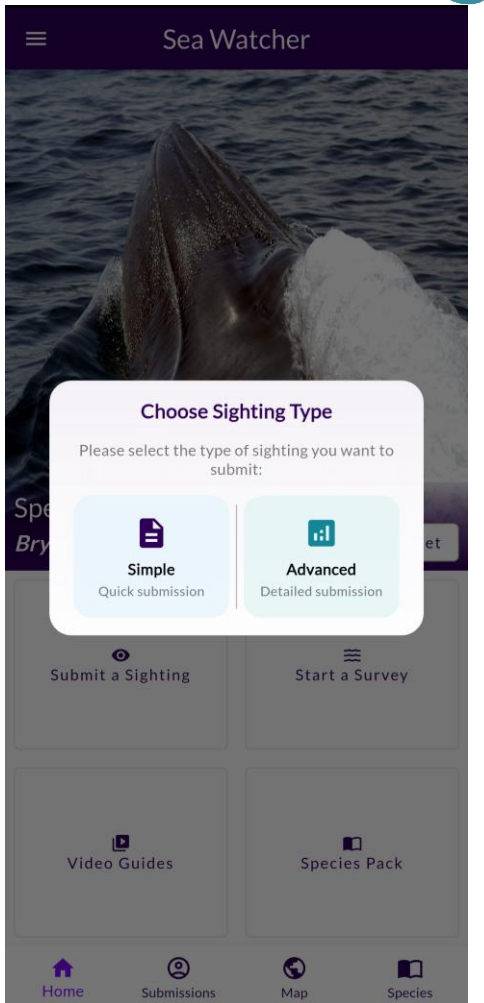
sea watch FOUNDATION

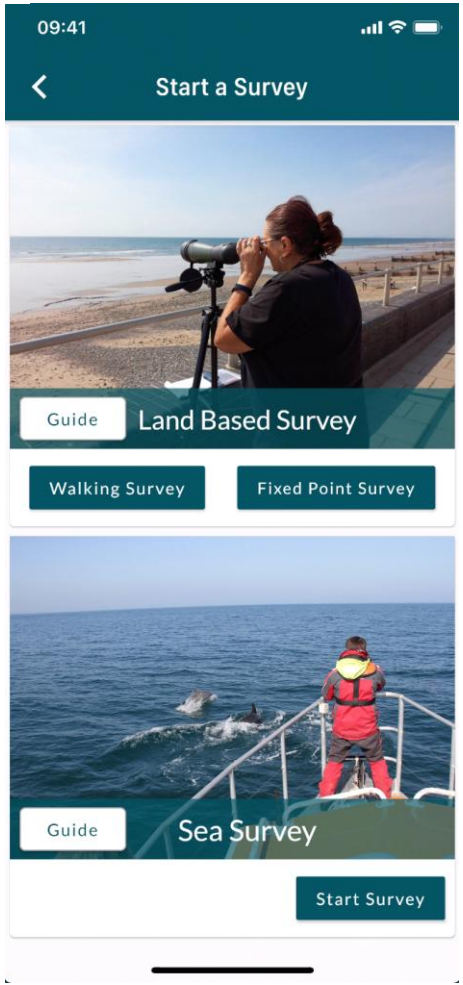
EASTME 2025

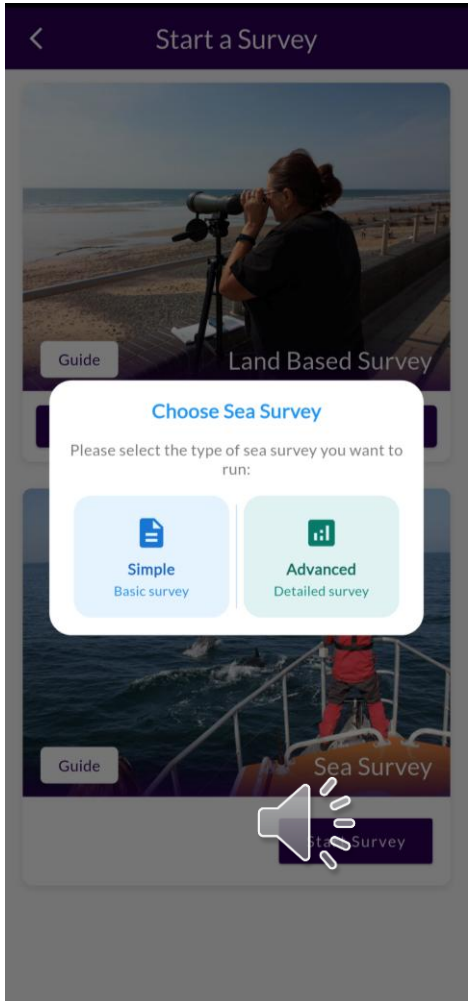
Cetaceans

Simone Evans
Sightings Officer


10:49
Sea Watcher
Species of the Day
Minke whale
Fact Sheet
Submit a Sighting
Start a Survey
Video Guides
Species Pack
Home
Submissions
Map
Species

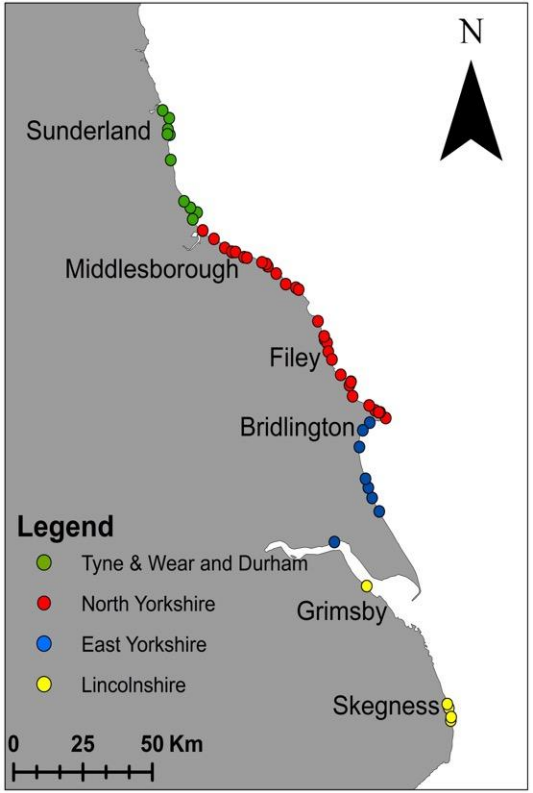

Sea Watcher
Choose Sighting Type
Please select the type of sighting you want to submit:
Simple
Quick submission
Advanced
Detailed submission
Submit a Sighting
Start a Survey
Video Guides
Species Pack
Home
Submissions
Map
Species


09:41
Start a Survey
Guide
Land Based Survey
Walking Survey
Fixed Point Survey
Guide
Sea Survey
Start Survey

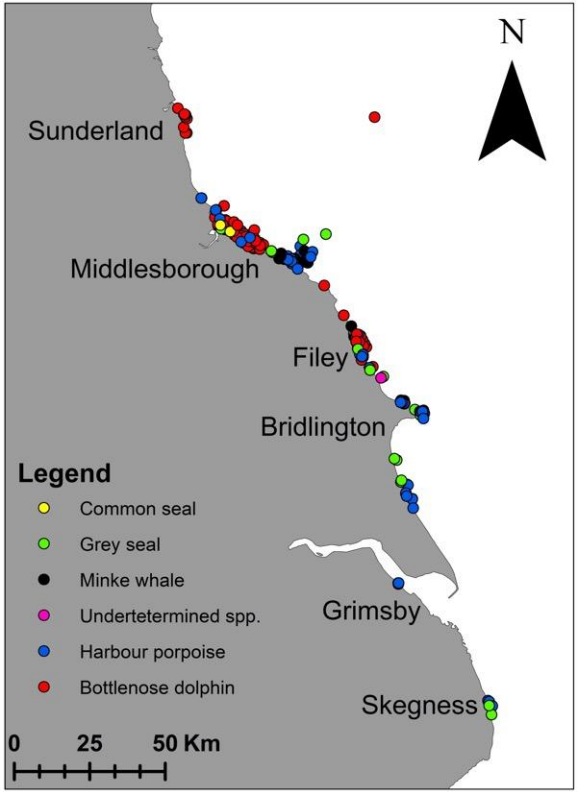

Start a Survey
Guide
Land Based Survey
Choose Sea Survey
Please select the type of sea survey you want to run:
Simple
Basic survey
Advanced
Detailed survey
Guide
Sea Survey

