

Have you seen a porpoise, dolphin or whale in the waters off Norfolk, Suffolk or Essex?

If so, please help us to conserve these elusive animals by returning the attached survey card



There has been relatively little research on porpoises, dolphins and whales found in the southern part of the North Sea. To safeguard the future of these fascinating animals, we need to develop a better understanding of their movements and distribution. By returning this survey card, you can help us to record and map the occurrence of cetaceans off our coast.



Above: Harbour porpoise mother and calf
Photograph courtesy of Rohan Holt

Front cover: Harbour porpoises surfacing
Photograph courtesy of Graeme Cresswell



This card has been produced by the Norfolk and Suffolk Biodiversity Partnerships and the Essex Biodiversity Project. Generous financial support has also been provided by the Norfolk Coast Partnership and the Wash Estuary Strategy Group. The following are gratefully acknowledged for their support: Tom Ashworth (artwork); Phil Coles and Gen Broad (species' descriptions); Graeme Cresswell (concept design) and Mark Iley (text).

All information is useful in building up a picture of distribution and will be used to help protect these species more effectively. Records are held by the Seawatch Foundation and shared with the Norfolk and Suffolk Biodiversity Partnerships as well as the Essex Biodiversity Project.

The species most likely to be seen in our coastal waters is the harbour porpoise. However, many other cetacean species can also be seen on occasion. Some of the more frequently occurring species have been included on this card.

What to do:

- If you see a live cetacean at sea, please fill in and return the survey form attached to this card.
- If you find a live stranding, immediately contact the RSPCA on 08705-555999 or the British Divers Marine Life Rescue on 01825-765546. Please remember that whales, dolphins and porpoises can harbour diseases that are transmissible to people; they are also able to inflict serious injuries with their mouths and tails. For these reasons, live animals should never be handled!
- If you find a cetacean corpse, please contact the Coastguard on 01255-675518 (for areas south of Southwold) or 01493-851338 (for areas north of Southwold). If possible, move the carcass above the high water line or anchor it securely. Always wear gloves if handling cetacean corpses. Freshly dead animals are sent for post-mortem to the British Natural History Museum to establish age, sex and cause of death. Tissue samples are also analysed for pollutants, including heavy metals and other contaminants.
- To record a live or dead stranding, please fill in and return the survey card.

Harbour Porpoise Length: 1-2m
Phocoena phocoena

UK's smallest and commonest cetacean, often seen near shore. Seen alone or in small groups. Robust body; small triangular dorsal fin mid-back; blunt, rounded head; no beak. Dark grey. Unlikely to breach; appears only briefly at surface.



Bottlenose Dolphin Length: 2.5-4m
Tursiops truncatus

Large, robust dolphin; brown or dark grey upper parts, paler below. Tall, swept-back dorsal fin mid-back. Usually seen in groups. May come close to shore. Fast swimmer; active at surface; often bow rides and breaches.



Long-finned Pilot Whale Length: 4-6m
Globicephala melas (melaena)

Not common, usually found in deeper water. Glossy black and often slow swimming, usually in groups. Distinctive large rounded head, no beak. Dorsal fin low, set forward on body. Long, slender flippers. Some animals may have grey 'saddle-patch' behind the fin. May allow boats to approach. Tail flukes show when deep-diving. Strong 'blow', easily visible.



White-beaked Dolphin Length: 2-2.5m
Lagenorhynchus albirostris

Large, robust dolphin with striking black and white markings. Beak usually light coloured, but not always. Black back, pale greyish area behind dorsal fin and on flanks. Usually in small groups. Acrobatic and very active at surface; often breaches and approaches boats.



Atlantic White-sided Dolphin Length: Up to 3m
Lagenorhynchus acutus

Occasionally seen off East Anglian coast. Long, chunky body with striking markings; large swept-back dorsal fin mid-back; short flippers; deep tail shape. Travels fast.



Minke Whale Length: Up to 10m
Balaenoptera acutorostrata

Largest cetacean to be frequently encountered around the UK. Surfacing begins with pointed snout breaking the surface, followed by a loud "blow"; the blow is not usually visible. Very large, grey back rolls forward quickly, revealing small dorsal fin two-thirds along the body. White bands on flippers are often visible, even underwater. May be alone, or in twos or threes. Will occasionally approach boats.



Tips for Spotting Cetaceans

Whales, dolphins and porpoises can be seen from boats, headlands and even occasionally, beaches and harbour walls. Look out for splashes or other unusual shapes at the surface. Bird activity often suggests there is food in the area that might attract a marine mammal. Spotting cetaceans is often a question of luck, but if you want to see them, you also need to be patient and keep scanning the sea.

Watching Cetaceans at Sea

- Porpoises, dolphins and whales are highly intelligent animals and are easily disturbed. They should never be chased or harassed.
- Keep your distance – don't go closer than 100m (200m if another boat is present) and spend no longer than 15 minutes near the animals.
- Never drive head on, move between, scatter or separate groups of animals. If unsure of their movements, simply stop and put the engine into neutral.
- If cetaceans approach the boat, maintain a steady direction and slow to no wake speed.
- Never try to swim with cetaceans, for your safety and theirs.

By law, it is an offence to kill, injure, take, cause unnecessary suffering or deliberately disturb any species of porpoise, dolphin or whale.

Additional copies of this card can be downloaded from the following websites:

www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk
www.norfolkbiodiversity.org.uk
www.suffolk.gov.uk/Environment/Biodiversity/

Survey Card

Please record as much information about your sighting as possible

Date Time (24 hour clock)

Exact location (latitude/longitude or OS grid reference)

Species (if unsure, please describe what you saw)

Please sketch your sighting here - even a simple drawing can be very helpful. For example, what shape is the dorsal fin and where is it located on the back? Does it have a pointed snout or a rounded head?



Length of time for which the animal was visible

Distance between you and the animal

Sea conditions at the time

The direction in which the animal was travelling

Were there associated seabirds or other wildlife?

The number and behaviour of the animals

Your Contact Details:

Name

Address

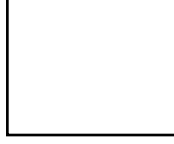
Postcode

Phone

Email

Boat name (if the sighting occurred at sea)

Please tick here if you do not want your contact details to be stored



Please affix stamp

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