

2021

Annual Report



Manx Whale and
Dolphin Watch

CETACEANS IN MANX WATERS IN 2021

Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch

Bryony Manley

“To conserve and protect whales, dolphins, and porpoises (cetaceans) in Manx waters through research and education.”

MWDW TEAM

The Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch team in 2021 was as follows:

Trustees and Core Team

Paul Cain – Chairman/Treasurer

Jen Adams – Secretary and Education and Outreach Manager

Bryony Manley – Trustee and Researcher

Tom Felce – Research and Science Support

Other Volunteers

Chris Kelly – IT and website Support

Richard Coase – Boat Maintenance and Skipper

Roy Maddrell – Boat Maintenance Support

Yasmika – Visitor Centre and Events Volunteer

Dates of note – Isle of Man COVID-19 timeline:

- 7th January 2021 – Lockdown 2 restrictions start
- 1st February 2021 – Lockdown 2 restrictions end
- 3rd March 2021 – Lockdown 3 restrictions start
- 19th April 2021 – Lockdown 3 restrictions end

YEAR IN SUMMARY

Due to another year of COVID restrictions and lockdowns MWDW was unable to take on Dolphineers again thus reducing the number of dedicated surveyors available. Public education and outreach events were still able to be conducted, with continued strong engagement from the public in events and publicly reported sightings. Despite restrictions a good amount of both land and boat-based surveys were conducted. There was an increase in survey km and sightings from boat-based surveys compared to 2020, but a slight decrease in land-based hours and sightings. Overall, there were similar sighting numbers of bottlenose dolphins, harbour porpoise, and minke whales, with an increase in both common dolphin and Risso's dolphin sightings from 2020. It was a very good year for common dolphin sightings in Manx waters, and around the British Isles in general. Through speaking to other organisations there were regular sightings of large pods, many with young calves, which was reflected here. One encounter in July provided sightings of both mating and calf suckling behaviour, neither of which have been recorded in Manx waters previously. Resident mother and calf bottlenose dolphin pair Moonlight and Starlight are still present in Manx waters and are regularly reported by the public accounting for a large number of the bottlenose dolphin sightings around the island.

BOAT BASED SURVEYS

Table 1: Boat-based survey effort and cetacean sightings during 2021

* One sighting of Moonlight and Starlight

Number of surveys	6
Dedicated	5
Opportunistic	1
Kilometers surveyed	346
Sea states 0 and 1	236
Sea states 2 and above	110
Number of sightings (individuals)	47 (324)
Bottlenose dolphin	1*(2)
Common dolphin	6 (233)
Harbour porpoise	36 (75)
Minke whale	1 (1)
Risso's dolphin	3 (13)

Temporal distribution of boat surveys in 2021

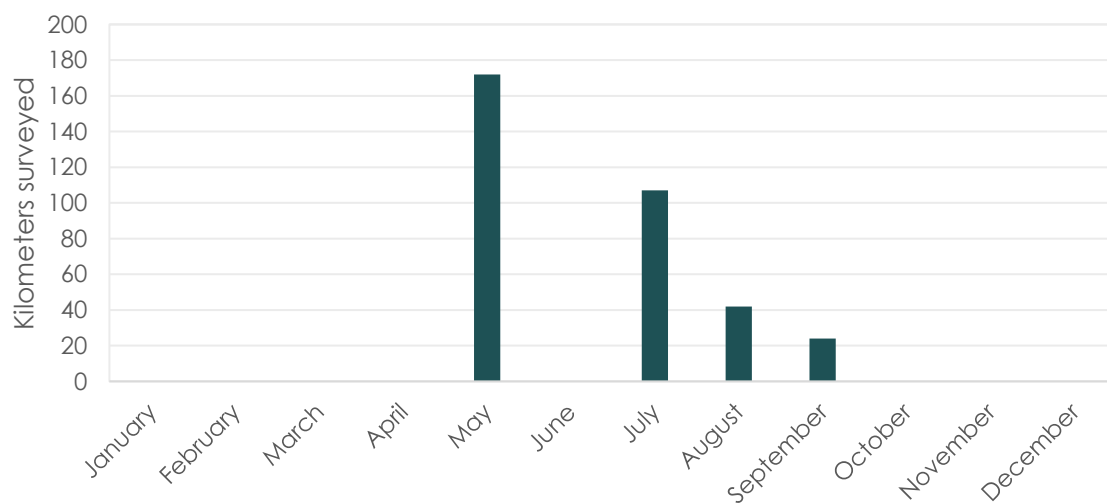


Figure 1: Temporal distribution of the kilometers of boat-based surveying during 2021

