

The status of basking sharks in Cornwall



Tom Horton

The Project

- Previous works suggesting decline in numbers
- Following another "interesting" year . . .
- Long-term aim is to **categorise and understand long-term trends in abundance**
- Work in progress . . .

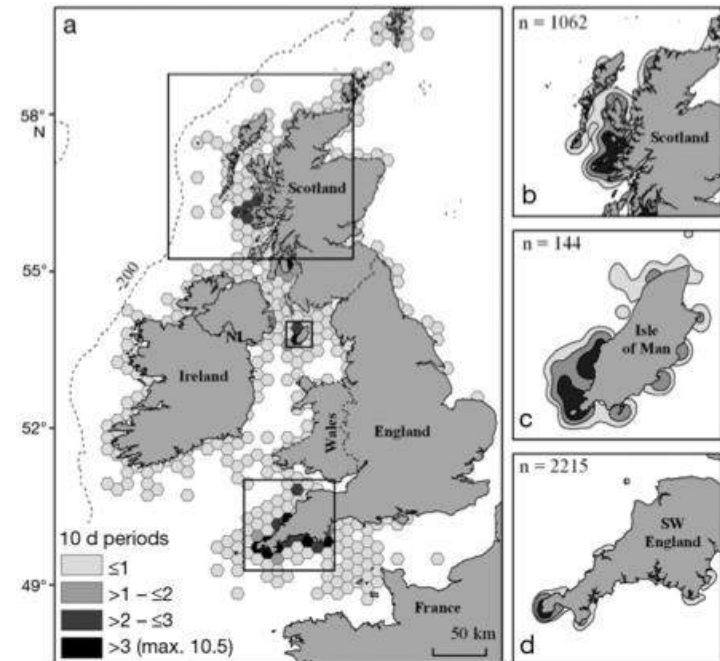


Overview

- Basking sharks in the UK and Cornwall
- 2014
- Long-term trends
- Implications
- The future

BASKING SHARKS IN THE UK

- Seasonal visitors
- Fished 1946-1997
- Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)
- Listed on CITES & CMS
- “Vulnerable” IUCN Red List (1996-)
- SW England regional hotspot



BASKING SHARKS IN CORNWALL

- “ICONIC” species
- Synonymous with Porthcurno & Sennen
- Income through wildlife tour operators
- Multiple sightings programs
- Proposed to be listed in MCZ’s
- How about numbers?





2014

NEWS VIDEO PEOPLE VOICES SPORT TECH LIFE PROPERTY ARTS + ENTS TRAVEL MONI

UK v / World v / Business v / People / Science / Environment v / Media v / Technology / Education v / Images / Obitua

News > Environment

Conservationists rejoice as Cornwall is awash with basking sharks

i



SEEN A BASKING SHARK? PLEASE HELP US...

The University of Exeter and partner organisations would like to deploy satellite tags to track these amazing animals in Cornwall during June to August 2014