Sea Watch Partnership with North Sea Wildlife Trusts

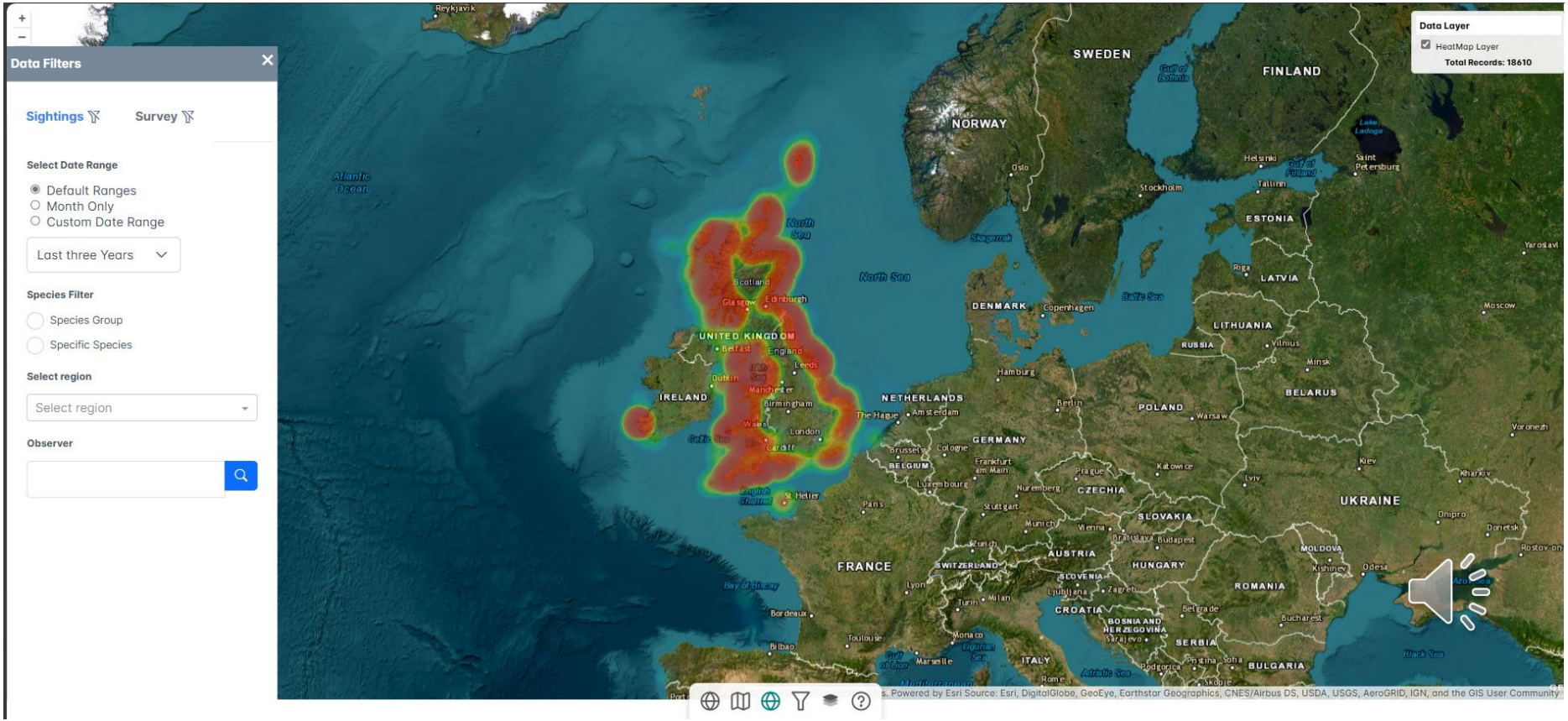
a) Land Watch Sites



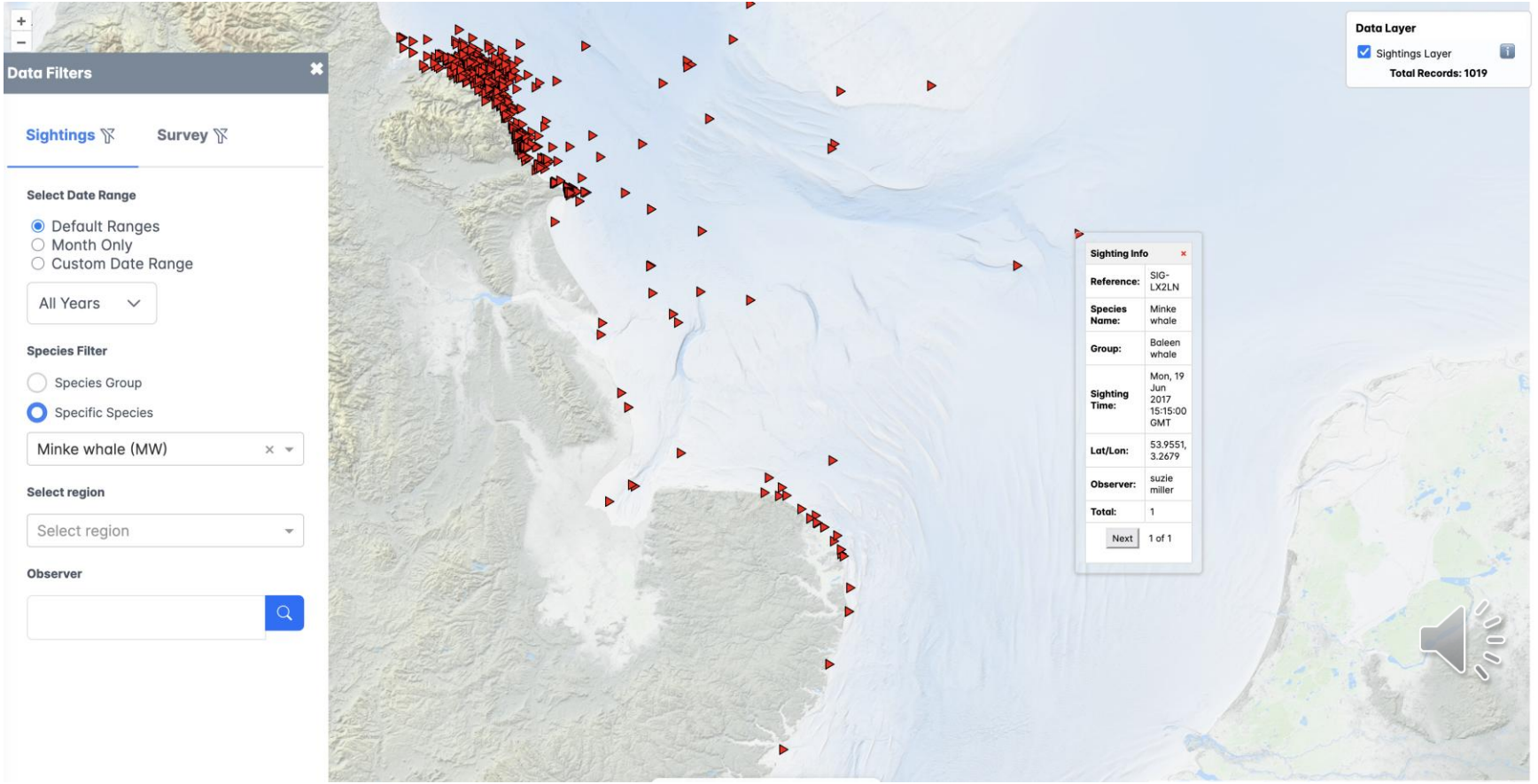
b) Species Sightings



Map Viewer

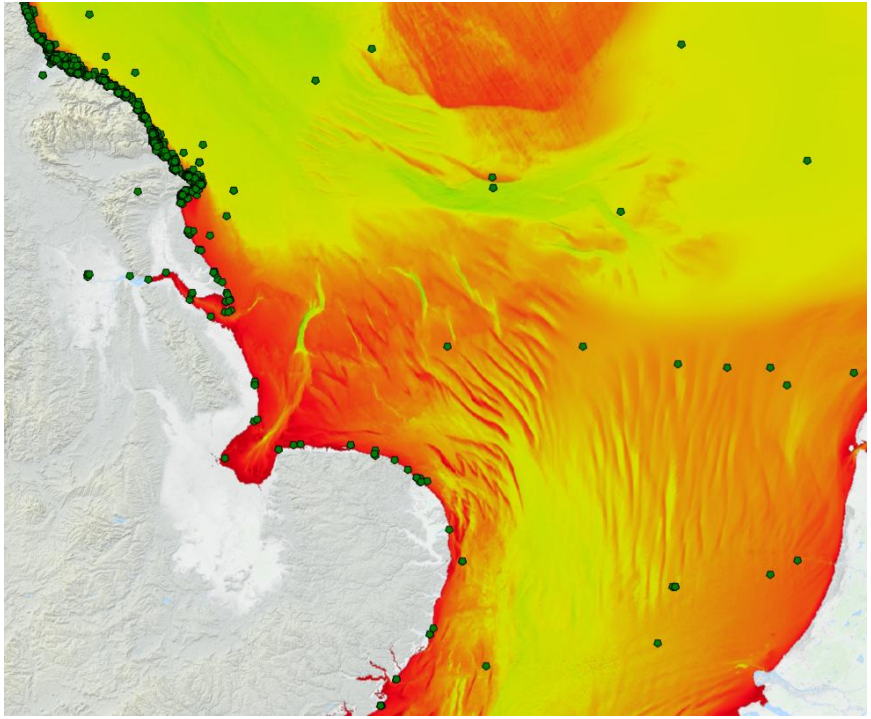

Data Filters
Sightings
Survey
Select Date Range
Default Ranges
Month Only
Custom Date Range
Last three Years
Species Filter
Species Group
Specific Species
Select region
Select region
Observer
Data Layer
HeatMap Layer
Total Records: 18610
SWEDEN
FINLAND
NORWAY
ESTONIA
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
DENMARK
UNITED KINGDOM
IRELAND
NETHERLANDS
GERMANY
BELGIUM
POLAND
BELARUS
RUSSIA
UKRAINE
FRANCE
SWITZERLAND
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
SLOVAKIA
CZECHIA
ROMANIA
MOLDOVA
CROATIA
SERBIA
BULGARIA
ITALY
Reykjavik
Oslo
Stockholm
Helsinki
Tallinn
Riga
Copenhagen
Moscow
Minsk
Vilnius
Warsaw
Berlin
Hamburg
Amsterdam
The Hague
Brussels
Paris
London
Dublin
Belfast
Edinburgh
Glasgow
Cardiff
Birmingham
Manchester
Leeds
Munich
Vienna
Prague
Budapest
Zurich
Lyon
Bordeaux
Toulouse
Marseille
Milan
Rome
Kyiv
Lviv
Kharkiv
Dnipro
Donetsk
Odesa
Bucharest
Belgrade
Sofia
Atlantic Ocean
North Sea
Baltic Sea
Black Sea
Powered by Esri Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Map Viewer – Minke Whale Example

