

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

A third Loggerhead Turtle was found washed up on south west coasts in four weeks. The most recent was found on the Isles of Scilly on 13th February and rescued by BDMLR volunteers and taken to the Blue Reef Aquarium at Newquay. Unfortunately this one died, but the first two are recovering well. There have been 19 Loggerhead Turtles washed up on the coast of UK and Ireland since 29th December 2007, that's including the three in the west country. The seas around our coast has warmed considerably in the last 30 years so may have become more hospitable for turtles, and there is a possibility that more may be found. If further turtles are found, the public are urged to contact the marine strandings hotline on 0845 201 2626. They should not be put back into the sea for they will die.

Britain's Sea Birds are facing a deadly new threat from a population explosion of Snake Pipefish, a species which was virtually unknown around the UK in 2002 and has undergone a massive, baffling and dangerous expansion since then.. They are related to seahorses, are very bony and can grow to 18" long and have very little nutritional value. Seabirds, already affected by depletion of Atlantic and North Sea fish stocks of their usual prey are turning to pipefish to supplement their diet. They have been found in the nests of puffins, kittiwakes, terns and other sea birds, and although the adults are feeding on them the chicks are choking to death on the rigid and bony bodies. Implications for the future generations of sea birds are alarming. The explosive growth of the Snake Pipefish numbers in the past 5 or 6 years has been one of the most mysterious events affecting British coastal waters in recent years.



Snake Pipefish



A grey seal pup was spotted at Godrevy with nylon fishing net around its neck. If this net is not removed it is likely to cause the death of this seal, for it will cut into its flesh as it grows. Several people have phoned in with sightings of the seal, and BDMLR are hoping to effect a rescue. There is a good chance that the pup will eventually haul out on its own, and members of the public are being reminded not to attempt to rescue the pup on their own, this is a wild animal, and so the best thing is to contact the Seal Sanctuary or BDMLR straight away, at the number mentioned above.

There were very few sightings during February. Only two reports of Bottlenose Dolphins, both in the Falmouth area, 2 were seen at the mouth of the river near Black Rock, and a single one was seen to surface once near The King Harry Ferry as it headed up river. There was a sighting of 5 Dolphins off Fire Beacon Point, near Boscastle on the 9th, and these were probably Bottlenose Dolphins also. There were 5 reported sightings of Harbour Porpoises, 3 of which were near The Brisons off Cape Cornwall, and they were also seen off Porthgwarra and The Lizard. The only other reported sightings were of Minke Whales, one off Swanpool on the 1st of February and the other off Porthallow on the 4th February, these were probably sightings of the same animal.

Strandings this year, up to the end of January have been 4 Common Dolphins, 6 Harbour Porpoises, one Striped Dolphin, 7 Grey Seals, including a pup, and one Loggerhead Turtle