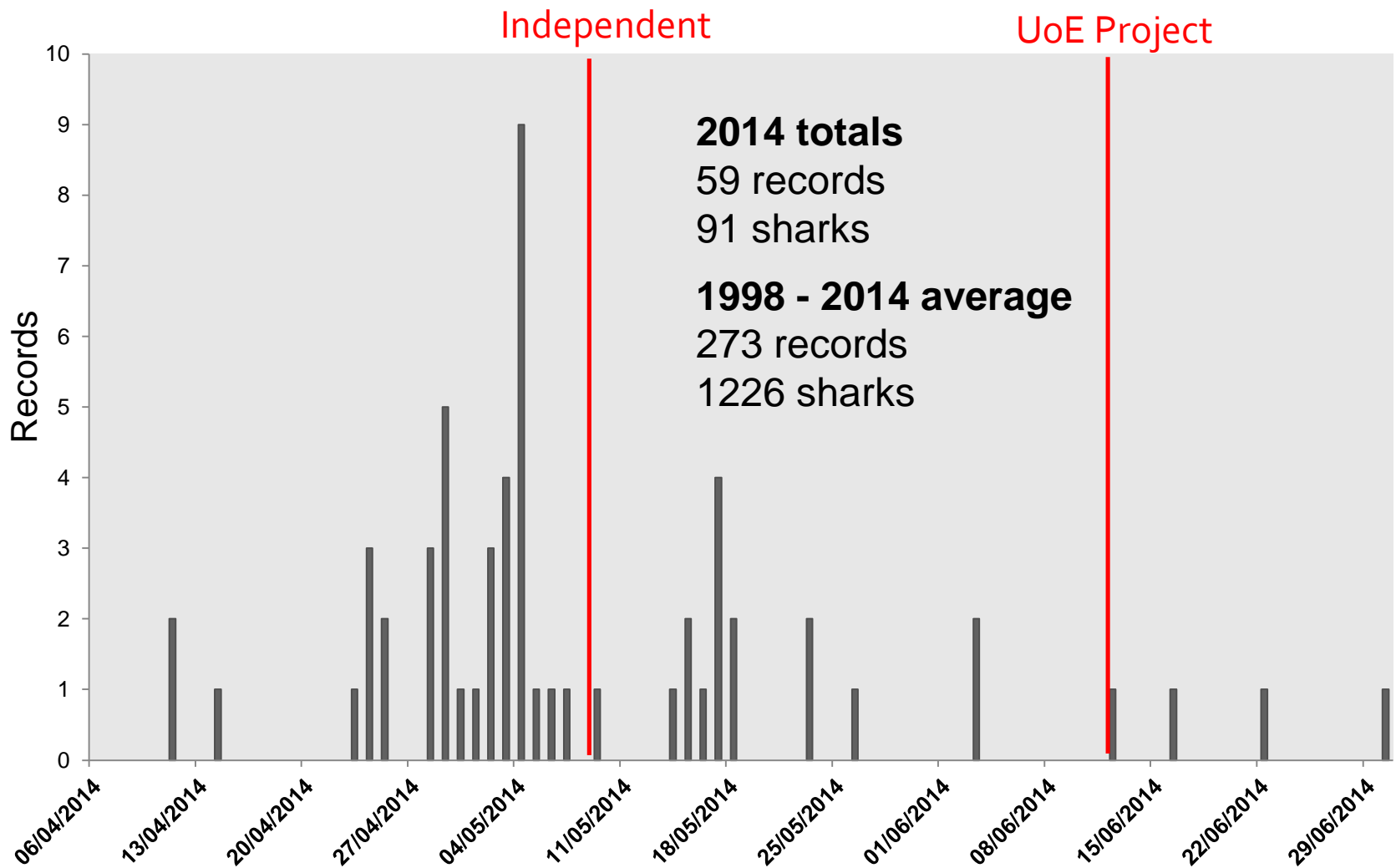
If you see a basking shark please call or text us as soon as you can with the approximate time and location of the sighting on **07935 098122**