LAND-BASED SURVEYS

Table 2: Land-based survey effort and cetacean sighting rate during 2021

Location	Hours of effort	No. of intervals	% cetacean +ve
Calf East	4.25	17	11.8
Calf West	4.75	19	47.4
Marine Drive	13.5	54	24.1
Niarbyl	29.25	117	41.0
Point of Ayre	4.75	19	5.3
Port St Mary	6.25	25	72.0
TOTAL	62.75	251	

Temporal distribution of effort in 2021

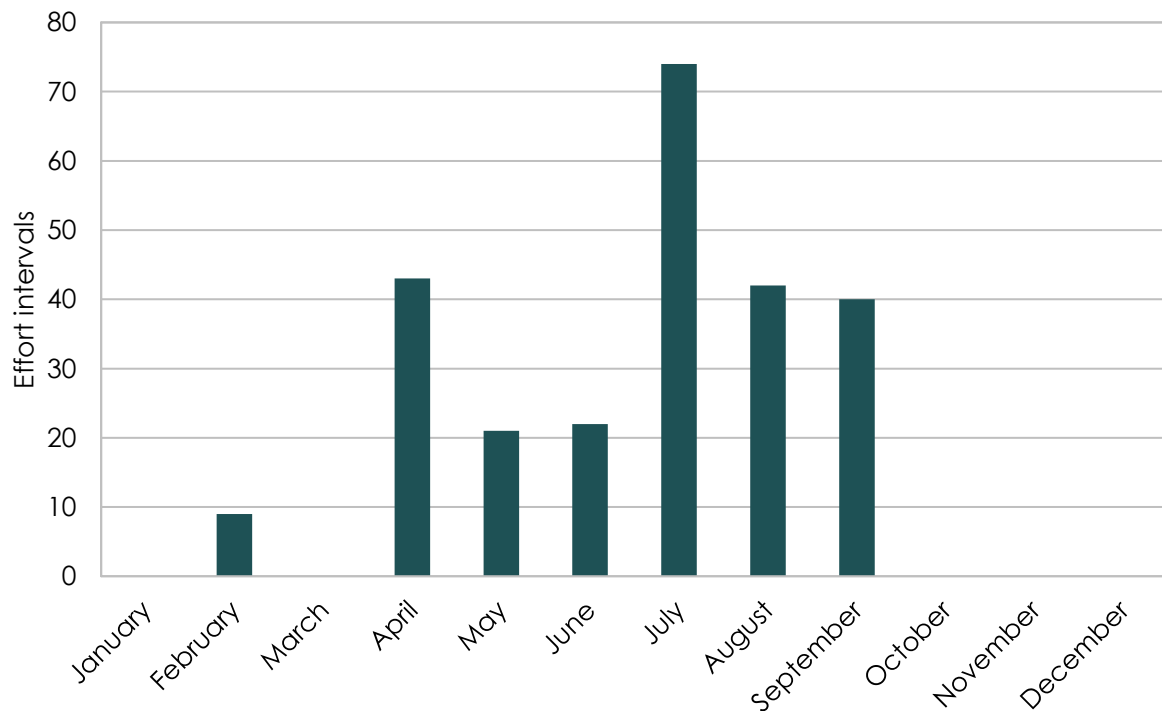


Figure 2: Temporal distribution of land-based effort intervals during 2021

Table 3: Number of cetacean positive intervals, different sightings, and number of different individuals of each species recorded during land-based surveys in 2021

Species	No. of +ve intervals	No. of different sightings	No. of individuals seen
Bottlenose dolphin	6	2	4
Common dolphin	2	1	3
Harbour porpoise	48	27	66
Minke whale	8	4	4
Risso's dolphin	76	32	91
Unidentified small cetacean	2	2	16
TOTAL	91	68	184

