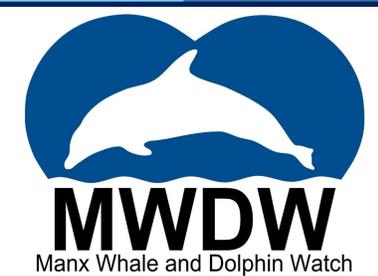




The development of a network of local land-based surveyors on the Isle of Man

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Introduction

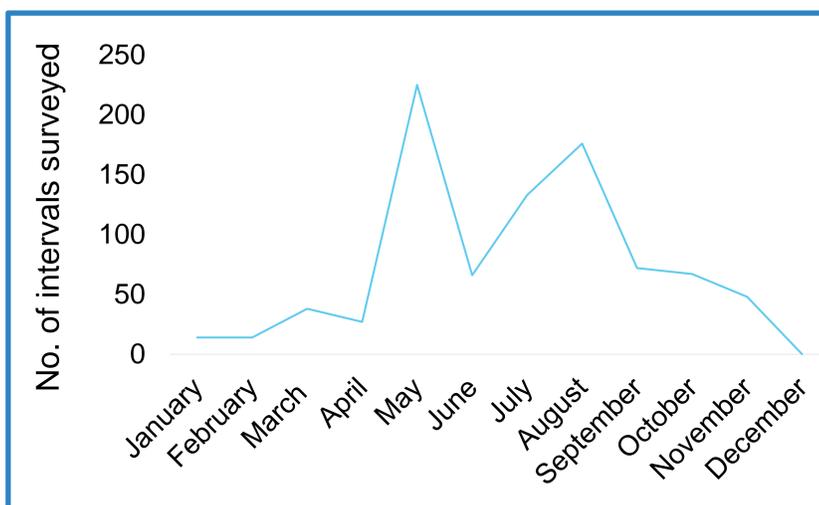
In 2016, Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch (MWDW) embarked on a 2 year project aimed at training members of the public to conduct effort-based surveys of cetaceans and basking sharks from specific sites along the Manx coastline. It is a citizen science project allowing the local community to become actively involved in data-collection and work together with MWDW to ensure the ongoing conservation of cetaceans in Manx waters. We would like to thank the Manx Lottery Trust for financially supporting the project.

Methodology

- 5 training workshops took place with a focus on identification of local species and methods used to conduct a land-based survey
- Each attendee received a pack containing ID chart, forms, compass and protocol
- 10 dedicated survey sites were identified, 5 of which have been used by MWDW to collect data since 2007
- Contact was maintained via a closed Facebook group and e-mail list.
- Surveyors were encouraged to join MWDW on live surveys until fully confident in species ID and data collection
- Data from surveys was sent back to MWDW via scanned or photographed forms e-mailed in or posted

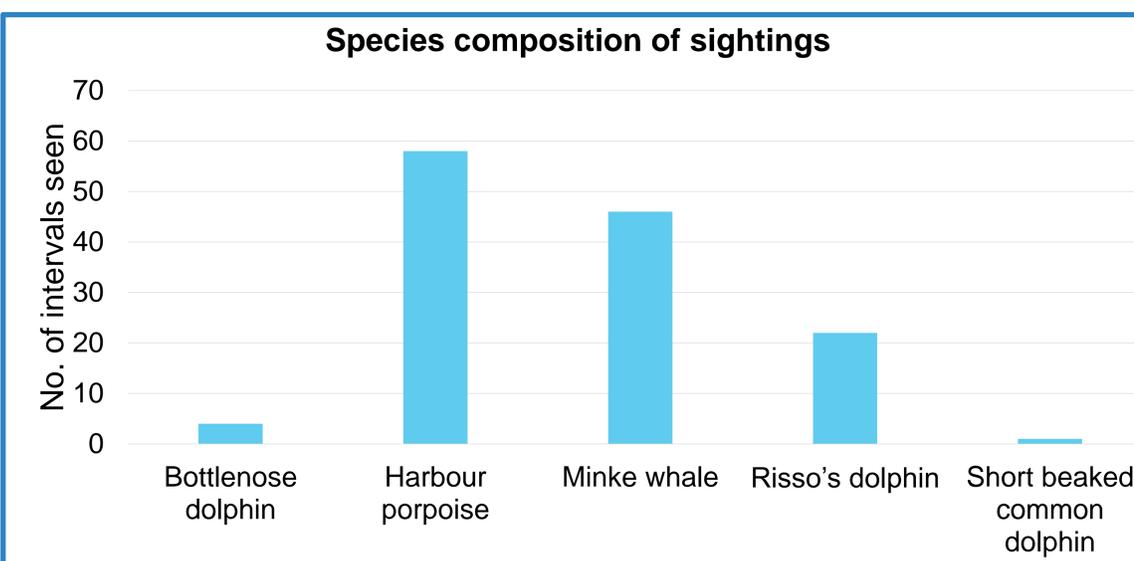
Results

A total of **55** people were trained in 2016, and a further **21** in 2017. Out of these only 24 actively carried out surveys. All data from the project was collected between 14/05/2016 and 31/12/2017. All effort and sightings data is collected in 15 minute intervals



Graph 1: 880 intervals of effort were surveyed, totalling **237:45 hours**. In the same period of time, the core MWDW team (3 staff, 5 interns) collected data in **704** intervals, totalling **176 hours**

Species composition of sightings



Graph 2: The total number of cetacean positive intervals (the number of intervals in which at least 1 cetacean or group of cetaceans were seen) was **115 (13.1%)**. Basking sharks were also recorded in 0.4% of effort intervals. Over the same time period, the core MWDW team had **225** cetacean positive intervals equating to **32.0%**

Conclusion

- Although members of the network are carrying out plenty of survey hours, their sightings rate is considerably less than the small, but highly experienced MWDW team. Further work needs to be done to heighten observation skills
- Engagement between MWDW and the local community has dramatically increased. A small, but dedicated network of enthusiasts is now established with strong species ID skills
- Public awareness is increasing as members of the network engage with the public whilst conducting surveys
- Those who were trained but did not actively conduct surveys have been reporting opportunistically to the website
- Some of our most experienced members of the network had a rare sighting opportunistically of 2 Fin whales off the east coast in autumn 2016. Using species ID skills developed over a summer of surveying, they were able to describe their sighting accurately and MWDW appeared on the scene to confirm the identification