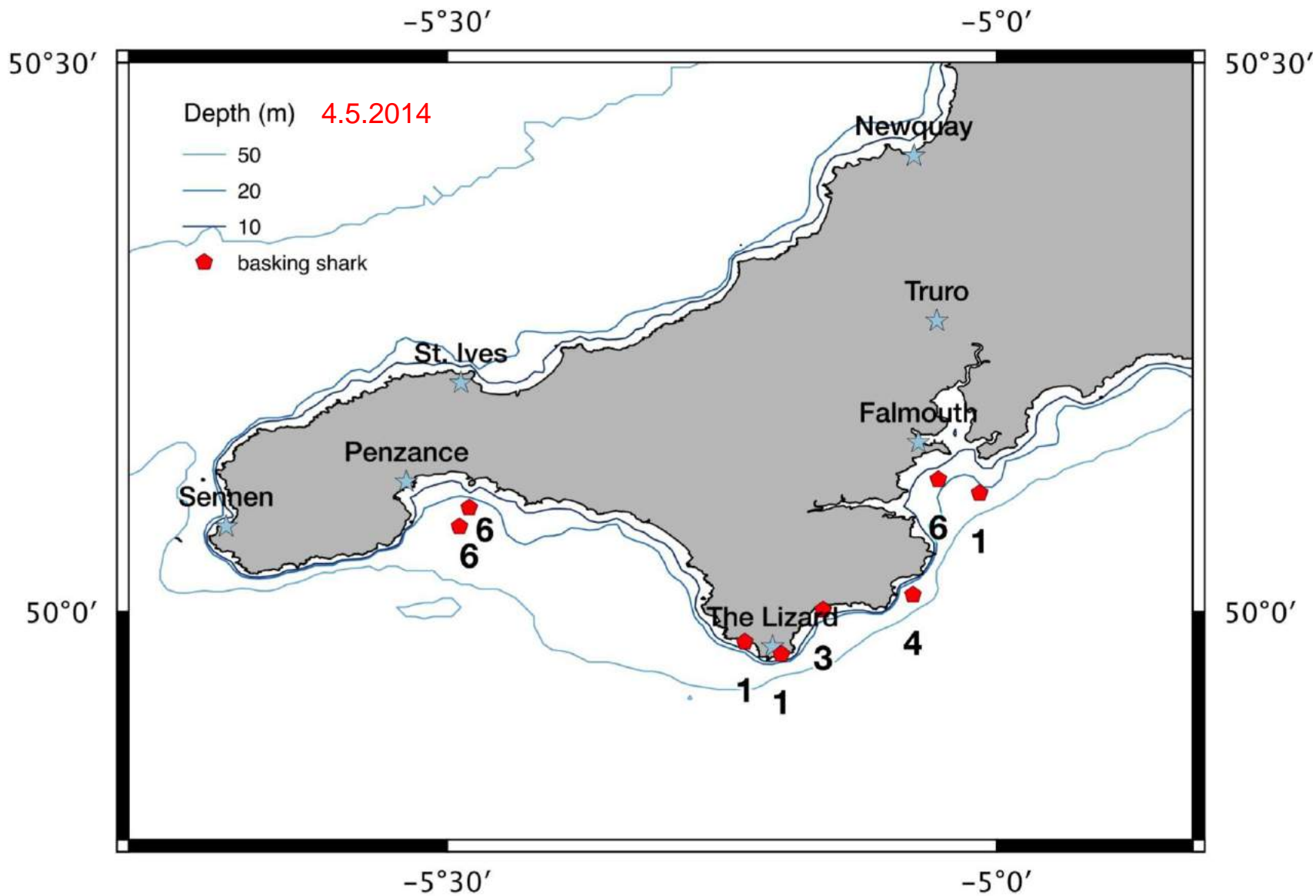


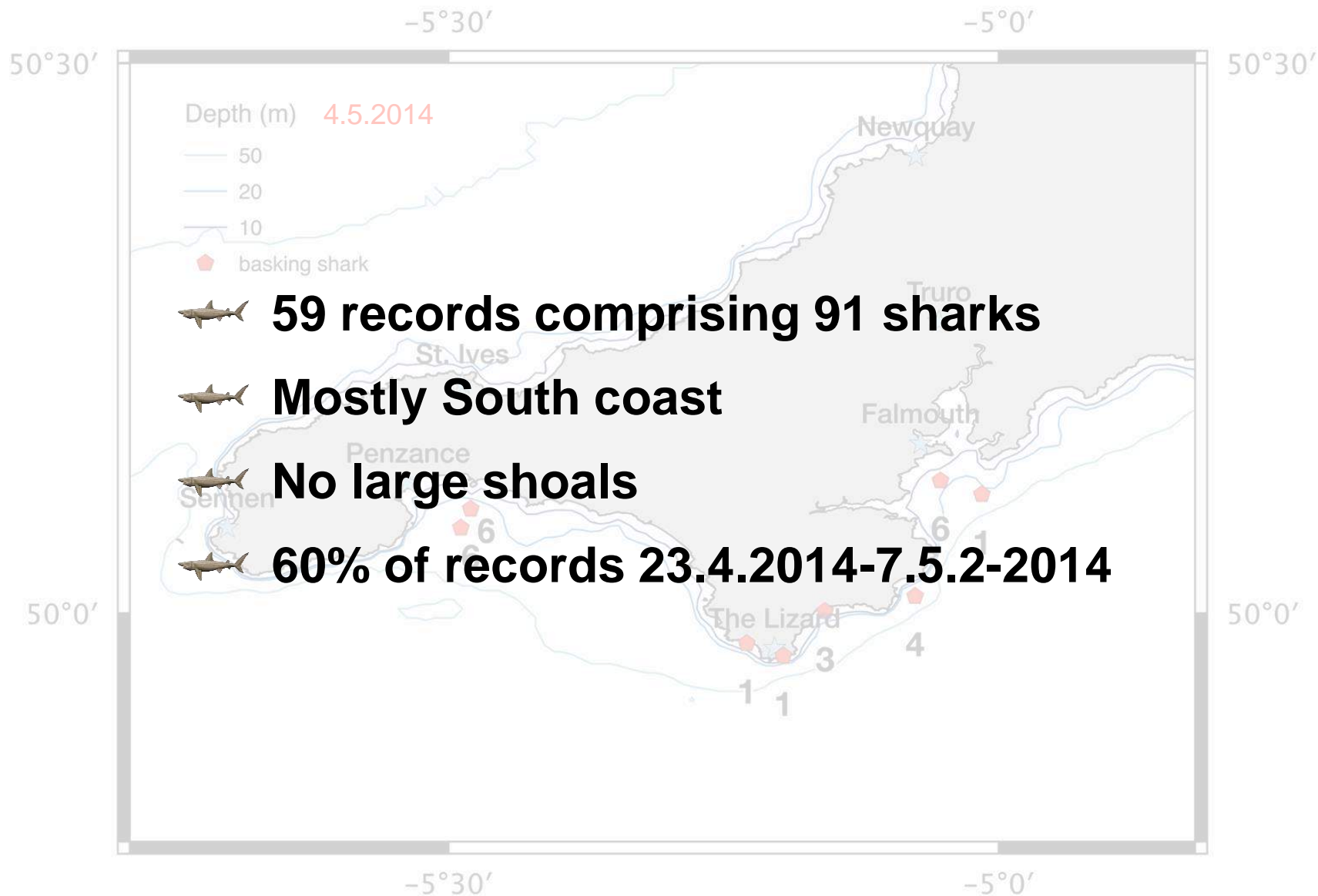
All work is to be conducted under scientific licence. If you typically report your basking shark sightings to Cornwall Wildlife Trust, the Marine Conservation Society or Shark Trust then please continue to do so.

