

# The Green Blue

Making the environment second nature

## The Green Marine Wildlife Guide



A joint BMF and RYA Initiative



# wildlife, boating and the law

Central to our enjoyment of boating is our interaction with the natural environment, taking in the scenery or catching a glimpse of the varied and wonderful marine wildlife that our rich waters provide. However, some of our actions as boaters can have a detrimental effect on this wildlife, and it is important to recognise that we all have a responsibility to protect the UK's marine biodiversity now and for future generations.



A recent change in legislation, (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Amended), means that anyone can now be prosecuted for disturbing wildlife and ignorance of the law will not be deemed a suitable excuse. All types of craft have the potential to cause disturbance if handled without care, so it is vitally important that we know what to look out for and how to act when we encounter wildlife.

## Disturbance

It is important to remember that 'reckless' disturbance is a legal term, any kind of disturbance can have a negative effect on wildlife, but reckless disturbance can land you with a heavy fine or even a prison sentence.

All types of craft have the potential to cause disturbance if handled without care, so it is vitally important that we know what to look out for and how to act when we encounter wildlife.

Disturbance simply means affecting the way in which wildlife would normally behave and having a detrimental effect on their breeding, feeding, resting and numbers; for example, a passing boat causing a flock of resting seabirds to take flight; engine noise interfering with the acoustic communications of whales and dolphins affecting the way they hunt for prey. Speeding vessels causing bank erosion through excessive wash can also lead to disturbance of habitats. In effect, disturbance can be caused by noise, wash or by just being too close.

Reckless disturbance is harder to define but it is generally assumed to be when a person knows (or should know), that they may cause disturbance but they continue with their activity anyway. This deliberate disturbance can occur anywhere and there are no geographical boundaries, i.e. you can be prosecuted whether the wildlife is within a protected area such as a SAC, a SSSI, a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), or a Nature Reserve or not.

## What to do if you see a marine animal?

ALL sightings are important, even the LACK of a sighting is important to researchers. Please report all sightings as soon as you can online at [www.wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org) with the following information:

- what you saw (photos, video or a description are invaluable)
- where you saw it/them
- when you saw it/them (include time)

- who you are (name/address/email/phone)
- how certain you are of the identification
- how many you saw
- what it/they were doing

Plus, any other details e.g. weather, animal's condition including marks or scars etc.

If you would like to learn more, become a regular dolphin surveyor or have marine mammal records to give, please contact The Wildlife Trusts through [www.wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)

## Data Protection Act

All the information you provide will be logged and may be passed on to third parties (e.g. Seawatch Foundation, Marine Conservation Society) for conservation and management purposes, or displayed on websites for educational purposes. Personal details (apart from names) will NOT be passed on without prior permission being given by the individual. Please contact us if you have any objections to this.

## Code of conduct

Whales, dolphins, porpoises and sharks are highly intelligent animals and vessels can unintentionally disturb, hit and injure them. If they approach your boat or bow-ride, enjoy the spectacle but maintain or reduce to a slow speed and keep a constant course until they leave. Do not be tempted to follow them.

The golden rule when watching cetaceans, or any other wildlife, is to be aware of any changes in their behaviour which may signify disturbance and always give them the space and time to decide what happens.

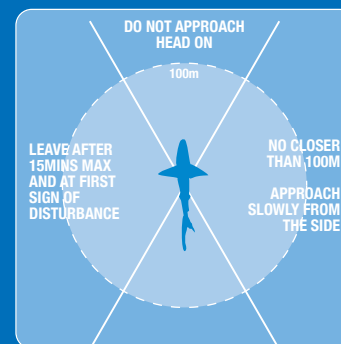
## Top tips for spotting marine wildlife

- Calm, still days with high cloud are best.
- Circling and diving birds indicate shoals of fish, these attract dolphins and porpoises.
- Cliff tops, headlands and boats provide the best views.
- Keep quiet! Being calm, still and quiet will allow you to view the most natural behaviour.
- Be especially aware that noise transmitted through the hull and over water can travel long distances.
- Always keep a good distance away and use binoculars to get a better view.

