

Seaquest Southwest

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Seaquest Southwest is a marine citizen science and public participation project run by Cornwall Wildlife Trust to record the presence and behaviours of marine megafauna found in Cornish waters; including porpoise, dolphins, whales, seals, sharks, turtles and fish.

Aims of Seaquest



Risso's dolphins by Freya Stacey

- 1** To engage people with the marine environment.
- 2** To collect data on marine wildlife.
- 3** To better understand and conserve marine wildlife.

2023 Key Facts and Figures

2966

Marine megafauna reports

15

Marine mega fauna species

139

Seaquest effort surveys conducted

51

Public watches* and Seaquest Sundays*

35

Sites visited during Seaquest surveys

1259

People engaged with the project

*Public watches (run by Seaquest) and Seaquest Sundays (run by local marine groups) are led by trained volunteers, but anyone can attend and trained volunteers can also lead their own cliff-top surveys!!

To find out more visit: www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/seaquest

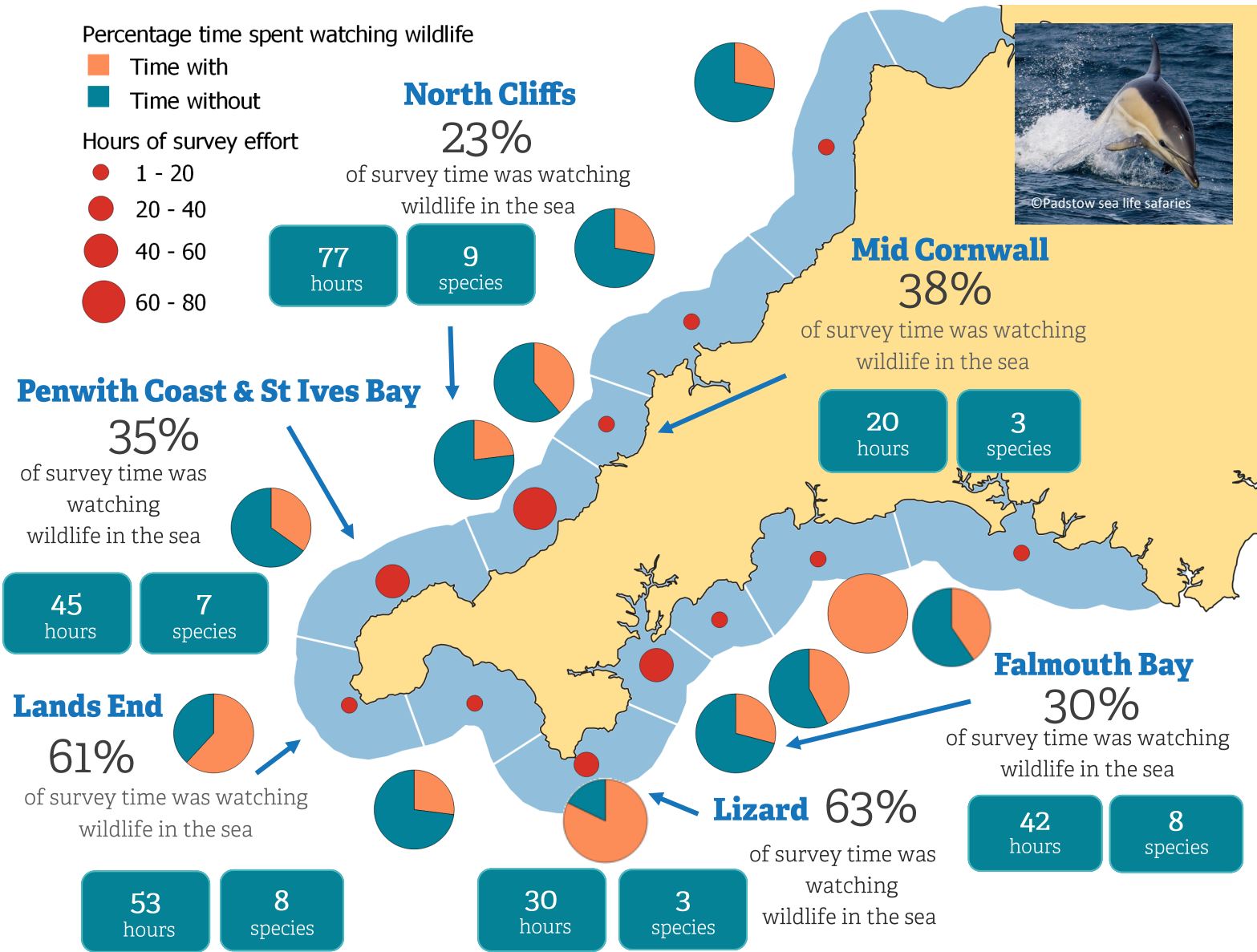
Or contact us at: seaquest@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk

Seaquest Effort Based Surveys 2023

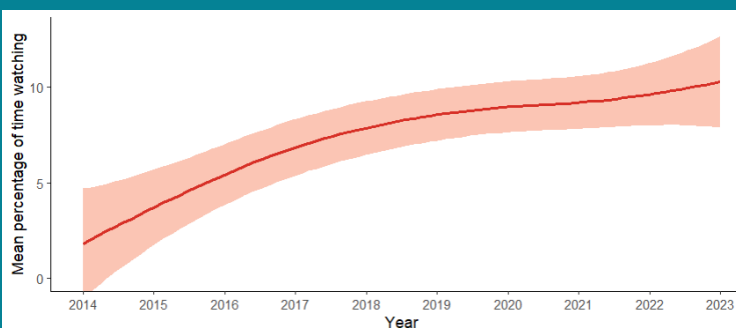


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Trained Seaquest volunteers conduct timed cliff top surveys, recording the presence or absence of marine megafauna at their location every 15 minutes and any additional sightings. This data is then stored in the publicly accessible Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS) for use in conservation projects.



More time watching dolphins! The amount of time spent in the company of common dolphins has increased from less than 3% of survey time in 2013 to more than 10% in 2023.



Key survey facts 2023

276 Hours of surveys	139 Surveys submitted	14 Species recorded	36 Sites surveyed
34% Seaquest Sundays	63% Volunteer surveys	3% Public watches	3% NWDW* surveys

*NWDW = National Whale and Dolphin Watch Week

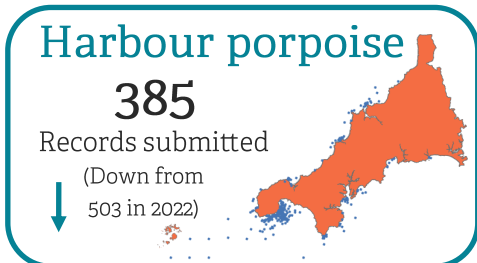
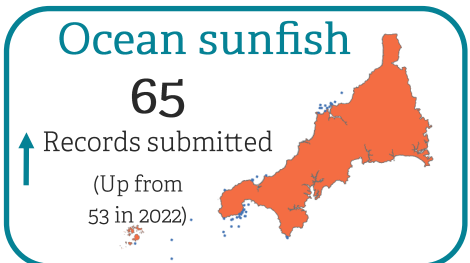
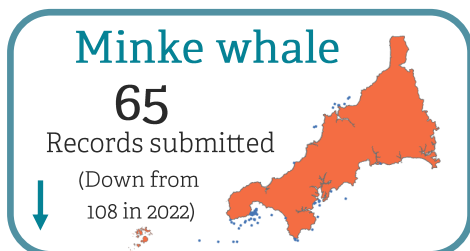
Casual Sightings



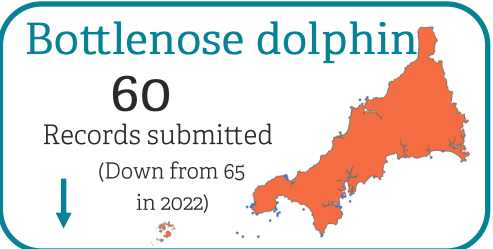
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Casual sightings records are received via e-mail, picked up through social media, or are recorded directly via www.ORKS.org.uk. One Sightings record can represent a single individual or a group of individuals, thus the total number of individuals seen each year can be much higher!

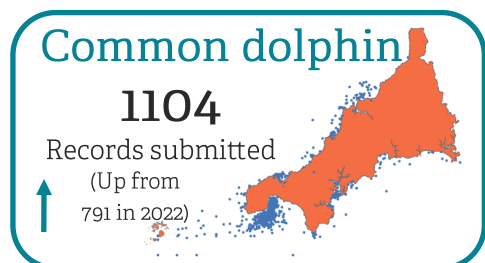
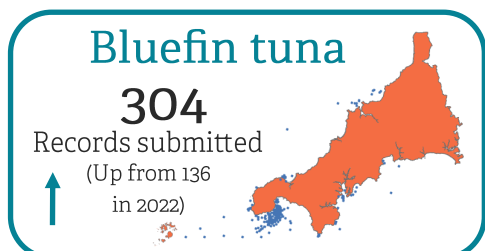
Number and distribution of 2023 sightings