Marine
Discovery
Penzance









Long-term trends

1. Public recording



1988- present



Cornwall

1997- present



1997- present

2. Effort-based



2007- 2011



2007- present



Cornwall

2008 - 2012

Long-term trends

1. Public recording



1988- present



Cornwall

1997- present



1997- present

2. Effort-based



2007- 2011



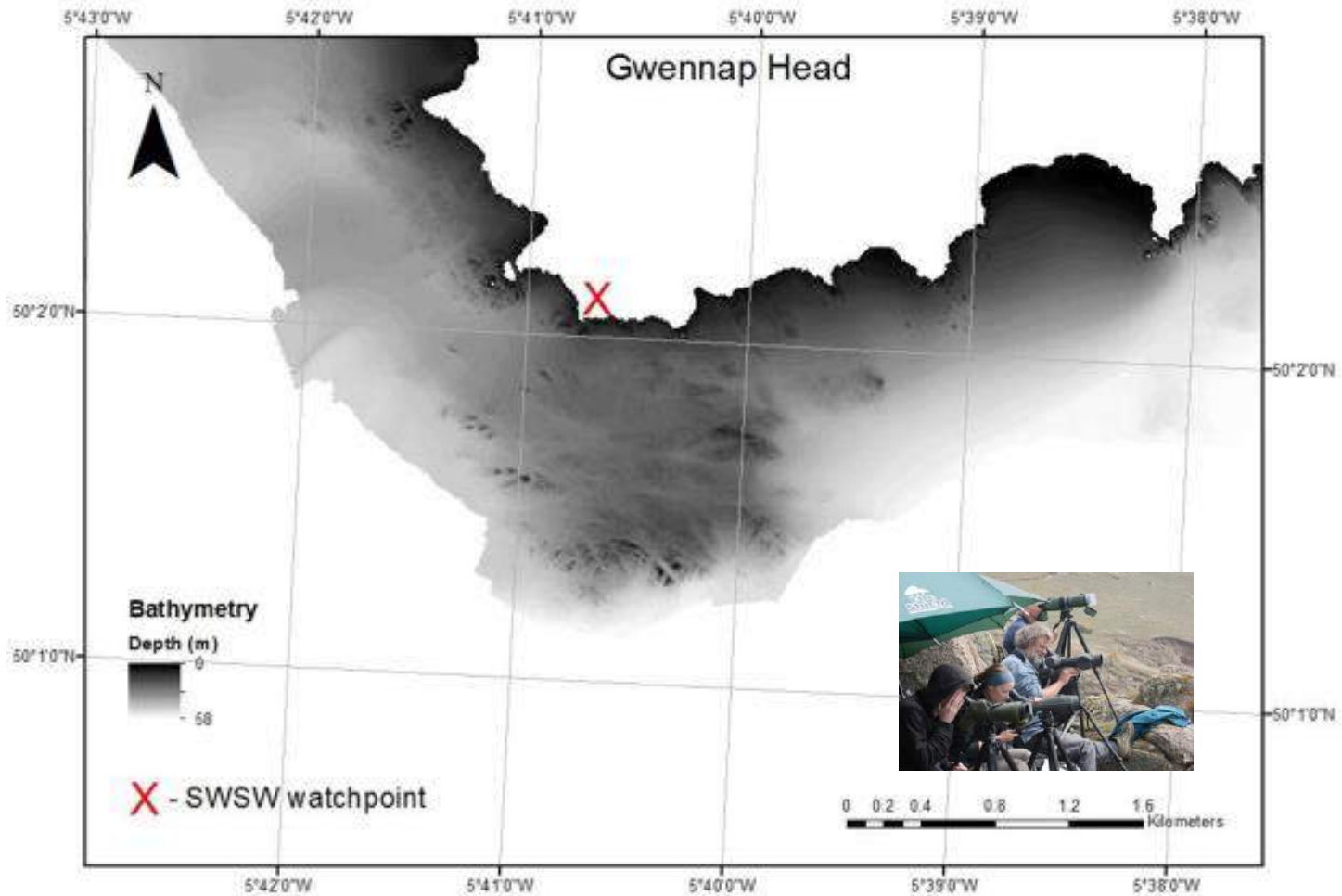
2007- present



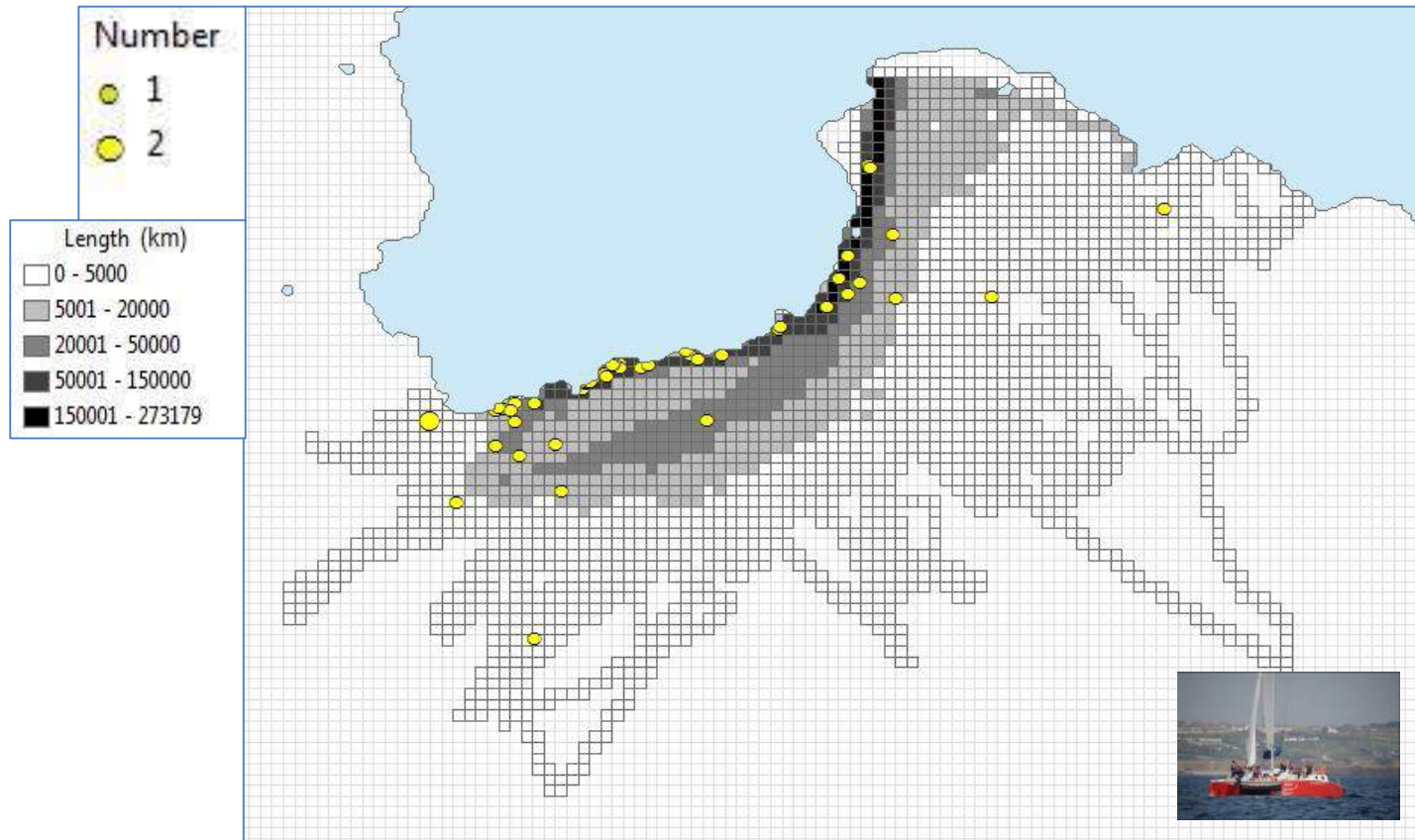
Cornwall

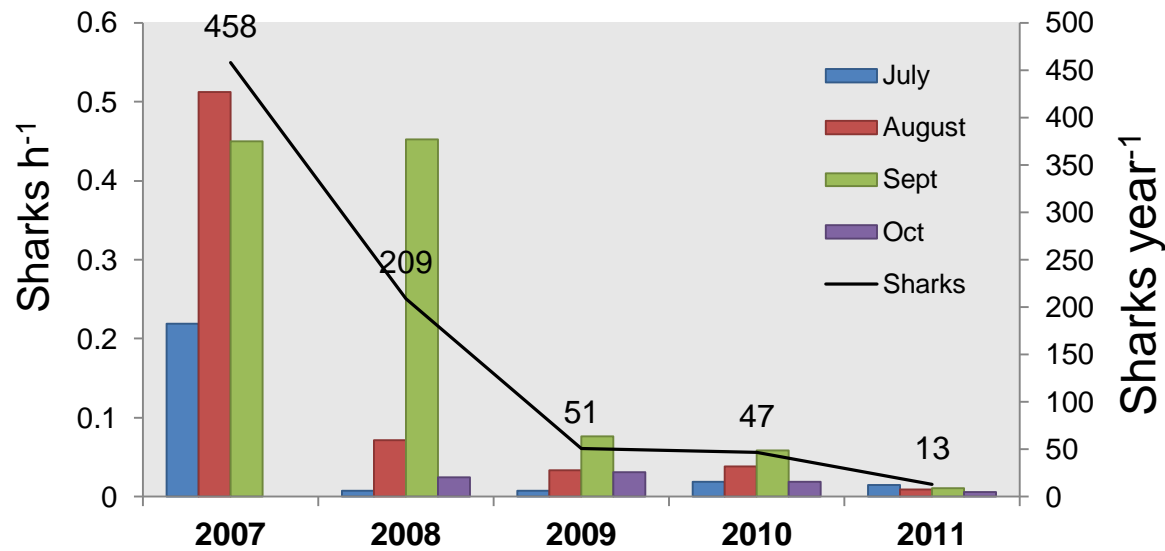
2008 - 2012

Seawatch Southwest



Marine Discovery



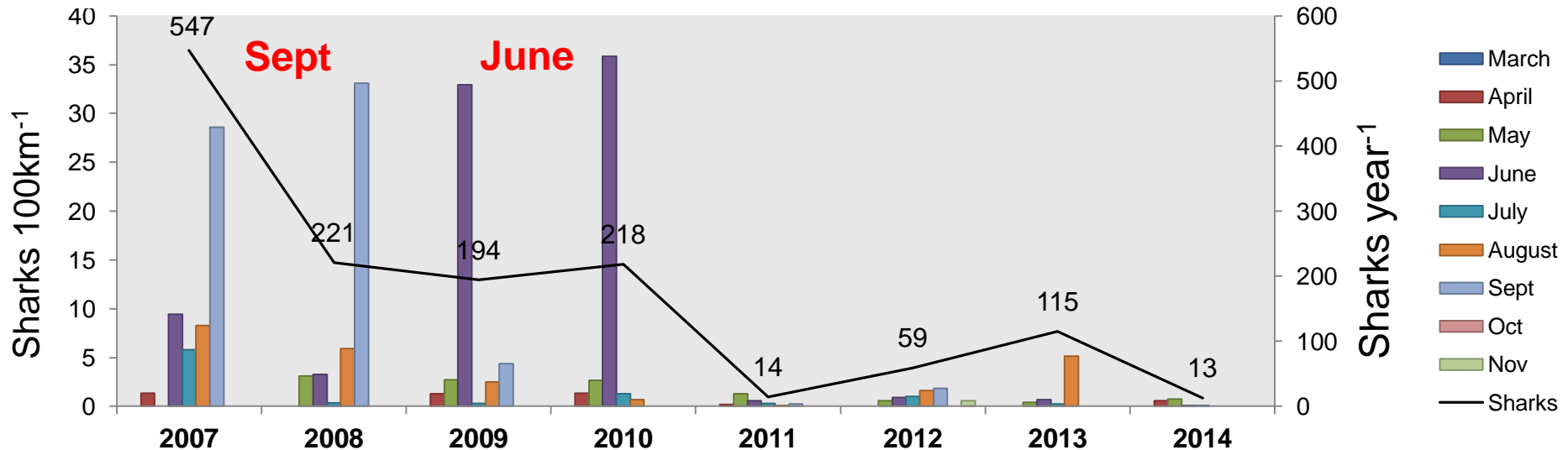


SWSW

Yearly average:
156 sharks

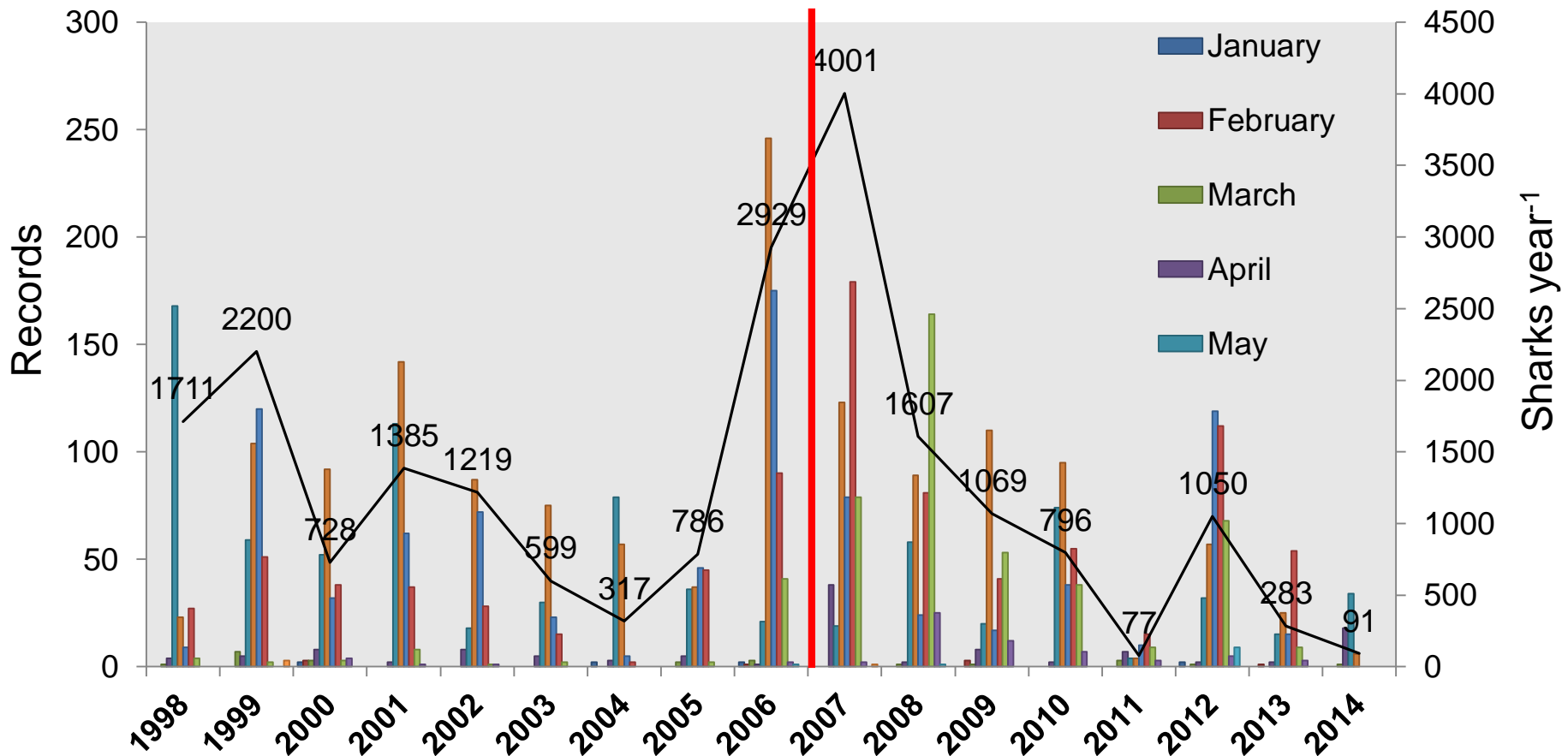
MD

Yearly average:
173 sharks



Cornwall Wildlife Trust

SWSW & MD Start



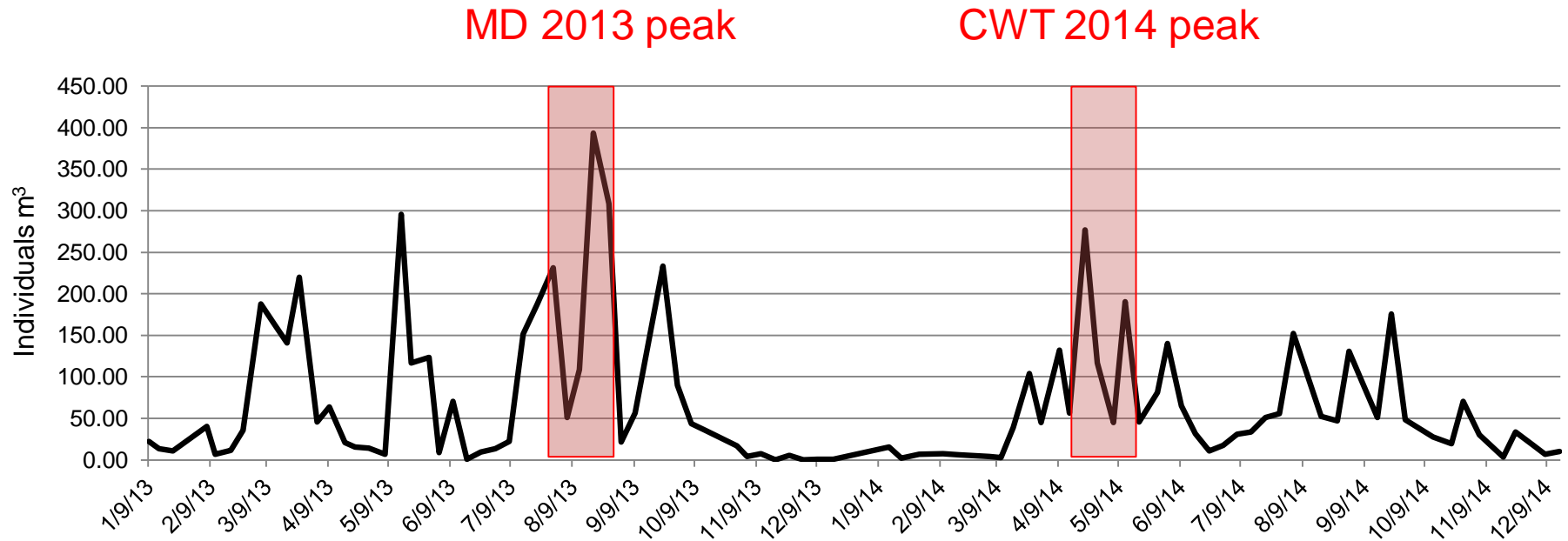
So what is this telling us?