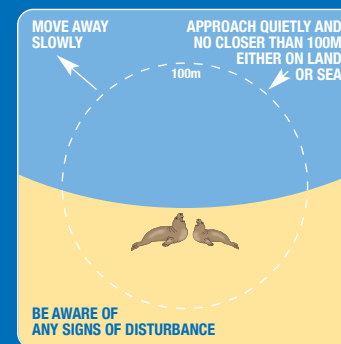


## Please follow these guidelines:

### At sea



### On shore

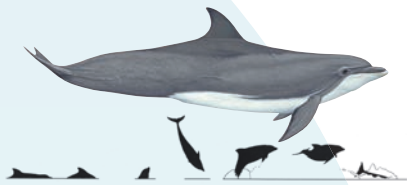


- **Keep your distance.** Never go closer than 100m (200m if another boat is present)
  - **Never drive head on to, or move between, scatter or separate animals.** If unsure of their movements simply stop your vessel.
  - **Never chase or harass wildlife**
  - **Always allow them a clear escape route**
  - **Move away slowly** if they show signs of disturbance such as longer dives or erratic behaviour
  - **Spend no longer than 15 minutes near the animals**
  - **Avoid mothers with youngsters**
  - **Maintain a steady direction** and slow 'no wake' speed
  - **Don't call other vessels to the area**
  - **Never swim with cetaceans** for your safety and theirs.
- Cetaceans and basking sharks are protected by law making it illegal to disturb or harass them. Report all incidents to the Police (08452 777444).
- For more information about Wildlife Safe (WiSe scheme) operation around animals, or to find an accredited operator to join on a watching trip go to [www.wisescheme.org](http://www.wisescheme.org)
- For more information about basking shark hotspots in Scotland download the leaflet at [www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)

# Marine megafauna of the UK

## basking shark, dolphins and whales

Please report sightings as soon as you can online at [www.wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)  
To find out more about how to behave if you see wildlife while afloat go to [www.thegreenblue.org.uk](http://www.thegreenblue.org.uk)



**Bottlenose dolphin** *Tursiops truncatus*  
• 2.2 - 4m  
• Large, stocky, plain grey colouring



**Striped dolphin** *Stenella coeruleoalba*  
• 1.8 - 2.5m  
• Slender, torpedo shape with pale 'V' shoulder blaze

### Bottlenose dolphin

- Tursiops truncatus*
- Large, stocky (adult 2.2 - 4m)
  - Tall, curved dorsal fin
  - Short, stubby beak
  - Plain grey colouration, with possible muted colour pattern
  - Often jumps or breaches and bow rides
  - Usually in small groups close to shore but can be seen in larger groups offshore

### White-beaked dolphin

- Lagenorhynchus albirostris*
- Medium-sized, robust body (adult 2.5 - 2.8m)
  - Tall, dark dorsal fin
  - Short, stubby beak, often white but not always
  - Obvious pale grey 'saddle' behind dorsal fin, otherwise body is variable dark grey with greyish white blazes
  - Thick tail stock
  - Powerful swimmer. Active and acrobatic
  - Usually travels in groups of 5 to 50
  - Can be confused with: Atlantic white-sided dolphin

### Striped dolphin

- Stenella coeruleoalba*
- Small, slender, torpedo-shaped (adult 1.8 - 2.5m)
  - Curved, dorsal fin
  - Long, well-defined beak, prominent forehead
  - White/light grey V-shape 'shoulder blaze', swept back and up toward dorsal fin
  - Very active and agile, often jumping and bowriding
  - Sometimes travels in large groups of up to 1,000
  - Rare visitor from southern waters
  - Can be confused with: common dolphin



**White-beaked dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*  
• 2.5 - 2.8m  
• Tall dorsal fin with pale 'saddle' behind, indistinct beak



**Risso's dolphin** *Grampus griseus*  
• 2.6 - 3.8m  
• Tall dorsal fin, scarred body, no beak



**Harbour porpoise** *Phocoena phocoena*  
• 1.3 - 1.9m  
• Small, no beak, triangular dorsal fin

### Risso's dolphin

- Grampus griseus*
- Large, robust (adult 2.6 - 3.8m)
  - Tall (sometimes very tall) curved dorsal fin
  - Rounded head, no beak
  - Dark grey back and flanks, often heavily scarred, especially the head. Older animals look almost white
  - Surfaces slowly but can be active (spy-hopping, breaching and head/tail slapping)
  - Usually seen in groups of up to 15
  - Can be confused with: bottlenose dolphin