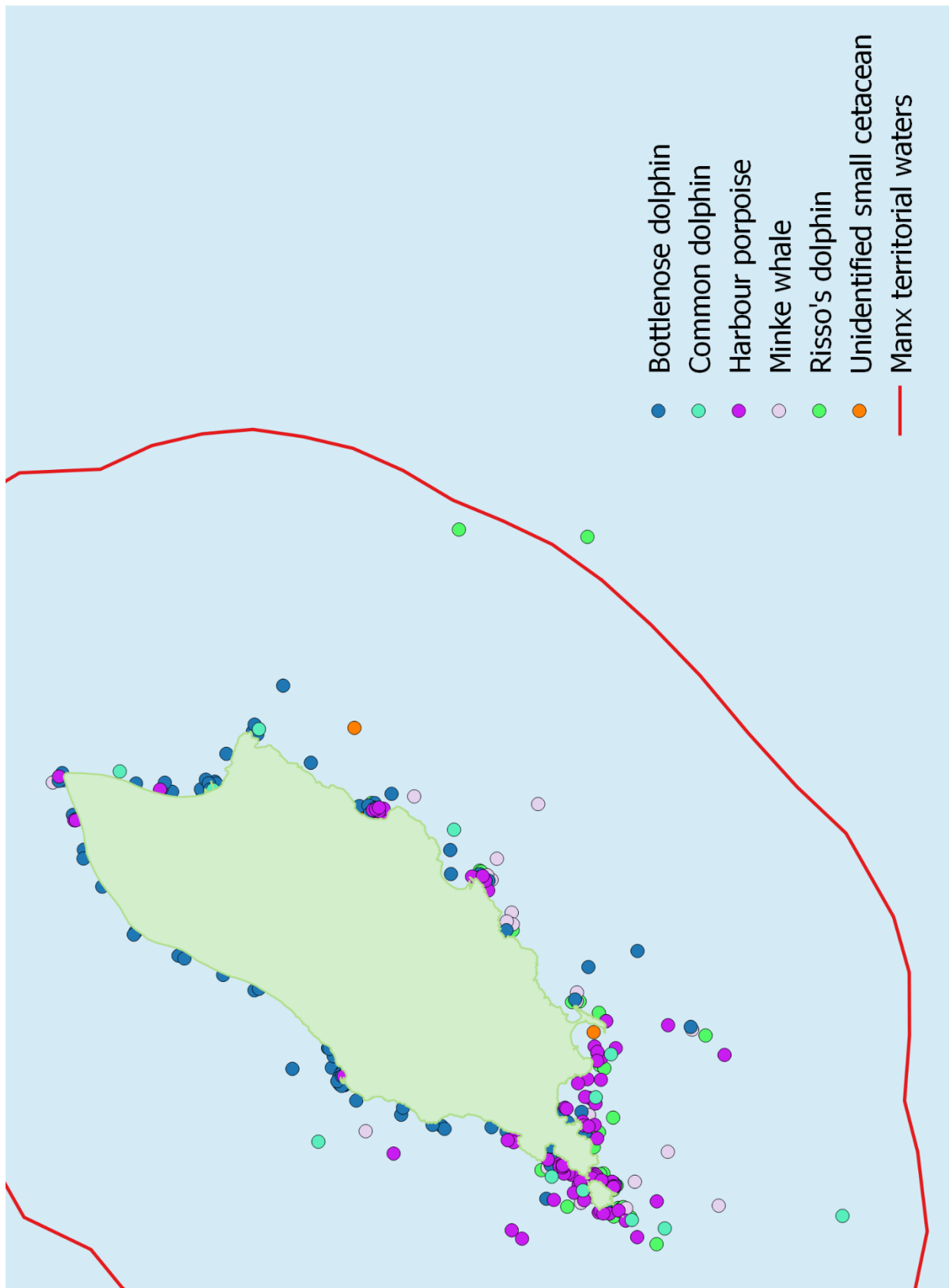
PUBLIC SIGHTINGS

Table 4: Total number of opportunistic sightings, individuals and juveniles of each species observed during 2021

* 102 sightings were of Moonlight and Starlight so were removed from individual total

Species	No. of sightings	No. of individuals	No. of juveniles	% of total sightings
Bottlenose dolphin	160*	824*	89*	42.4
Common dolphin	12	467	74	3.2
Harbour porpoise	117	280	24	31.0
Minke whale	31	42	3	8.2
Risso's dolphin	52	286	25	13.8
Unidentified small cetacean	5	29	0	1.3
TOTAL	377	2131	316	

Figure 3: Distribution of public cetacean sightings during 2021



SPECIES

Through the scientific studies of Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch we have established the regular presence of five species of cetacean in Manx waters.

Bottlenose dolphin – *Tursiops truncatus*

In 2021 there were a total of **163** sightings of bottlenose dolphins combined from boat-based, land-based, and public sightings.

Common dolphin (short-beaked) – *Delphinus delphis*

In 2021 there were a total of **19** sightings of common dolphins combined from boat-based, land-based, and public sightings.

Harbour porpoise – *Phocoena phocoena*

In 2021 there were a total of **180** sightings of harbor porpoise combined from boat-based, land-based, and public sightings.

Minke whale – *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

In 2021 there were a total of **36** sightings of minke whales combined from boat-based, land-based, and public sightings.

Risso's dolphin – *Grampus griseus*

In 2021 there were a total of **87** sightings of Risso's dolphins combined from boat-based, land-based, and public sightings.