“Shark sightings have declined in the SW”

1. *Species assemblage change*
2. *Zooplankton density*
3. *Temperature*



Calanus helgolandicus @ L4

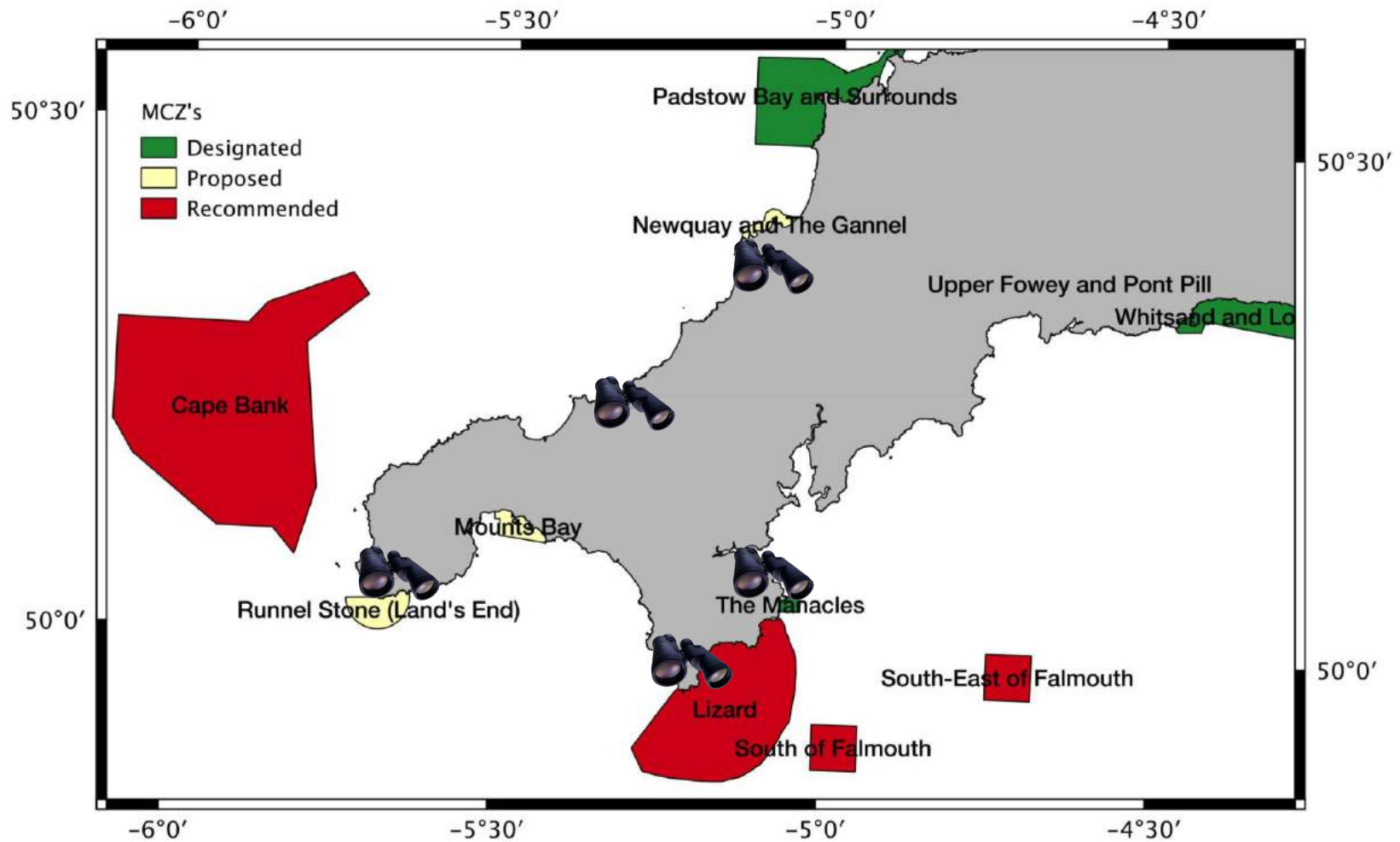


Data courtesy of Rachel Harmer @ PML

basking shark “status”

- CWT dataset shows periodicity +/-
- SWSW & MD show decline -
- A need for the inclusion of long-term prey and SST data
- Sub-surface sharks?
- Importance of monitoring schemes

Moving Forwards



Summary

- Raw data show a decline in sightings since 2006/07
- Combined effects of SST & prey rather than a population decline
- Still defined need for long-term monitoring
- Fingers crossed for 2015!



Thanks for listening