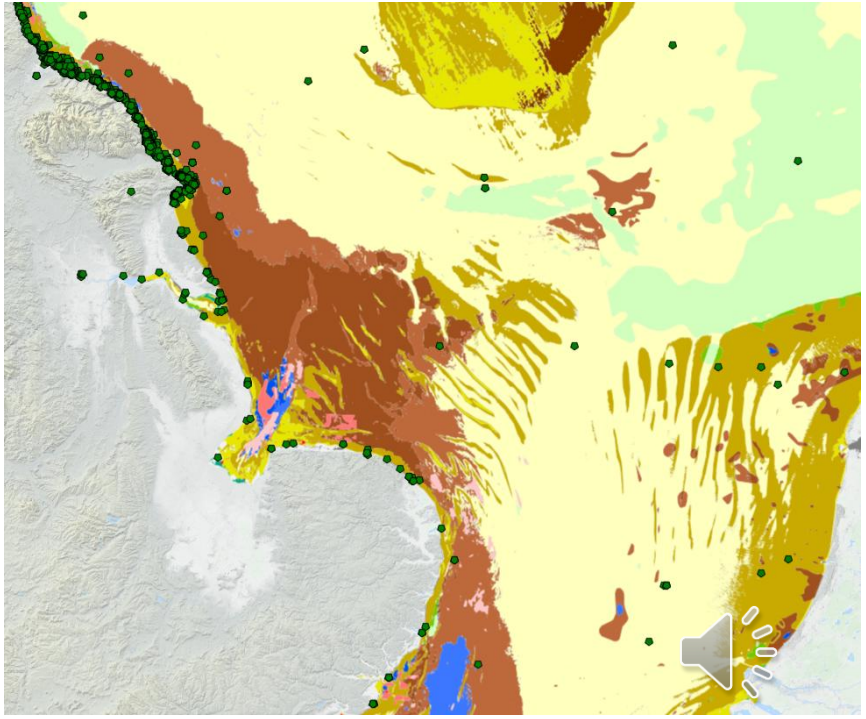


Bottlenose Dolphin Sightings with Environmental layers

Depth Layer

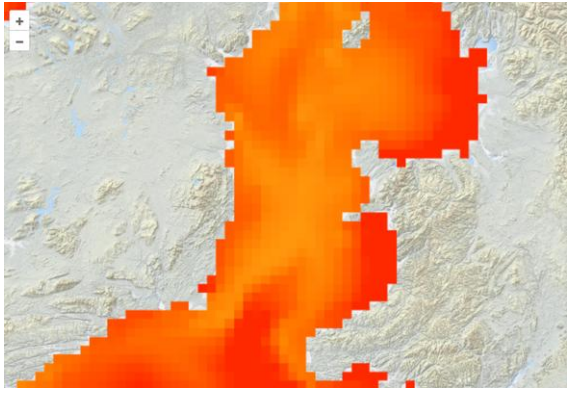


Seabed habitats

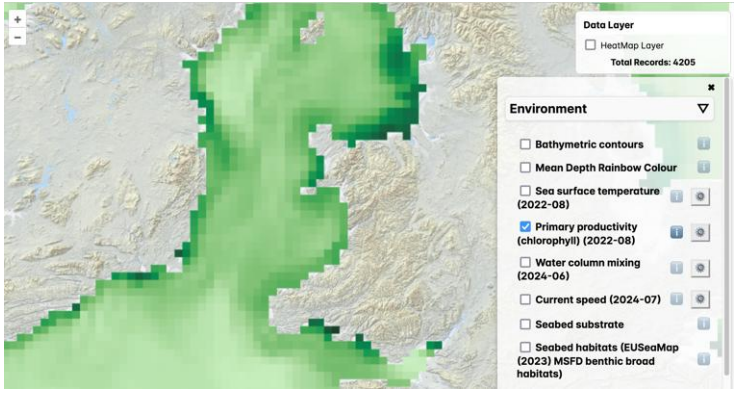


Environmental Layers

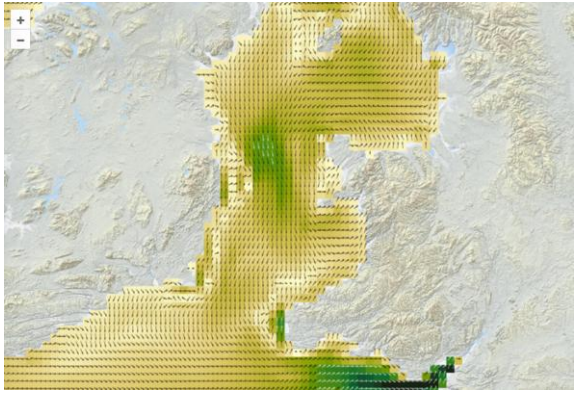
Sea Surface Temperature



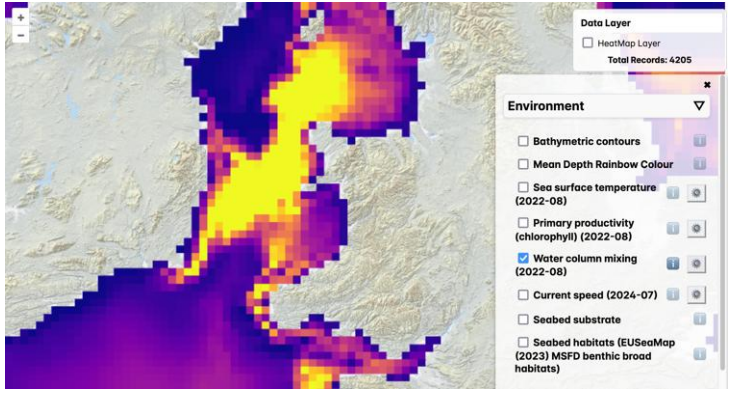
Primary Productivity



Current Speed

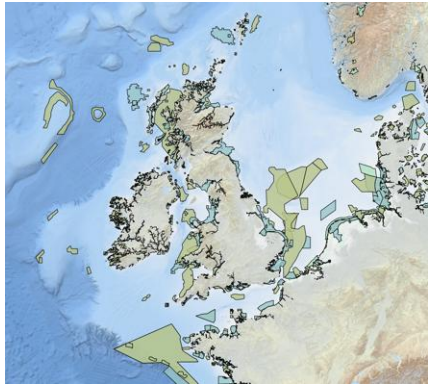


Mixed Layer Depth

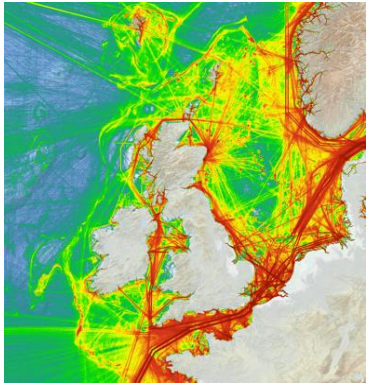


Human Activity Layers

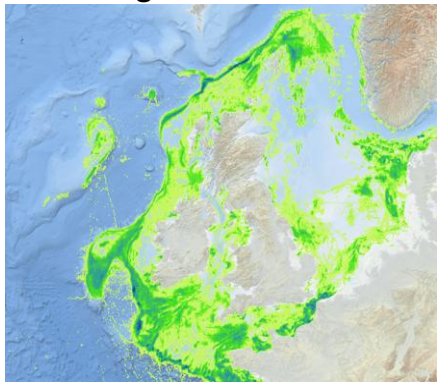
Marine Protected Areas



Overall Vessel Density

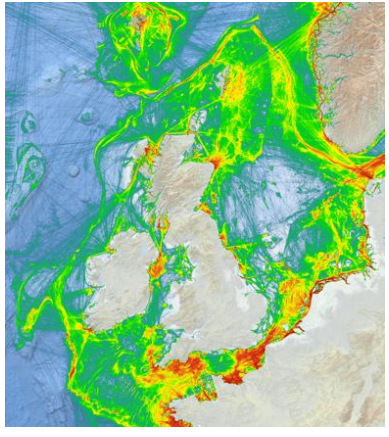


Fishing with Static Gear

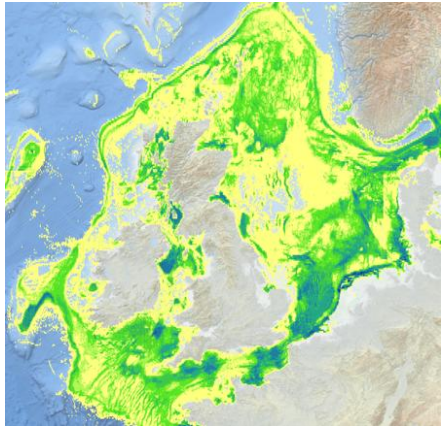


Imp. Mar. Mammal Areas

Overall Fishing Density



Subsurface Fishing



15 Cetacean Species in the East England Region












Regular

- Harbour Porpoise
- Bottlenose Dolphin
- White-beaked Dolphin
- Minke Whale

Occasional

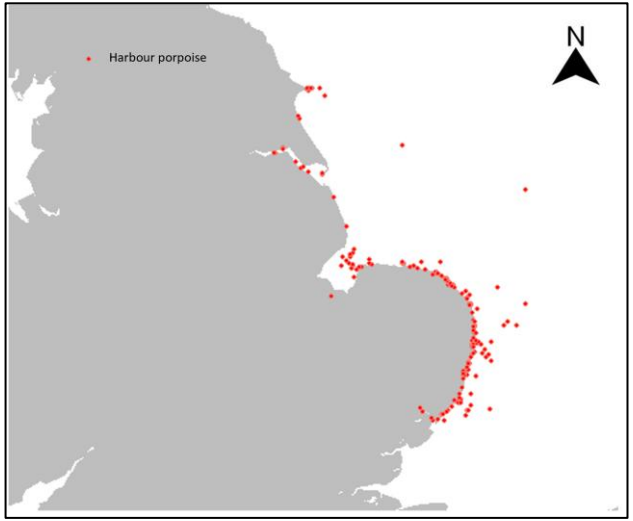
- Common Dolphin
- Atlantic White-sided Dolphin
- Risso's Dolphin
- Fin Whale
- Humpback Whale

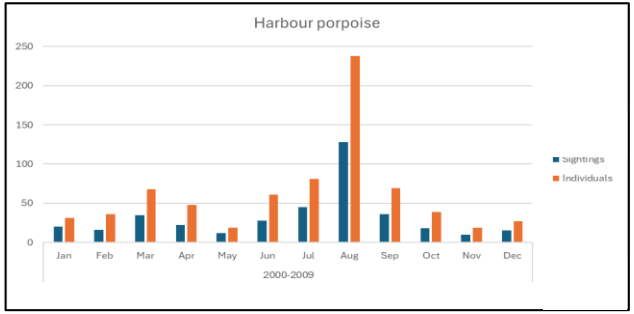
Rare

- Killer Whale
- Northern Bottlenose Whale
- Sowerby's Beaked Whale
- Long-finned Pilot Whale
- Sperm Whale
- Sei Whale

