

# Penzance B.S.A.C. Conservation Officer's Report 2008

2007 was a good year for marine sightings. A pod of 8 to 10 Bottlenose Dolphins moved around Land's End into Mounts Bay on the 1st January 2007 and we were able to follow this pod throughout the year. They stayed in Mounts Bay for a few days but had moved back to St Ives by the 19th and were at Sennen at the end of January. For the rest of the year they ranged along the north coast from Port Quin around Land's End and into Mounts Bay as far as Perranuthnoe up to December 31st, when they were off St Ives. There was a pair of young males visiting harbours from St. Ives to Fowey and a few sightings of Bottlenose Dolphins along the south coast from the Lizard east toward Fowey, but this would have been a different pod because the whereabouts of the north coast pod was known at the time of those sightings. It is possible that the two pods came together briefly on April 21st for there was a lot of surface activity outside Penzance Harbour at 8.30 a.m.



when 20 Bottlenose Dolphins and 25 Common Dolphins came together, until a dive boat left the harbour and the Bottlenose Dolphins headed off east and the Commons headed southwest. There were far fewer sightings of Common Dolphins, none at all during January and March and only one sighting of 8 in Mounts Bay in February. During the rest of the year there were over 80 sightings, mostly of pods moving rapidly along the coast with pods ranging in size from 1 to 300, some bow riding boats, and seen right around the coast from near Bude on the north coast to Whitsand Bay, east Cornwall, on the south. There were 24

sightings of Risso's Dolphins during the year the earliest was May 3rd when a pod of 12 was seen well out off Fowey. Pods were seen each month up to November 29 when a single one was seen off Gwennap Head. All the other pods were of 1 to 10 animals except one, and that was a pod of about 30 around the Longships lighthouse on October 12th. A rare sighting was of a pod of 30 to 40 Striped Dolphins seen heading west off Porthwarra, and watched for ½ hour. The most recent sighting before that, was of a single Striped Dolphin off Gwithian in June of 2005 and just 2 off St. Mary's I.o.S in January of 2002 so quite a rare sight. Harbour Porpoises were seen regularly throughout the year, mostly of resident small groups feeding in the tide race off Headlands, mostly around West Penwith, but the occasional large pod were seen well offshore, like a pod of about 100 heading west off Nare Head on July 31st. The first Ocean Sunfish of the year was early, a single off Cape Cornwall on February 18th and they were seen up to November 3rd, when a single was seen off Sennen. There were 85 other sightings, all of single fish except 3 groups of 2, a group of 3 and a group of 5 off St. Ives on Sept 15th. It was an amazing year for Basking Sharks, although the first on April 7th, was late compared with some previous years. That was a single off Nare Head. There were almost daily sightings after that, and reports coming in from many areas on the same day. These were reports of groups of up to about ten fish, but then groups of 50 or 80 were reported from headlands near Sennen and Gwennap Head until the amazing total of 462 were counted from a high point near Land's End on September 5th. There were 42 Minke Whales seen, the first on May 31st in Mounts Bay and the last off Gwennap Head on November 29th. 15 of them were seen from Gwennap Head during August, September and early October when a Survey was being carried out by Seawatch Foundation and Cornwall Bird Watching & Preservation Society. The survey was mainly concerned with Balearic Shearwaters, but they were recording all Sea Birds and all marine creatures and these were put on their website daily. This gave me a vast amount of information for

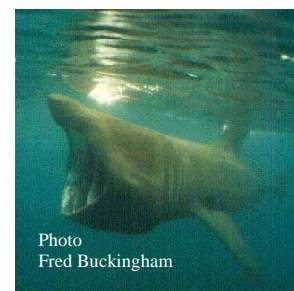


Photo  
Fred Buckingham



Sea Hare *Aplysia depilans*

our database. On one day alone, September 6th, they recorded 100s of seabirds, 28 Basking Sharks, 2 Minke Whales, 9 Bottlenose Dolphins, a pod of 90 or more Common Dolphins, 20 Harbour Porpoises and a Grey Seal. This volume of recording went on for most of the time the survey was conducted. It just shows what you could see if you really look for it. Other rare creatures that turned up were large Sea Hares *Aplysia depilans* and strings of stinging siphonophora called Pearl Chains *Apolemia uvaria*



Photo  
Neil Hope

Pearl Chain *Apolemia uvaria*