



**CONSERVING MARINE WILDLIFE
THROUGH RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**





STRIPED DOLPHIN

*Our data suggests this warm water dolphin is wintering further north in response to **climate change**. Pollution and dwindling fish stocks may inhibit this spread.*

WHY IS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

Our oceans occupy nearly three-quarters of the Earth's surface and support a greater diversity of life than any other ecosystem on the planet and could hold the key to battling climate change. So it is surprising that they are less understood than outer space!

We do know that marine wildlife is under real and acute threat, and some are on the verge of extinction. The unsustainable exploitation of once vast natural resources driven by economic need, pollution, shipping, military activity and increasing temperatures all pose growing threats.

The key to safeguarding our marine wildlife is in research. Only when we understand the changes that the marine ecosystem is undergoing, and identify practical solutions, will we be able to look after it for the future.

MONITORING MARINE WILDLIFE AT SEA – RESEARCH FROM COMMERCIAL VESSELS

Our core work since 1995 has been in researching the distribution, abundance and population trends for whales, dolphins, seabirds and other marine animals from commercial vessels. We operate year-round surveys along fixed 'transect' routes through the Channel, Bay of Biscay, North Sea, Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean, working on ferries, freight ships, cruise liners and smaller recreational boats.

Our work began in 1995 with the establishment of what has become one of the world's longest running deep sea scientific whale and dolphin monitoring programmes, the Biscay Dolphin Research Programme (BDRP) onboard P&O's *Pride of Bilbao*.



FIN WHALE

Globally endangered but an annual summer visitor to Biscay where it feeds in internationally important numbers. It is threatened by pollution, climate change and ship strikes in busy shipping areas.

Marinelife is a UK-based charity that is rising to this challenge

- ◆ We carry out scientific research on whales, dolphins, seabirds and other marine wildlife with the focus on the oceans of North-west Europe through a core team of professional staff, trained volunteers and a network of supporters.
- ◆ We strive to raise awareness among the public through our educational work.
- ◆ We use our research to convince decision makers that the conservation of the marine environment is an essential responsibility.

Since 1995, we have travelled more than half a million kilometres on BDRP surveys – a distance equivalent to travelling to the Moon and a third of the way back.



BALEARIC SHEARWATER

Critically endangered and has rapidly declined to around 2000 breeding pairs globally. The Channel and Biscay are crucial moulting grounds.

There are around 90 species of whales, dolphins and porpoises globally: our researchers have recorded more than a quarter of these species in the Channel and Bay of Biscay making it one of the most diverse marine areas in the world

BDRP has made a substantial contribution to the understanding of marine wildlife in European waters, identifying the Bay of Biscay as truly a global hotspot for whales and dolphins, recording over 10,000 sightings.

PEOPLE AND EDUCATION AT THE HEART OF MARINE CONSERVATION

An awareness of the wonderful array of marine wildlife within their reach and an understanding of the knife-edge on which it lives are crucial in influencing elected decision makers to safeguard this unique heritage. This is a vital part of Marinelife’s role and to date over 1,000,000 people have been informed about marine wildlife through onboard displays, lectures, talks and guided whale watches given by our wildlife officers. By raising awareness in this way, people gain a new appreciation for whales and dolphins, as well as memories which will last forever.

EXTENDING OUR RESEARCH

- ◆ We have developed collaborative projects with a wide range of stakeholders;
- ◆ We initiated and co-ordinate the ground-breaking Atlantic Research Coalition (ARC) – an international collaboration between research groups monitoring cetaceans in European waters;
- ◆ We have received European recognition and funding to support in-depth survey work in the Channel;
- ◆ We collaborate with shipping companies and cruise companies to access oceanic survey routes;
- ◆ We collaborate with angling, fishing and tourism businesses to identify ways of conserving marine wildlife at the same time as developing business opportunities and their environmental profile;
- ◆ We work with UK and European Government Agencies, Universities and other scientific research and conservation organisations to provide data for marine conservation strategies.

In 2001, Marinelife employed the world’s first full-time Wildlife Officer on a commercial ferry.



CUVIER'S BEAKED WHALE

A poorly understood deep sea species which we research in Biscay, where they are under threat from naval activity.



PUFFIN

Our work is helping to unravel the mystery of where this species winters.



ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

We promote our research and its implications through the media and our website, which receives over 1.5 million page views a year. With such a high interest in whales and dolphins, we also work closely with select eco-tourism companies to further local coastal economies by promoting ethical whale watching.

We believe that vibrant and economically successful coastal communities with local people who are passionate about wildlife are important to the success of marine conservation. Our Channel-based projects, initially centred on Lyme Bay on the Dorset coast, work closely with local anglers and pleasure boat operators in studying the population of White-beaked Dolphin and Balearic Shearwater. This work has led to a larger Western Channel project investigating all marine animals within the region and could open up opportunities for responsible out-of-season eco-tourism.

CONSERVATION

Our research is providing much needed impartial information on the status and distribution of marine wildlife. *Marinlife* makes this vital evidence available to conservation bodies and decision makers to help them more effectively consider the conservation needs of marine wildlife in policy decisions.

Our research has been published widely in scientific journals and at international conferences and is used as an evidence base by Government agencies, including Natural England, JNCC and Defra for marine spatial planning and site safeguard.

We also have our own growing policy voice. We have met with the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Fisheries to highlight worrying dolphin declines and the need for Marine Protected Areas in the Bay of Biscay. We also made a detailed submission to the UK government about the Marine Bill.

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WHITE-BEAKED DOLPHIN

A cold water species threatened by climate change. We are studying a vulnerable population of this species in the Channel

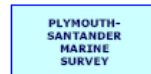
PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS

FRONT: Common Dolphins – *Debbie True*;
Humpback Whale – *Adrian Shephard*.
PAGE 2: Fin Whale – *Nigel Symes*; Striped
Dolphins – *Caroline Weir*.
PAGE 3: Balearic Shearwater, Puffin, Deckwatch
– *Tom Breerton*; Cuvier's Beaked Whale –
Pablo Cermeño. BACK: Fishing boat,
White-beaked Dolphin – *Gareth Knass*.
POSTER: Orcas – *Greg Boreham*.

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