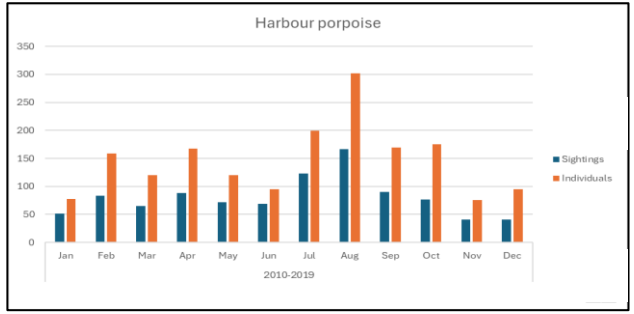
HARBOUR PORPOISE SIGHTINGS: 2000-2025

2000-2009

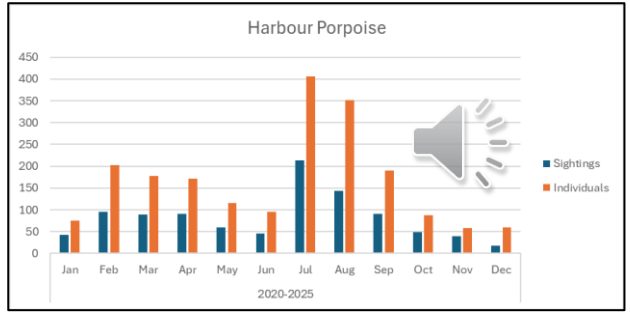




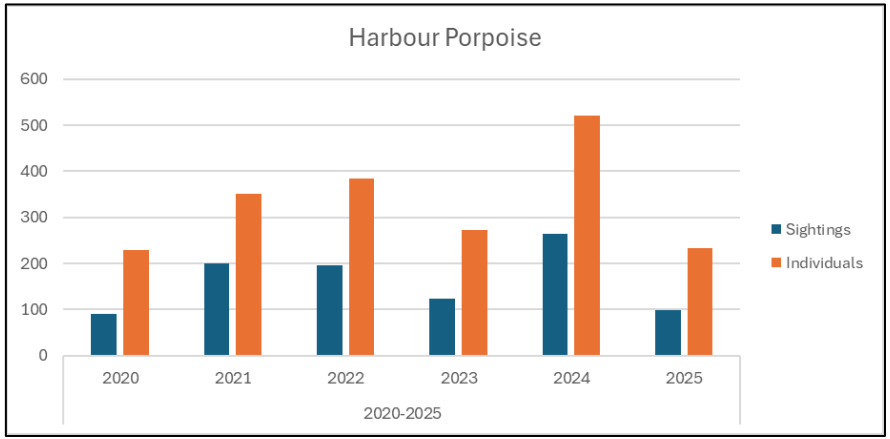
2010-2019

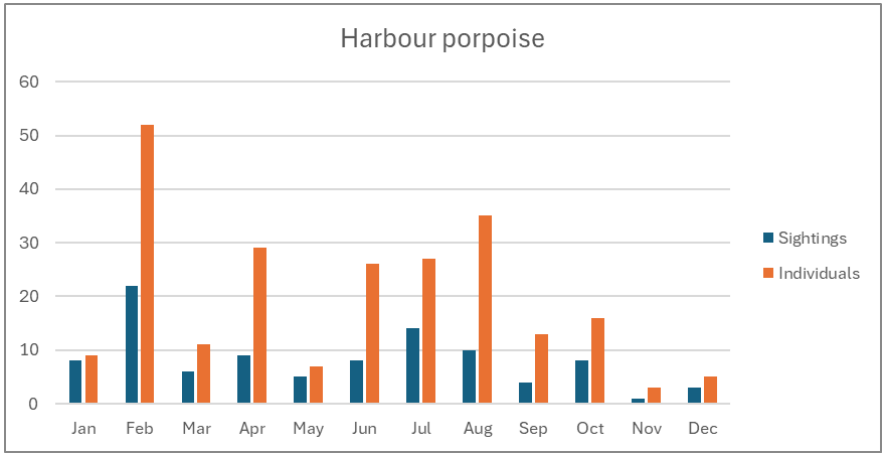


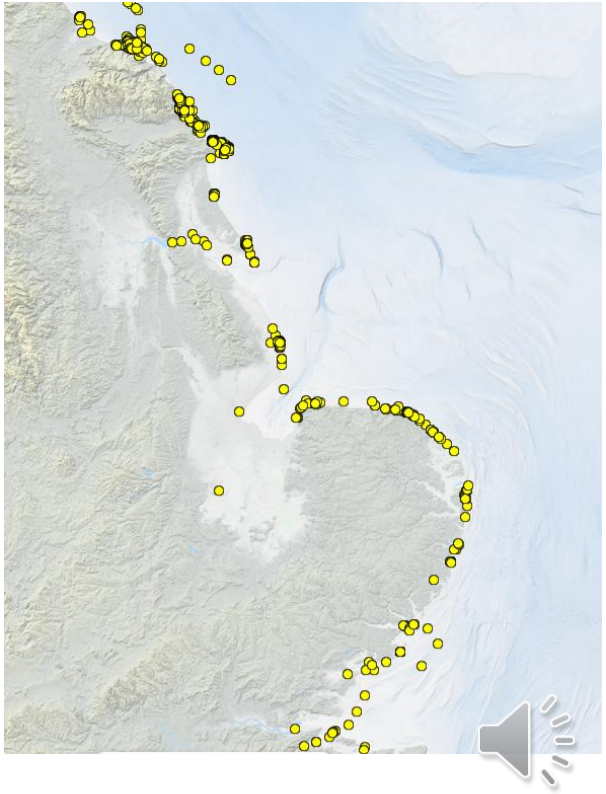
2020-2025



HARBOUR PORPOISE SIGHTINGS



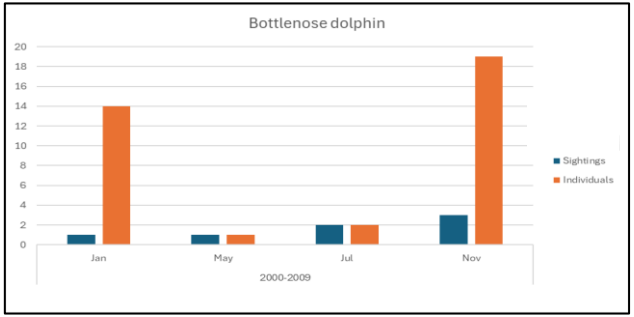




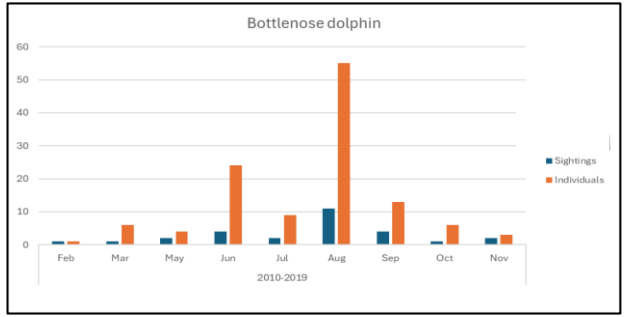
Last 3 years
2023-2025

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN SIGHTINGS: 2000-2025

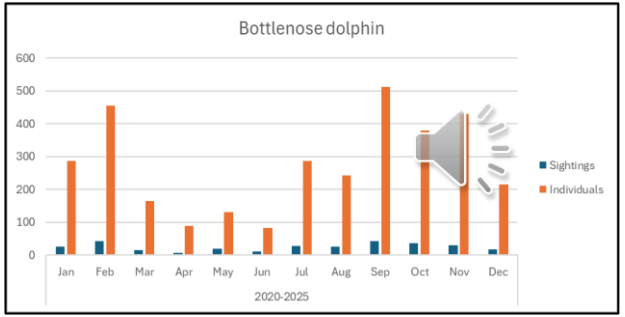
2000-2009



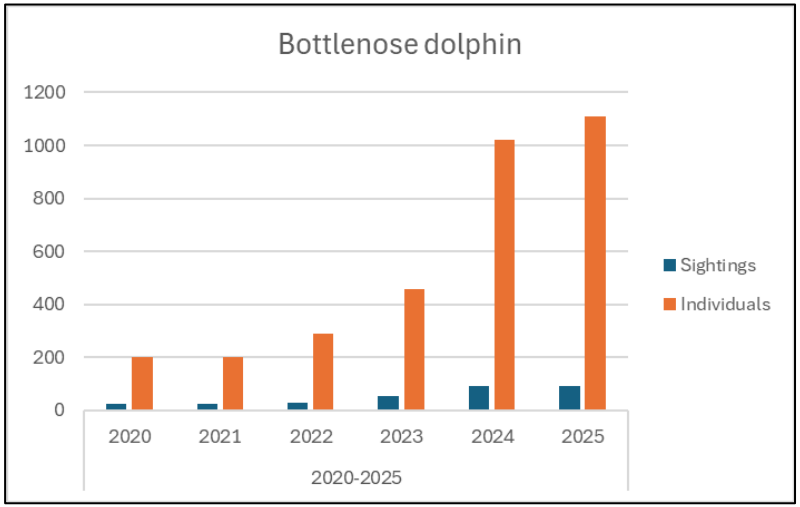
2010-2019

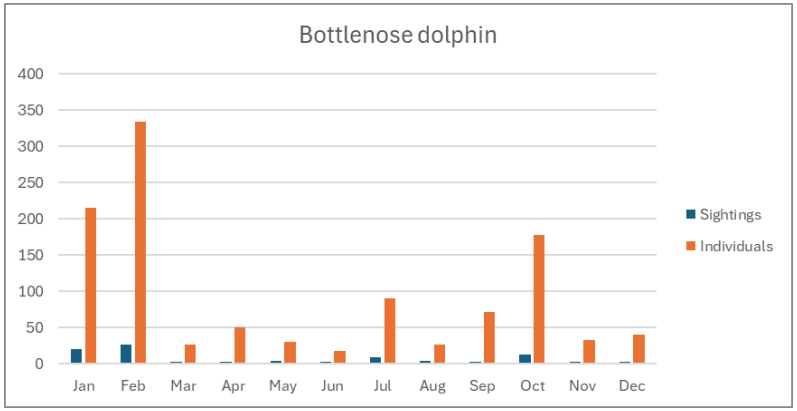


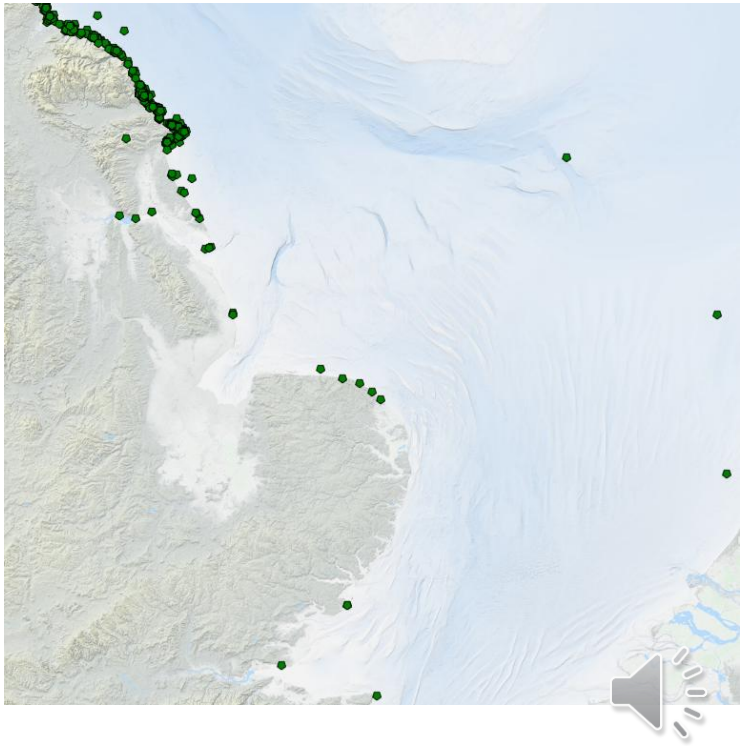
2020-2025



BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN SIGHTINGS

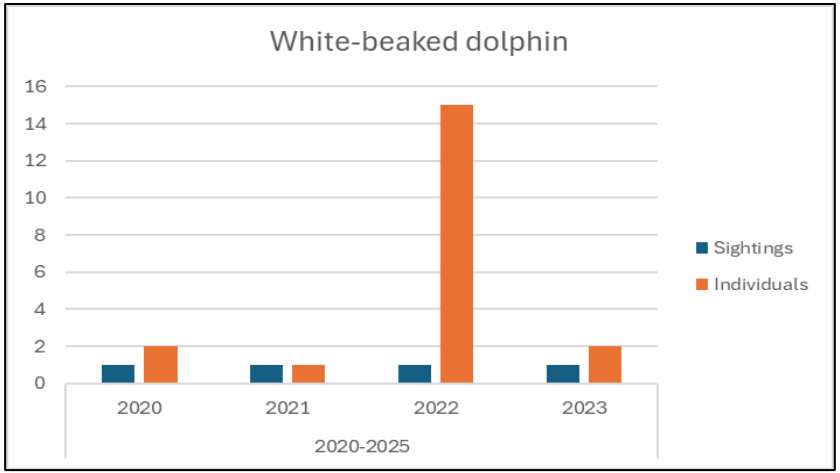


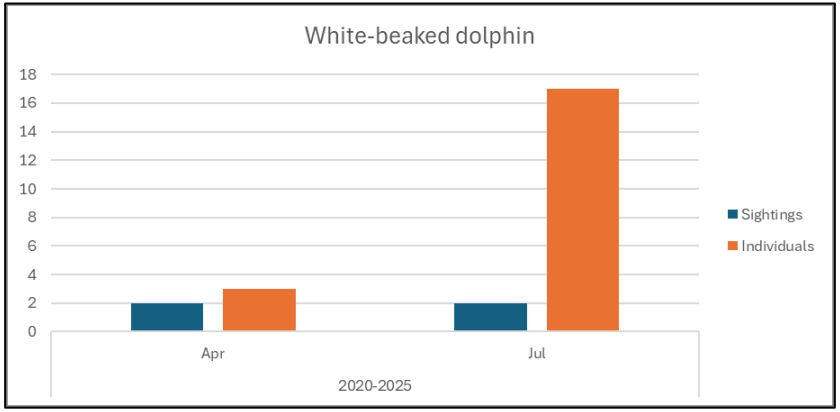


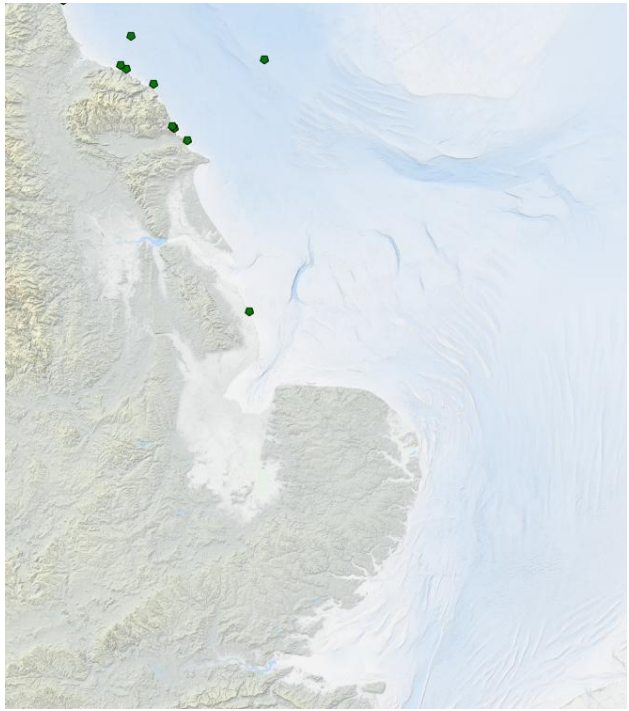


Last 3 years
2023-2025

WHITE-BEAKED DOLPHIN SIGHTINGS: 2020-2025

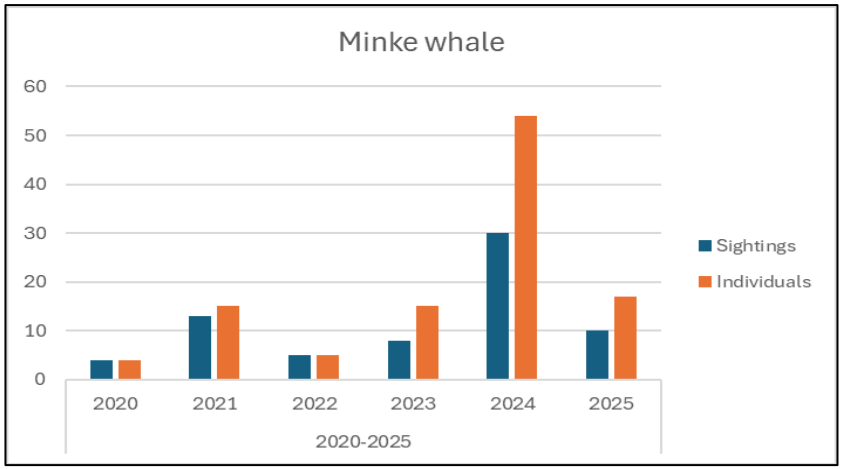


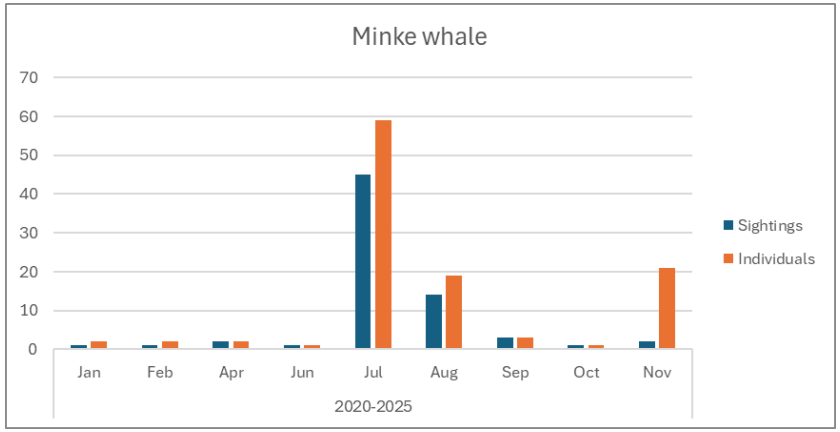


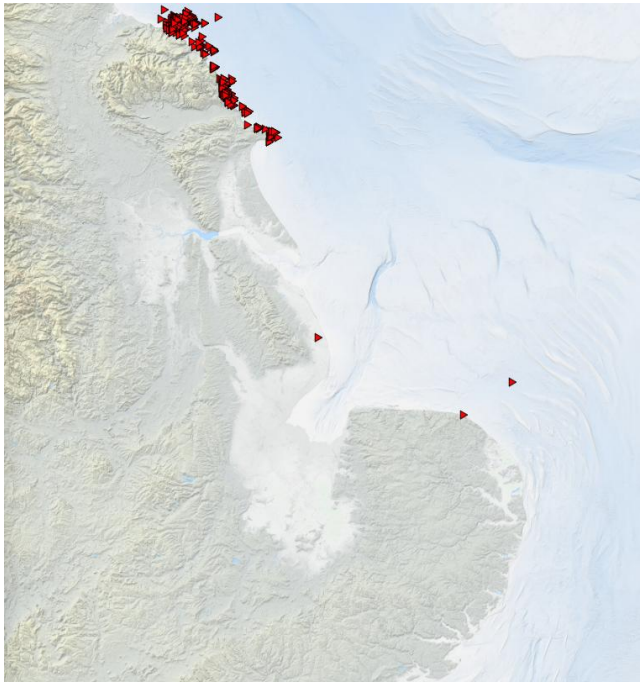


Last 3 years
2023-2025

MINKE WHALE SIGHTINGS: 2020-2025

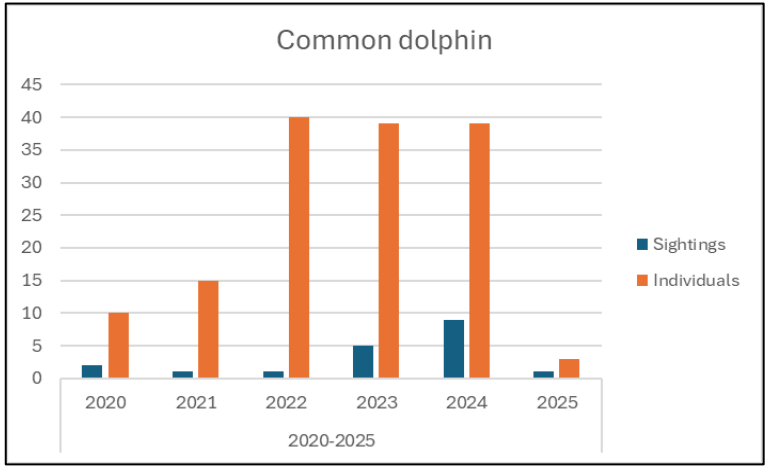


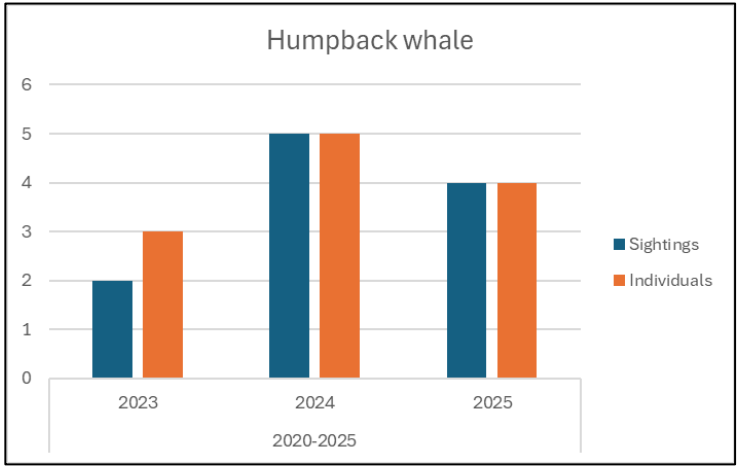




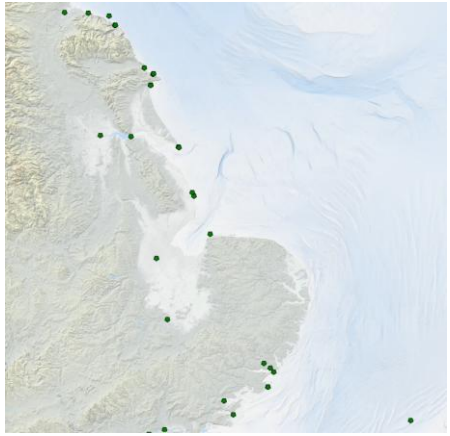
Last 3 years
2023-2025

COMMON DOLPHIN and HUMPBACK WHALE SIGHTINGS

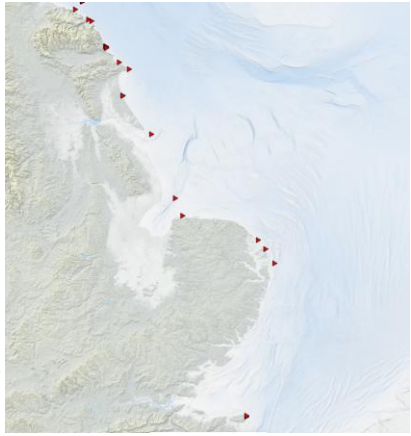




Last 3 years 2023-2025



Last 3 years 2023-2025




Whaling


Over fishing

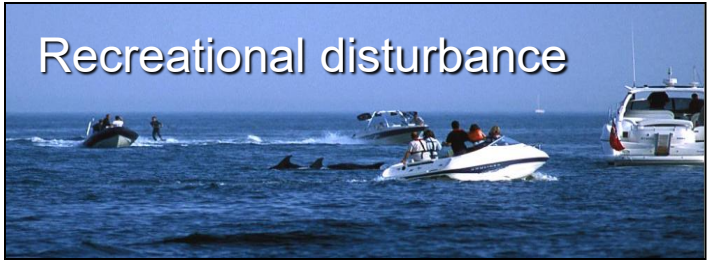

Entanglement in
fishing gear


Ship strikes


Pollution


Active sonar


Shipping


Recreational disturbance


Climate
Change


Wind farm construction

THREATS MATRIX: Greater North Sea

			Harbour porpoise	Common dolphin	White-beaked dolphin	Atlantic white-sided dolphin	Risso's dolphin	Minke whale	Long-finned pilot whale	Killer whale	Coastal bottlenose dolphin	Grey seal	Harbour seal
Pollution & other chemical changes	Contaminants		H	M	M	M	M	L	M	H	H	M	M
	Nutrient enrichment		L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	M	M
	Microplastics		Risk of contamination leading to ill health or death possible, but no evidence to date										
Physical loss	Habitat loss		L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	M	M
Physical damage	Habitat degradation		L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	M	M
	Litter (including plastics and discarded fishing gear)		L	L	L	L	L	M	L	L	L	M	M
Other physical pressures	Underwater noise	Military Sonar	M	L	L	L	L	M	M	M	L	L	L
		Seismic surveys	M	L	L	L	L	M	L	L	L	L	L
		Pile-driving	M	L	L	L	L	M	L	L	M	L	M
		Explosions	M	L	L	L	L	M	L	L	M	L	M
		Shipping	M	L	M	L	L	M	L	L	M	L	L
	Barrier to species movement (offshore windfarm, wave or tidal device arrays)		L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
	Death or injury by collision	with ships	L	L	L	L	L	M	L	L	M	L	L
		with tidal devices)	Risk of collision leading to death or injury is considered possible, but no evidence to date										
Biological pressures	Introduction of microbial pathogens		L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	M
	Removal of target and non-target species (prey depletion)		M	L	M	L	L	M	L	L	M	M	M
	Removal of non-target species (marine mammal bycatch)		H	L	L	L	L	M	L	L	L	M	M
	Disturbance (e.g. wildlife watching)		L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	M	L	M
	Deliberate killing + hunting		Does not take place within the region									L	L

Threat levels are classified as high, medium or low, using the following criteria:

High (red) = evidence or strong likelihood of negative population effects, mediated through effects on individual mortality, health and/or reproduction.

Medium (yellow) = evidence or strong likelihood of impact at individual level on survival, health and/or reproduction.

Low (green) = possible negative impact but evidence is weak and/or occurrences are infrequent.

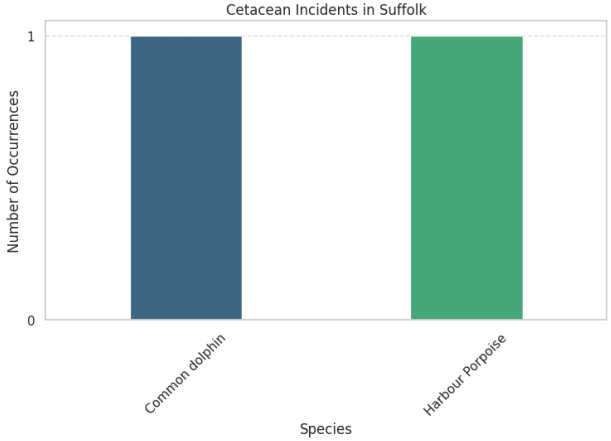
Source:
ICES WGMME (2025)

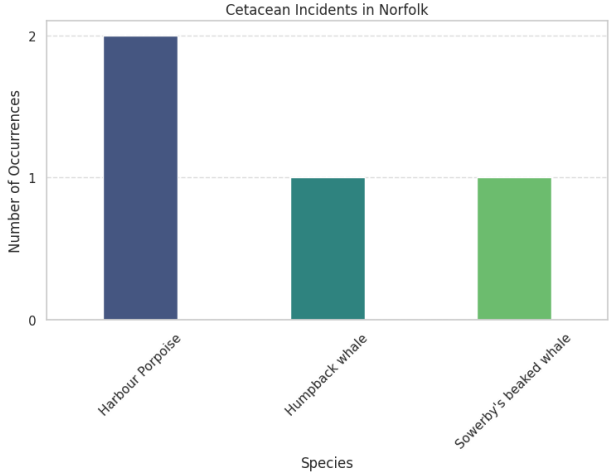
Cetacean Incidents 2025

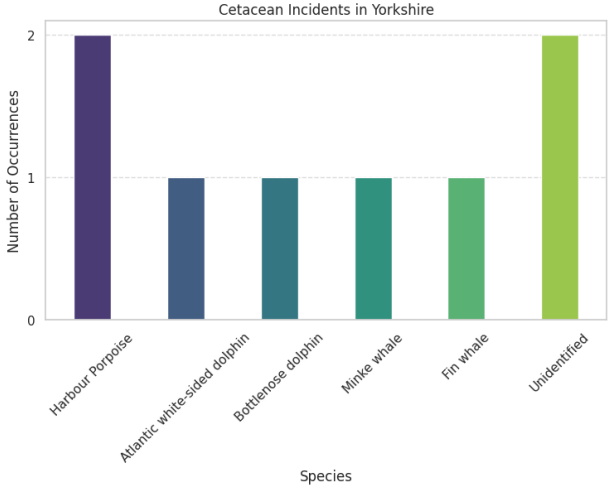
- BDMLR received a total of 16 cetacean related incidents in 2025 throughout the Middle-East of England.
- **Harbour porpoise** equated for **31.2%** of incidents, with **other known species** each equating to **6.2%**.

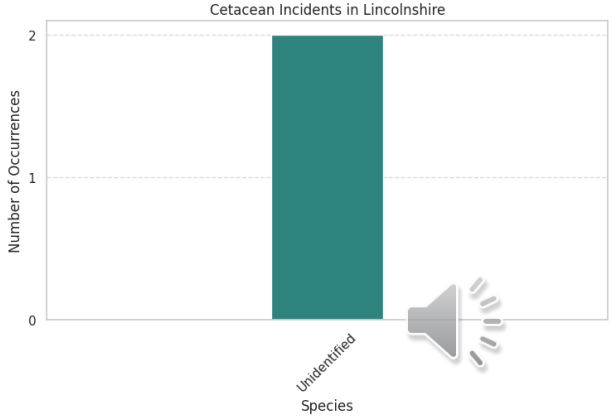
- Regional percentage:
  - Suffolk: 12.5%
  - Norfolk: 25.0%
  - Lincolnshire: 12.5%
  - Yorkshire: 50.0%

Some incidents consisted of more than one animal.







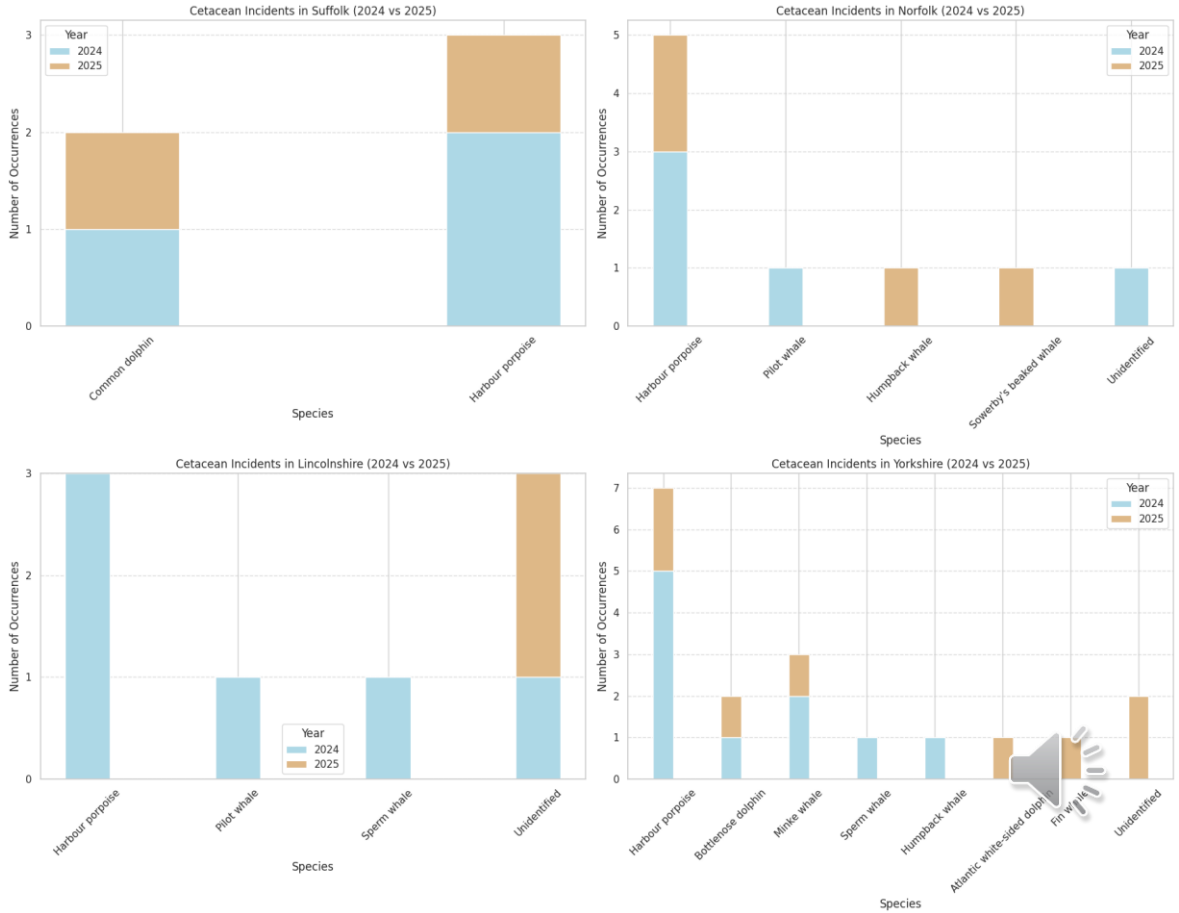


Cetacean Incidents 2024 vs 2025

Across the Middle-East of England we received -**33.3% in 2025 compared to 2024**.

What does this mean?

It does not mean there are less cetaceans, more that there were less incidents where there was a concern for the animal(s) welfare when reported.



Cetacean Incidents 2025

Real life rescue: Atlantic white-sided dolphin stranding, Easington, Yorkshire, 20.08.2025.

BDMLR received a call of a dolphin that was entrapped in the mud approx. 50m from the shoreline. With assistance from Humberside Fire and Rescue services and their specialist mud rescue equipment, Medics were able to reach the animal and transport it to safer ground for assessment.

The animal was a 2.6m long, male Atlantic white-sided dolphin with no severe injuries. Following the animal being stabilised and the veterinary assessment, the go ahead was given to attempt a refloat, The dolphin was transported to a more suitable site, away from the mud. Tragically, during the journey he suffered a seizure and passed away. The animal was then taken for investigation by Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (CSIP).

Huge thanks go to Humberside Fire & Rescue Services, HM Coastguard Humber and RNLI Withernsea for their immense support during this challenging incident.

