

# Penzance B.S.A.C. Conservation Officers Report May 2008

The first Basking Shark sighting for the year was a very small one. It was seen by divers close inshore off Porthkerris, east of The Lizard, on 10th April. The divers reported it as being just over a metre long, but I think it was probably longer than that, for normally Basking Sharks are about 150 to 180 cm at birth, (that's about 5 to 6 ft), after a gestation of perhaps as long as



Kelp on the bow

3½ years, but whatever the length it was a very young one indeed, and the smallest on our records. I find that observers often underestimate the size of creatures they have seen in the sea.

John Lambourne who is rebuilding the Cornish

Lugger called "Ripple", that was originally built in St Ives, launched the craft in October last year. It has not been to sea yet, but has been moored in Newlyn Harbour while he is working on the inside fittings. Late



Sea Anemones on the hull



Botryllus schlosseri

April he put it up on the slip in the south west corner of the harbour to scrape the bottom, for it had accumulated quite an array of weeds and creatures while in the harbour. On the sunnier side it became covered in a carpet of fine seaweeds probably, *Scytosiphon lomentaria*, whilst the other side was covered mainly in Anthozoa, Sea Anemones, and Ascidiacea, Sea Squirts, including little patches of *Botryllus schlosseri*. These little patches of tiny sea squirts were among the Sea Anemones but mainly higher on the hull. Also near the bow there was quite a collection of the Kelp *Laminaria saccharina*, sometimes called Sea Belt, Sugar Kelp or Poor-man's Weather Glass, up to a metre long.

Bottlenose Dolphins were reported 8 times during April, all between St Ives and Falmouth. There were also 5 reports of unidentified dolphins, 3 of which were probably also Bottlenose Dolphins, the other two reports were probably Common Dolphins of which there were also 8 reports. These were all on the south coast from Porthgwarra to The Dodman. The largest pod was of 50 or more seen ESE of St. Anthony Head near Falmouth. There were 7 reports of Harbour Porpoises, one report was of a single Nare Head all the rest were off Porthgwarra and Gwennap Head. Grey Seals were the greatest number of reports, 11 in total, mostly of one or two animals but one report was of about 60 seen in the Godrevy area. There was also the Basking Shark mentioned earlier in this report.

Up to the end of March there were 30 cetacean carcasses found on the beaches of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly this year. 15 of these were Harbour Porpoises, 12 Common Dolphins, one a Striped Dolphin, a Pilot Whale and a Fin Whale. There were also 14 Grey Seals, including 3 pups, 2 Trigger Fish and a Guillemot