### Common dolphin

- Delphinus delphis*
- Small, slender, torpedo-shaped (adult 1.6 - 2.6m)
  - Curved, dark dorsal fin, often has pale grey centre
  - Long, narrow beak
  - Clotted cream or yellow patch on sides near head forms part of distinct hourglass pattern, creating dark V-shape under dorsal fin
  - Very active and agile, often jumping/somersaulting
  - Sometimes travels in large groups of 50-1,000
  - Can be confused with: striped dolphin and Atlantic white-sided dolphin



**Common dolphin** *Delphinus delphis*  
• 1.6 - 2.6m  
• Slender, torpedo shape & 'hourglass' pattern



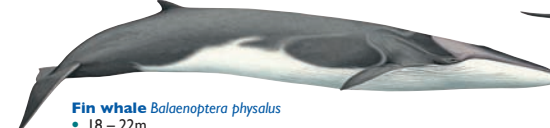
**Atlantic white-sided dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus acutus*  
• 1.9 - 2.8m  
• Yellow patch near tail, indistinct beak

### Harbour porpoise

- Phocoena phocoena*
- Small size (adult 1.3 - 1.9m) but chunky
  - Small, blunt and triangular dorsal fin
  - Blunt head, no beak
  - Dark grey/black back, paler patch on flanks
  - Quietly rolls through water, rarely jumps
  - Often alone or in small groups
  - Most common cetacean in our inshore waters. Very shy
  - Only porpoise found in northern hemisphere, not a dolphin

### Atlantic white-sided dolphin

- Lagenorhynchus acutus*
- Medium-sized dolphin, robust body (adult 1.9 - 2.8m)
  - Tall, curved dorsal fin
  - Short, stubby beak, black on top, pale grey/white lower jaw
  - Body has colourful, bold markings. Entire dorsal surface is dark grey or black. Long white then yellow/ochre blaze on flank
  - Thick tail stock
  - Active and acrobatic
  - Can travel in groups of up to 1,000 but generally in smaller groups of up to 30 closer inshore
  - Can be confused with: common and white-beaked dolphins



**Fin whale** *Balaenoptera physalus*  
• 18 - 22m  
• Exceptionally large size, pointed head, small dorsal fin far along the back (behind centre)



**Orca (killer whale)** *Orcinus orca*  
• 3.8 - 9.8m  
• Large size, tall dorsal fin, distinct black & white colouring



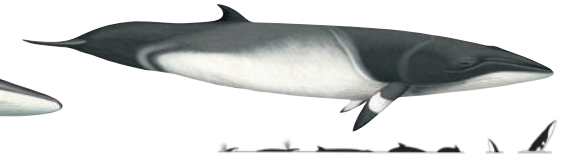
**Humpback whale** *Megaptera novaengliae*  
• 11.5 - 15m  
• Low stubby fin with hump, large knobby flippers and large tail flukes

### Fin whale

- Balaenoptera physalus*
- Second largest animal on earth (adult 18 - 22m)
  - Small, falcate dorsal fin far behind centre on the back
  - Slender, pointed head with single central ridge
  - Asymmetrical colouring on lower jaw (grey on the left, white on the right)
  - Fast swimmer. Fin visible soon after blow
  - More commonly seen in small groups

### Minke whale

- Balaenoptera acuturostrata*
- Smallest baleen whale in Atlantic (adult 6.9 - 10.5m)
  - Sickle-shaped dorsal fin two thirds along the back
  - Slender, pointed head with single central ridge
  - Distinct white band on flippers, dark grey/black head and body with grey areas on flanks
  - Fast swimmer. Blowhole and dorsal fin visible at same time when surfacing
  - Usually solitary
  - Can be confused with: other baleen whales (bigger, no white patch on flippers)



**Minke whale** *Balaenoptera acuturostrata*  
• 6.9 - 10.5m  
• Pointed head, white band on flippers, dorsal fin two thirds along the back



**Long-finned pilot whale** *Globicephala melas*  
• 3.8 - 6.3m  
• All black body, bulbous head & low, wide dorsal fin



**Basking shark** *Cetorhinus maximus*  
• Up to 11m long  
• Large dorsal fin, snout and mouth. Snout, dorsal and tail fin often seen at same time on surface

### Orca (killer whale)

- Orcinus orca*
- Largest member of the dolphin family, extremely robust body (adult 3.8 - 9.8m)
  - Very tall, erect dorsal fin, more prominent in adult male (1-1.8m tall). Female and juvenile's dorsal fin is smaller and curved
  - Conical head with indistinct beak
  - Distinctive black and white body, oval white patch above and behind eye, grey saddle behind dorsal fin
  - Large rounded, paddle-shaped flippers
  - Fastest dolphin (30knots). Highly active, breaching, tail-slapping, spy-hopping and logging
  - Usually seen in tight family groups of 2-30

### Long-finned pilot whale

- Globicephala melas*
- All-black, large (adult 3.8 - 6.3m)
  - Low, rounded, swept-back and wide-based dorsal fin
  - Bulbous, rounded forehead (melon), no obvious beak
  - Long, thin flippers
  - Light grey streaks over eyebrow and saddle behind dorsal fin
  - Slow swimming. Groups can be synchronised. Often floats on surface (logging) and spy-hops
  - Seen in family groups of 5-20, can be spread out

### Humpback whale

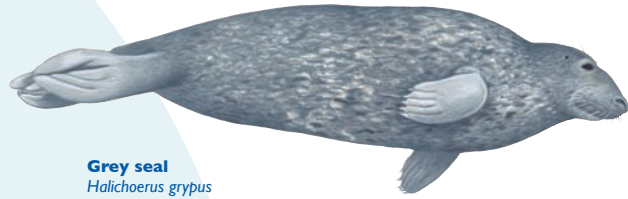
- Megaptera novaengliae*
- Large rounded body (adult 11.5 - 15m)
  - Black or dark grey on upper side
  - Low, stubby fin with hump, far behind centre
  - Can easily be distinguished from large tail fluke and long knobby flippers
  - One of the most energetic of large whales
  - Large groups can be observed, but most likely to be found solitary in the UK

### Basking shark

- Cetorhinus maximus*
- Second largest fish in world (adult to 11m)
  - Large, angular dorsal fin
  - Pointed snout over cavernous mouth (white inside)
  - Swims slowly at surface, feeding
  - Often see snout, dorsal and tail fin together on surface
  - Seen most often in summer

Other cetacean species recorded in our waters, as either sightings or dead strandings, include: Sowerby's beaked whale, northern bottlenose whale, Cuvier's beaked whale, and pygmy sperm whale.

# seals, summer visitors and jellyfish



**Grey seal**

*Halichoerus grypus*

- 2.1 - 3.3m
- Flat profile, male even has hooked nose, nostrils parallel, blotchy coat



**Sunfish**

*Mola mola*

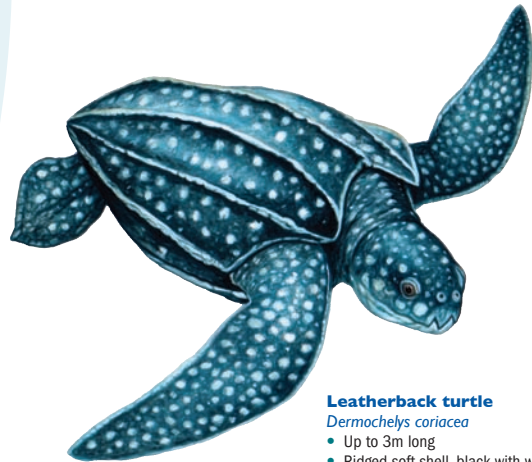
- Up to 3.3m in length
- Represent a fish head with a tail, with a laterally flattened body



**Common or harbour seal**

*Phoca vitulina*

- 1.2 - 1.9m
- 'Dog-like' face, V-shaped nostrils (joined at base) and spotty coat