Grant Ellis

Update on PhD project investigating the range expansion of east coast bottlenose dolphins

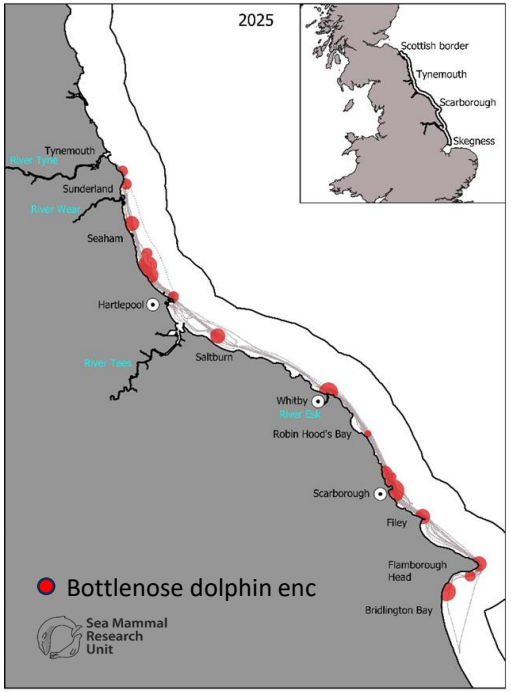


Photo ID:

- 19 boat surveys between Sunderland and Bridlington Bay (June - August 2025)
- 25 encounters with bottlenose dolphins
- 66 submissions to the *Citizen Fins* project
- ID matching currently in progress
- Natural England report on 2024 abundance to be published soon
- Aiming to establish a two-year baseline for abundance in the region

Sea Mammal Research Unit

University of St Andrews

citizenfins

UKRI Natural Environment Research Council

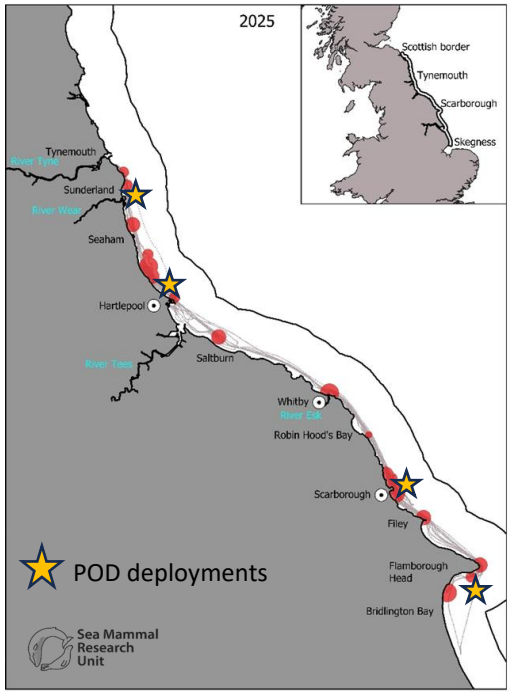
SUPER

North Sea Wildlife Trusts

JNCC

Grant Ellis

Update on PhD project investigating the range expansion of east coast bottlenose dolphins



Passive Acoustic Monitoring

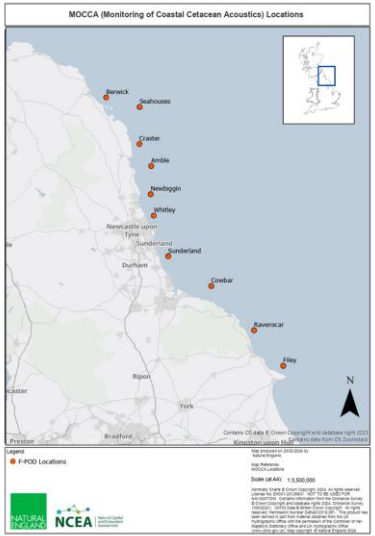
- Four hydrophone (PODs) deployments planned between Sunderland and Bridlington
- Aiming to monitor occurrence of dolphins and porpoise for 1-year starting Spring 2026

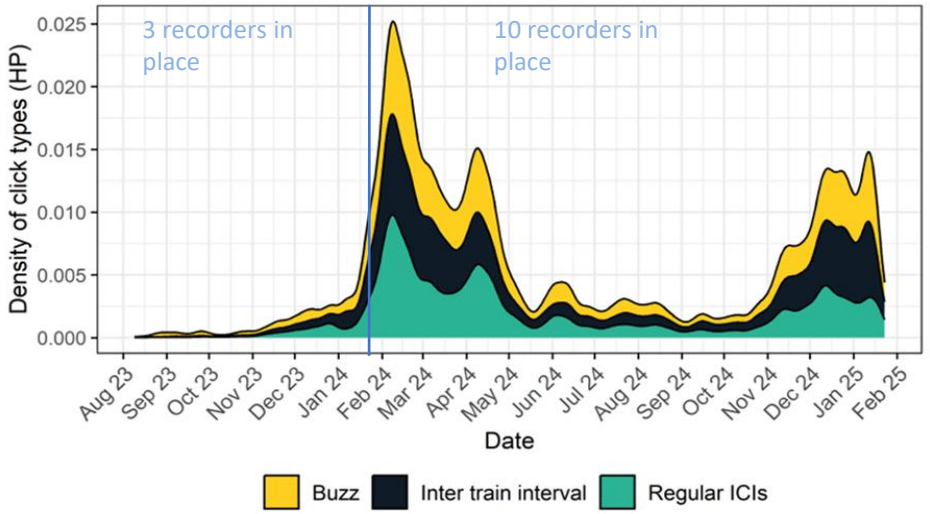
Natural England Updates: National Projects

Any questions: Fiona.mcnie@naturalengland.org.uk

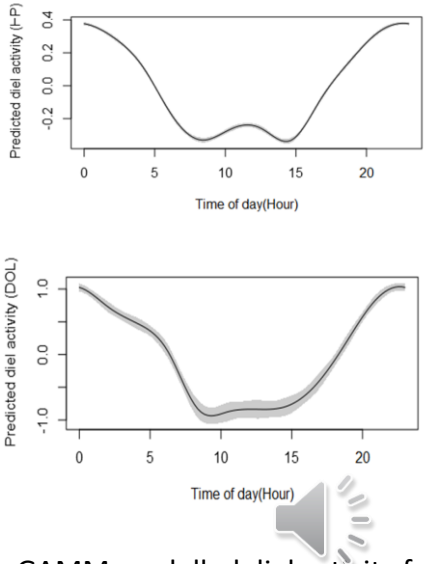
Reports and outputs soon to be released for 2 large projects:

1. POSEIDON: DSMs for 5 marine mammals and 19 sea birds across UK for each month between 2001 and 2024, followed by aggregation of layers to assess their sensitivity to risks from windfarms.
2. MOCCA: 2 years of acoustic FPOD monitoring in 10 sites up the NE coast totalling 3650 days of recording, showing regular presence of porpoises and dolphin species, seasonal and diel movements, and feeding buzzes occurring in most sites.





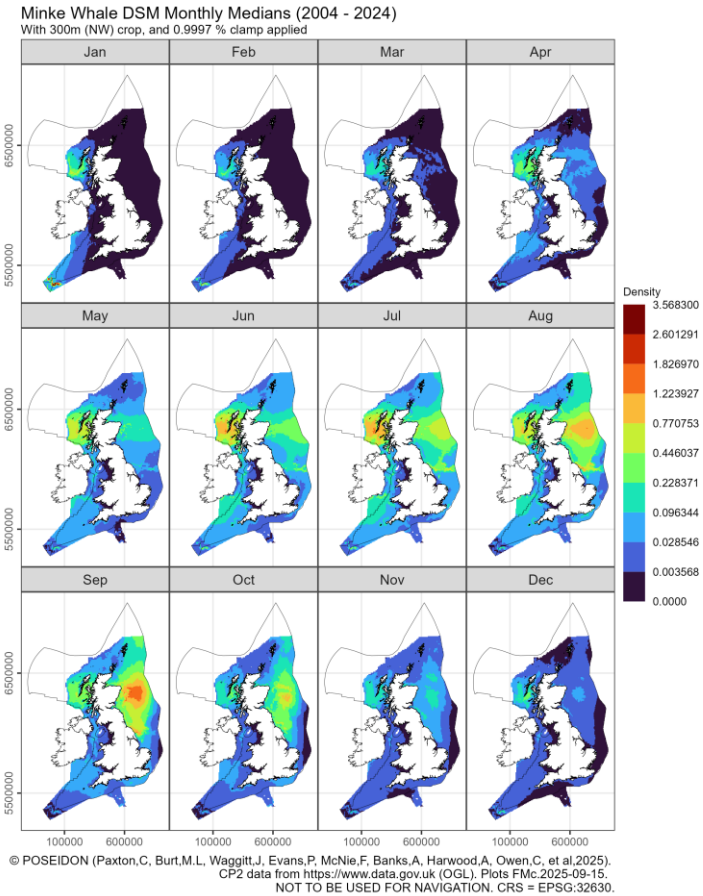
Stacked densities showing the proportion of Harbour porpoise click types per day, for all sites, classed by gaussian mixture models.



GAMM modelled diel activity for Harbour porpoise (top) and dolphin sp. (bottom), for all sites.

POSEIDON PROJECT

Minke Whale



Minke Whale

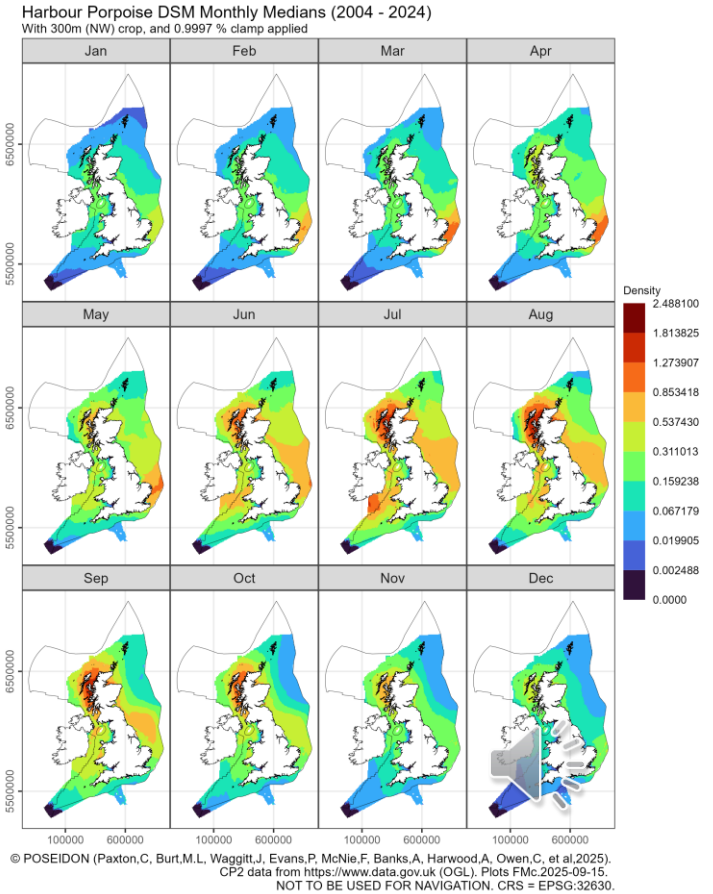
- Strongly seasonal but some overwinter
- In the North Sea, main densities in the central sector
- On East Coast, rare south of the Humber

