' data which comes from trained volunteers conducting surveys over a specific time period to actively search for the animals.**

Ad-hoc sightings of marine wildlife are always encouraged, and can be sent to Seaquest Southwest via the CWT website at [www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/marinesightings](http://www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/marinesightings). Alternatively the information can be emailed to [seaquest@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:seaquest@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk) or reported by phone to the Marine Conservation Officer on 01872240777 ext. 208. If possible, photos should always be included with sightings as they help to confirm species identification.

1,212 ad-hoc records for whales, dolphins, porpoise, seals, basking sharks and ocean sunfish were sent into Seaquest during 2014. These involved a minimum of 4,497 animals, and stretched the length and breadth of Cornwall.

In short 2014 could be described as a rather unusual year for marine animals.

Basking shark numbers were extremely low with a total of only 76 sightings involving 110 animals. The majority of these were from a period of two weeks in late April to early May.

In contrast we had large numbers of cetaceans, including a number of unusual records such as 8 orca (described from 3 separate locations though sadly not confirmed with pictures); 100 Risso's dolphins (three times the 'typical' number), 2 sightings of pilot whales, a Sei whale (only the 15<sup>th</sup> record for the UK); and a dwarf/pygmy sperm whale (a first for Cornwall).

2014 was a record year for barrel jellyfish, with the largest numbers reported since 2002. There were with 75 sightings of 384 animals, although they were most definitely under-recorded. Jellyfish sightings across the board were high in 2014, presumably as a response to one of the warmest summers in recent years.

Intriguingly, numbers of ocean sunfish, were down by about 60% from last year. In addition to the lower numbers we also noted that in 2013 they were seen regularly in large shoals of up to 20 individuals, whereas in 2014 the largest group size was reported as 4. We're seeking information from a 'sunfish expert' as to whether this was a national trend, and if so what may be behind it, so watch this space for updates on the story!

<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>NUMBER OF RECORDS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS</b>
Common Dolphin	122	1440
Harbour porpoise	341	1254
Grey Seal	356	731
Bottlenose Dolphin	105	567
Cetacean Species	46	120
Basking Shark	76	110
Risso's Dolphin	28	100
Ocean Sunfish	81	93
Minke Whale	22	27
Harbour Common Seal	12	13
Dolphin Species	6	11
Dwarf Sperm Whale	1	10
Orca (Killer Whale)	3	8
Striped Dolphin	4	4
Leatherback Turtle	3	3
Pilot Whale	2	2
Sei Whale	2	2
Seal	1	1
White-sided Dolphin	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1212</b>	<b>4497</b>

Table 1: Numbers of ad-hoc species records reported to Seaquest Southwest during 2014.