1910
Casual sightings records in total



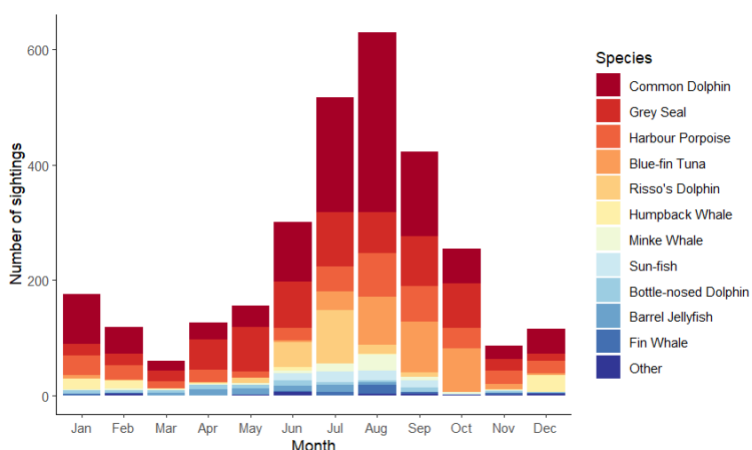
There is some indications in changes in sightings trends for species over the last few years. This is reflected in the effort based data.



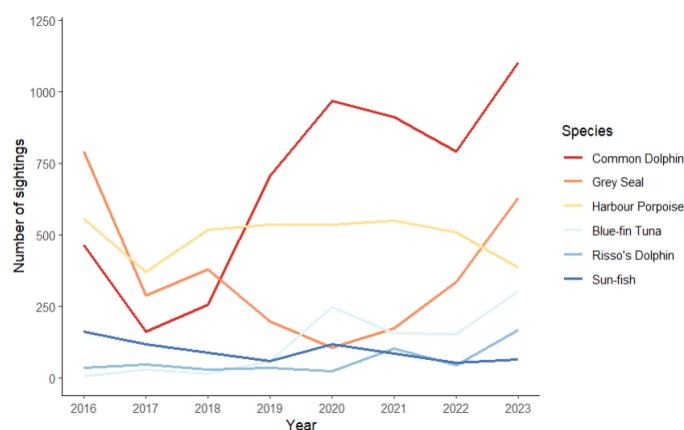
Sightings Highlights 2023

- **Baleen whales:** Humpbacks probably stole the show again this year with 71 sightings reported and seem to becoming a wonderful feature for winter seas. **Fin whales** sightings were reported 34 times (the most sightings of them since seaquest began) and most (12) were in the August public seawatch at St Anthony's head!
- **Toothed whales:** **Common dolphin sightings** continue to increase with a total of 1104 sightings reports in 2023. **Risso's dolphins** sightings in 2023 overtook bottlenose to be the second most commonly reported dolphin species
- **Blue fin tuna** were reported nearly every month with most being seen between July and Oct.

2023 sightings by month



Most commonly seen species by year



Project Engagement



Cornwall
Wildlife Trust

Key facts and figures

110

Volunteers trained

1259

People involved

50

Public events run

9

Local marine
groups involved



To all of our Seaquest volunteers and supporters

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who supported Seaquest during 2023!

A special big thank you to:

- Katherine O'Brien for doing a fantastic job as Seaquest Coordinator for 2023 and 2024.
- Gemma Newman, Current Marine Team Assistant for running events and collating data.
- Bex Allen current CWT Marine Conservation Officer for collating the report.
- Kate and Dave Williams and Brenda and Adrian Tregunna for an incredible number of Seaquest surveys completed.
- Our associated local marine groups; St Agnes Marine Conservation Group, Newquay Marine Group, Three Bays Wildlife Group, Mounts Bay Marine Group, Falmouth Marine Conservation, National Trust at Lizard, St Ives Marine Group, Perranporth Marine Conservation Group and Bude Marine Group for conducting Seaquest surveys in your areas.
- To all of our Seaquest trained volunteers for conducting an incredible number of surveys all around the coast in 2023.
- Marine Discovery Penzance, Padstow Sealife Safari, Newquay Sea Safari and Fishing, AK Wildlife Cruises and Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust and Cornwall Birds for kindly sharing your sightings.
- To everyone sharing marine animal sightings with us via our online recording website www.ORKS.org.uk, through our Facebook page or via email
- Finally a special shout out to the wonderful Abby Crosby, former CWT Marine Conservation Officer who left at the end of 2023, for managing the Seaquest project and helping it grow so successfully over recent years.

Seaquest is held up as an example of a gold standard citizen science. With effort based data going back over a decade we can really start to investigate patterns and changes in our Cornish marine megafauna distribution. The project has also engaged thousands of people with the marine environment and helped start careers in marine conservation.

JOIN THE SEAQUEST SOUTHWEST PROJECT!

- Visit www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/seaquest to learn more about the project
- Subscribe to our newsletter—the link is on the CWT website
- Follow us on Facebook (@CWTSeaquestSouthwest) and Instagram (@seaquest_southwest)
- Come along to a Public sea watch, talk or training event (Programme available on our website)
- Explore casual sightings by visiting the Seaquest Recording Group on www.ORKS.org.uk.
- Sightings and surveys are available on request for your research, project or personal interest, if you would like to access Seaquest data please email the Wildlife Information Service within ERCCIS via email: wis@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk.