

# Marine Mammals of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly



**Common Dolphin** *Delphinus delphis*  
Length: 1.7 - 2.4 metres  
Bow rides, acrobatic displays, distinct hourglass pattern on side



**Fin Whale** *Balaenoptera physalus*  
Length: 18 - 22 metres  
Very large whale, vertical bushy blow 4-6 metres high



**Orca (Killer Whale)** *Orcinus orca*  
(Male illustrated. Inset box shows female dorsal fin)  
Length: 5.5 - 9.8 metres  
Noisy, explosive blow, very large dorsal fin



**Bottlenose Dolphin** *Tursiops truncatus*  
Length: 1.9 - 3.9 metres  
Bow rides, acrobatic displays



**Risso's Dolphin** *Grampus griseus*  
Length: 2.6 - 3.8 metres  
Great displays of swimming in pairs, scratches/scars over body, especially the head



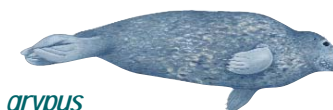
**Long-finned Pilot Whale** *Globicephala melas*  
Length: 3.8 - 6 metres  
Slow swimmer, often floats on surface with blow every 3-10 minutes



**Harbour Porpoise** *Phocoena phocoena*  
Length: 1.4 - 1.9 metres  
Tends to show little of itself at the surface



**Minke Whale** *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*  
Length: 7 - 10 metres  
Vertical blow 2-3 metres high



**Grey Seal** *Halichoerus grypus*  
Length: 2.1 - 3.3 metres  
Head has flat profile with 'Roman nose', often seen resting on rocks



**Common Seal** *Phoca vitulina*  
Length: 1.2 - 1.9 metres  
Rare in Cornish waters, head has rounded profile, usually seen in estuaries



## WDCS Code of Conduct

Whales and dolphins are highly intelligent animals. They are sensitive to disturbance and can be hit by vessels, including their propellers.

If they approach the boat or bow-ride, maintain a slow speed and course until clear. Cetaceans should never be chased or harassed in an attempt to make them bow-ride. When watching dolphins, always let them decide what happens.

When watching marine mammals please follow these simple guidelines:

**KEEP** your distance. Never go closer than 100m (200m if another boat is present).

**NEVER** drive head on to, or move between, scatter or separate dolphins. If unsure of their movements, simply stop and put the engine into neutral.

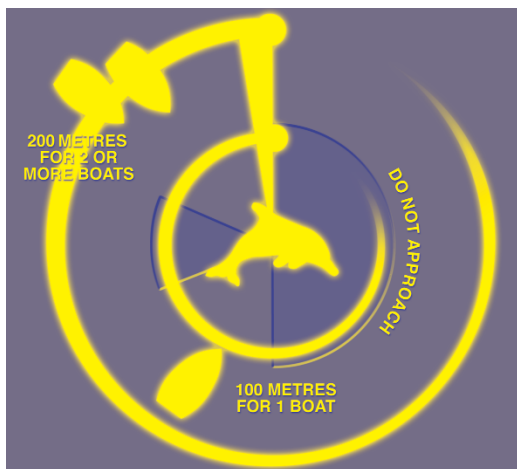
**PLEASE** spend no longer than 15 minutes near the animals.

**SPECIAL** care must be taken with mothers and young.

**MAINTAIN** a steady direction and slow 'no wake' speed.

**NEVER** try to swim with cetaceans for your safety and theirs.

**Do not dispose of any rubbish, litter or contaminants at sea**



**MAXIMUM TIME 15 MINUTES**

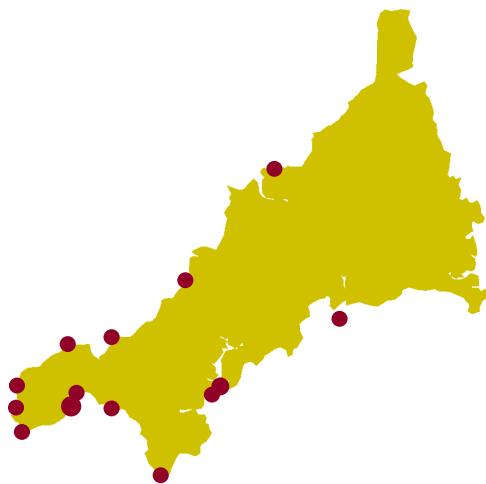
This ID guide has been produced as part of the 'Celebrating Cornwall's Mammals - from Dormice to Dolphins' project, an Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS) project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, WDCS and Sequest South-West.

## Top tips for marine mammal sightings:

Marine mammals are easier to see on a calm day than when the sea is choppy.

Circling birds indicate shoals of fish, often being pursued by dolphins and porpoises.

You get a better view and can see further out to sea from cliff tops and headlands. The map shows some areas where marine mammals are often sighted.



## What to do if you see a marine mammal:

Fill in the recording form or contact us with the following information: what you saw, what condition it is in (dead/alive), where you saw it, when you saw it and who you are (name/address). **If the animal is stranded, phone the Cornwall Wildlife Trust on 01872 273939 immediately with the above information.**

If you would like any more information or have marine mammal records to give, please contact the Mammals Project Co-ordinator at:

### ERCCIS

Cornwall Wildlife Trust, Five Acres, Allet, Truro, TR4 9DJ  
Tel: 01872 273939

### Data protection act

All the information you provide will be added to the computer database at the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Wildlife information from this database may be passed on to third parties for conservation and management purposes, but personal details relating to recorders will not be passed on without prior permission being given by the individual. Some wildlife information may also be made available on websites but personal details will not. Please contact us if you have any objections to this.

## Did you know?

### Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*

Live in permanent family groups and are often seen close inshore. Playful and inquisitive and often approach boats. Made famous by the TV series 'Flipper'.

### Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis*

Groups range from 10's to 1000's in number. More likely to see from boats offshore as rarely swims inshore. Possibly the fastest dolphin on earth and can swim at up to 32 knots.

### Risso's Dolphin *Grampus griseus*

Risso's Dolphin is often confused with the Orca. Sometimes called the Grey Dolphin. Live in groups of 3 to 50 animals.

### Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*

Used to be called 'piffer' which relates to the heavy breathing sometimes heard from boats. Found in small groups often in shallower bays, estuaries and tidal channels. Usually travel alone or in small groups. Shy and hard to spot as they don't leap.

### Minke Whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

An inquisitive cetacean often seen investigating ships and boats, but also seen around coastlines.

### Fin Whale *Balaenoptera physalus*

A migratory species, usually seen in offshore waters but may be seen close to shore where water is deep enough.

### Orca (Killer Whale) *Orcinus orca*

The largest dolphin! Males have a towering dorsal fin up to 1.8 metres in height. Lives in family groups of 3-50 individuals.

### Long-finned Pilot Whale *Globicephala melas*

Lives in groups of 10 - 100 in number. Often seen with other small cetaceans or Minke Whales. Can be seen 'spy-hopping' – sticking its head out of the water to view boats.

### Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*

Two-thirds of the world's Grey Seal population lives around the coast of the UK.

### Common Seal *Phoca vitulina*

Large numbers wiped out around the country by the Phocine Distemper Virus (PDV) in 1988 and 2002.