**Leatherback turtle**

*Dermochelys coriacea*

- Up to 3m long
- Ridged soft shell, black with white spots

**Sunfish**

*Mola mola*

- Large unusual looking fish (adult 3.3m)
- Fish head with a tail
- The side fins are small and fan-shaped. However, the top and bottom fin are lengthened, often making the fish as tall as it is long
- Range from brown to silvery-gray or white, with a variety of mottled skin patterns

**Leatherback turtle**

*Dermochelys coriacea*

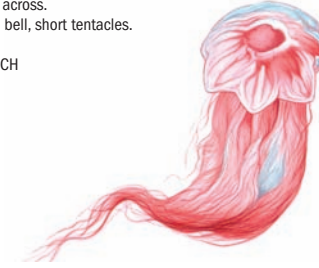
- Largest turtle in world (adult to 3m)
- Distinctive, soft shell with longitudinal ridges
- Black with white spots
- When at surface only back and sometimes head visible



**Moon jellyfish**

*Aurelia aurita*

- Up to 40cm across.
- Four rings in bell, short tentacles.
- Mild sting.
- DO NOT TOUCH



**Lion's mane jellyfish**

*Cyanea capillata*

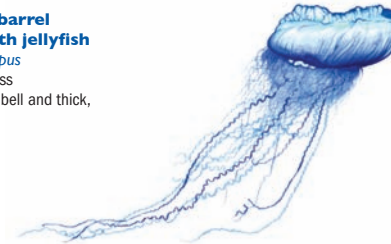
- Up to 2.5 m across; trailing tentacles can reach in excess of 30m.
- Bell divided into 8 lobes; younger individuals usually orange or tan in colour.
- Strong sting.
- DO NOT TOUCH.



**Dustbin lid, barrel or root mouth jellyfish**

*Rhizostoma octopus*

- Up to 1m across
- Solid, rubbery bell and thick, frilled arms



**Portuguese man-of-war**

*Physalia physalis*

- Float is up to 30cm long.
- Gas-filled float, very long trailing tentacles
- Strong sting
- DO NOT TOUCH



**Mauve stinger**

*Pelagia noctiluca*

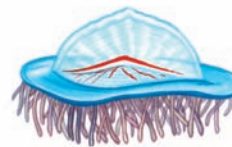
- Up to 10cm across
- Deep bell with small 'warts', glows at night
- Strong sting
- DO NOT TOUCH



**Blue jellyfish**

*Cyanea lamarckii*

- Up to 30cm across
- Blue bell with radial lines
- Mild sting
- DO NOT TOUCH



**By-the-wind-sailor**

*Velella velella*

- Up to 10cm across
- Upright 'sail', blue-purple colour, occurs in vast swarms



**Compass jellyfish**

*Chrysaora hysoscella*

- Up to 30cm across
- V-shaped markings on bell look like compass points.
- Stings
- DO NOT TOUCH

## The Green Blue

The Green Blue is the joint environment programme created by the British Marine Federation and Royal Yachting Association for anyone who enjoys getting out on the water or whose livelihood depends on it. We help boat users, boating businesses, sailing clubs and training centres to reduce their impact on the natural environment.

By working towards an environmentally self regulating boating community we can save money, avoid red tape and safeguard the waters and habitats we enjoy and rely upon for future generations.

The Green Blue promotes sustainable management and development of coastal and inland waterways by:

- Providing information and raising awareness through publications, events and site visits.
- Conducting research on key topics.
- Encouraging new environmentally friendly products and services relevant to boaters.

For more information visit our website [www.thegreenblue.org.uk](http://www.thegreenblue.org.uk)

## The Green Blue

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[www.thegreenblue.org.uk](http://www.thegreenblue.org.uk)

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## The Wildlife Trusts

There are 47 Wildlife Trusts across the whole of the UK, the Isle of Man and Alderney. Together, we are the UK's largest voluntary organisation dedicated to protecting wildlife and wild places whether they be in the country, in cities or at sea. We are supported by more than 800,000 members, with more than 150,000 belonging to our junior branch, Wildlife Watch.

Our expert staff are helped by a dedicated workforce of more than 35,000 volunteers.

For more information or to join your local Wildlife Trust, go to [www.wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)



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All of nature for all of Scotland



Mixed Sources

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