Harbour Porpoise

- Most abundant cetacean species in the North Sea
- Highest densities in SE, Jan-May
- Highest densities in Central East Coast, June-Sep

Source: Paxton et al. 2026

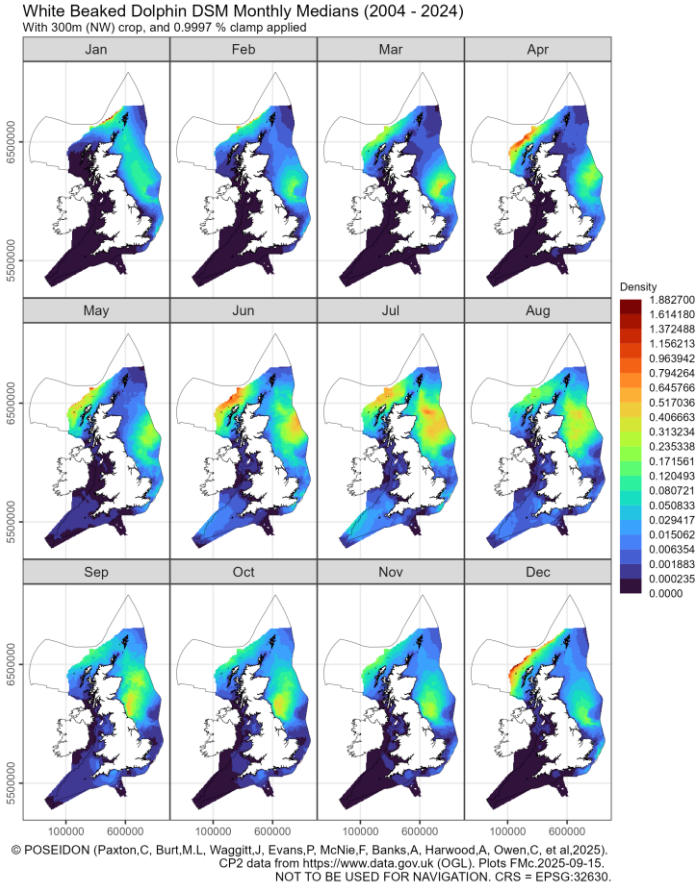
Harbour Porpoise



Collaboration between CREEM, Bangor University, SWF & Natural England

POSEIDON PROJECT

White-beaked Dolphin



White-beaked Dolphin

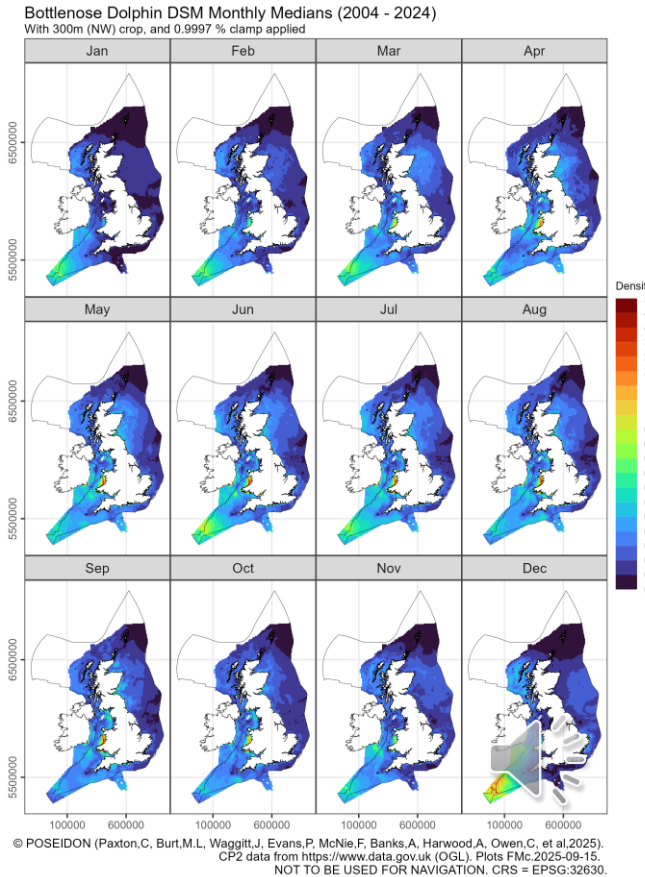
- Present year-round but with peaks in North Sea, Jun-Sep
- Highest densities in Central & NW North Sea
- On East Coast, rare south of the Humber

Bottlenose Dolphin

- Small N Sea coastal population mainly in East Scotland
- No strong seasonality
- Range extension south of Scottish Border in last 15-20 years

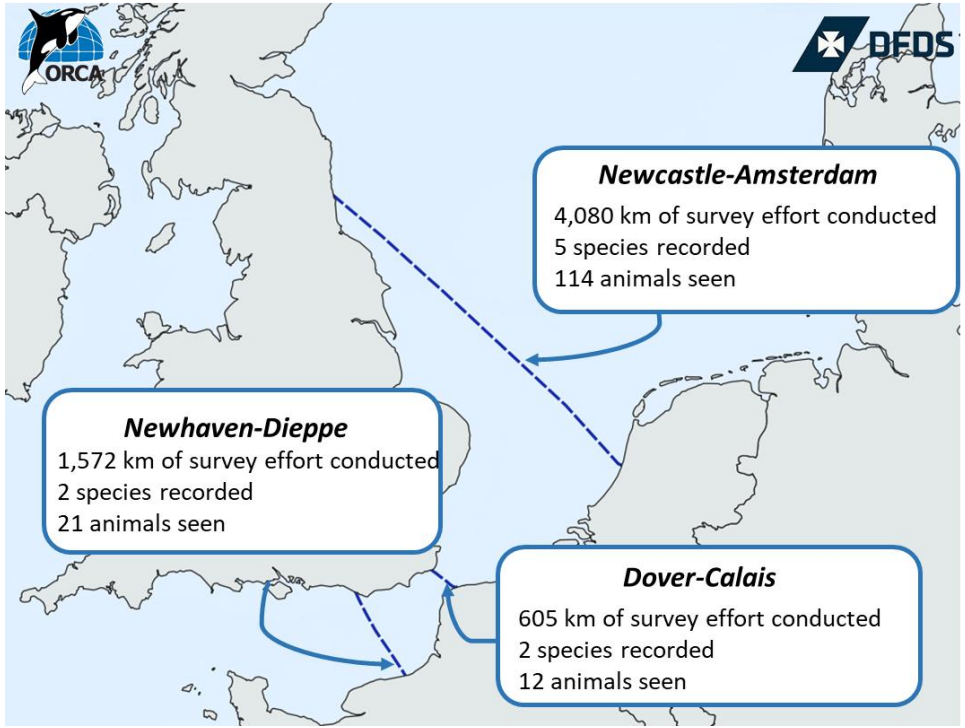
Source: Paxton et al. 2026

Bottlenose Dolphin



Collaboration between CREEM, Bangor University, SWF & Natural England

ORCA ferry surveys



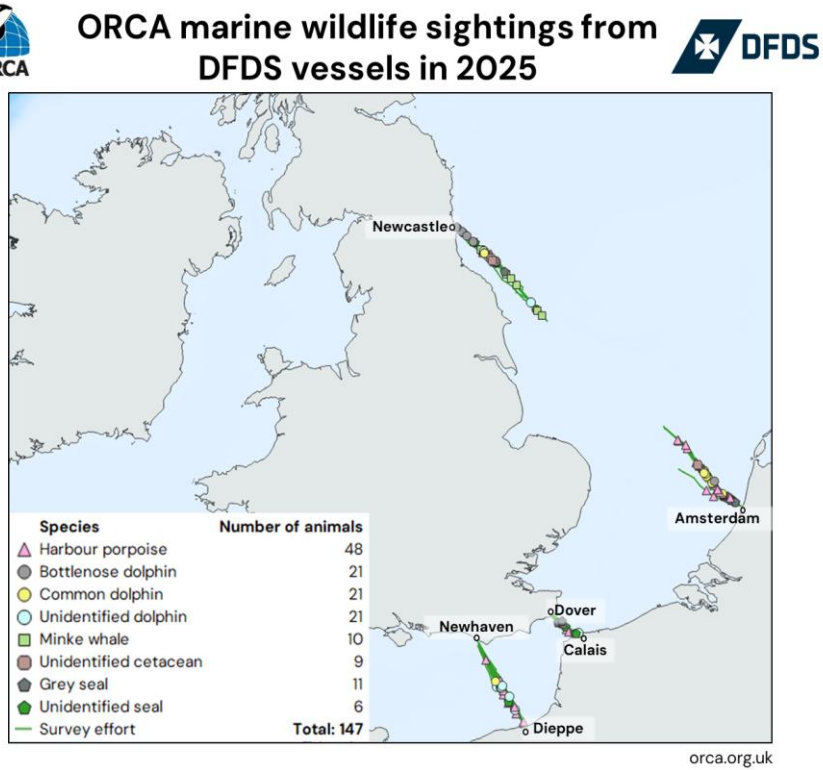
Newcastle – Amsterdam

ORCA has been conducting 2 surveys a month on this route between April - September every year since 2009.

Teams of 4 highly trained ORCA Marine Mammal Surveyors conduct line transect distance sampling surveys from the bridge.

Surveys are not conducted outside these months due to sailing schedule and daylight hours.

ORCA ferry surveys



Harbour porpoise are the most commonly sighted species.

Other species recorded: white-beaked dolphin, bottlenose dolphin, common dolphin, Risso's dolphin, pilot whale, minke whale, fin whale, humpback whale, sperm whale, grey seal, harbour seal.

In 2025 4,080km survey effort was conducted; 5 species recorded; 144 animals identified.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Shifting Species Trends**: In 2025, six of fifteen local species were sighted. Harbour porpoise numbers dropped to 2020 levels.

- **Bottlenose Range Expansion**: Bottlenose dolphins are now seen year-round with a notable winter peak in 2025, a confirming stable southward range expansion from East Scotland, but increased winter observations and alternative monitoring, such as acoustics, for winter is essential.

- **Other species:** No white-beaked dolphin reports in 2025 but minke whales were seen nearly year round. Humpback whale and common dolphin sightings continue a UK-wide upward trend, but common dolphin sightings decreased in 2025 in the area.

- **Human Pressures & Data Gaps:** While gillnetting and bycatch risks have declined locally, underwater noise and contaminants remain key pressures in this location.

- Year-round, effort-based watches are urgently needed south of Flamborough Head.

Organisations contributing data to our analyses

In Eastern England, we thank the very many volunteers for Sea Watch, and value our partnerships with the Wildlife Trusts and their members