

2022

Annual Report



Manx Whale and
Dolphin Watch

CETACEANS AND BASKING SHARKS IN MANX WATERS IN 2022

Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch

Bryony Manley

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

MWDW TEAM

The Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch team in 2022 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

Dolphineers

Elan Shipton – Part-time volunteer

Other Volunteers

Chris Kelly – IT and website Support

Richard Coase – Boat Maintenance and Skipper

Matt Dean – Boat Assistance

Roy Maddrell – Boat Assistance

YEAR IN SUMMARY

Due to the difficulty of finding affordable, available accommodation for residential Dolphineers it was decided to try and recruit local volunteers this year. There was little interest in this, however, resulting in no full-time Dolphineers but one part-time (one day a week) volunteer to assist with surveys and office work.

This year MWDW officially took over the public recording of basking sharks following the retirement of Jackie and Graham Hall and the dissolution of Manx Basking Shark Watch. Coincidentally this also saw the first year since 2018 with a reasonable number of publicly reported basking shark sightings, and the first shark arrived earlier than the expected mid-May on 29th April.

Due to ongoing boat problems which are still being addressed following the COVID years we did not manage many boat surveys. However, land-based surveys and public sightings were in good numbers. Public events and outreach were conducted including a well-attended summer show at the Villa Marina.

There were several unusual sightings this year which are worth mentioning. On 14th August between Fort Island and the runway a member of the public reported a pod of dolphins and submitted a phone video. The behaviour and colouring seemed different to our usual species and on consulting with other marine mammal researchers it was decided this was likely a pod of white-beaked dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*) which would be a first record for Manx waters.

On 27th August, during an MWDW boat survey a swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) was spotted approximately 4nmi off Niarbyl, a first recorded sighting of this species in Manx waters.

There have been two reports of Atlantic bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*), one on 26th August ~15nmi west of Peel, slightly outside Manx waters but reported by a Manx fisherman who filmed two animals following his boat. A single animal was recorded by drone in September a short way off Douglas Head.

Overall, compared to 2021, there were similar sighting numbers for bottlenose and common dolphins, and minke whales. There was a reduction in the sightings of Risso's dolphins, far fewer seen on land-based surveys and slightly fewer public reports. There were also slightly fewer public reports of harbour porpoise which may be as a result of the largely unsettled and windy weather of 2022. Resident mother and calf bottlenose dolphin pair Moonlight and Starlight are still present in Manx waters and are regularly reported.

BOAT BASED SURVEYS

Table 1: Boat-based survey effort and cetacean sightings during 2022

Number of surveys	2
Dedicated	2
Opportunistic	0
Kilometers surveyed	77.81
Sea states 0 and 1	29.50
Sea states 2 and above	48.31
Number of sightings (individuals)	6 (24)
Bottlenose dolphin	0
Common dolphin	0
Harbour porpoise	6 (24)
Minke whale	0
Risso's dolphin	0

Temporal distribution of boat surveys in 2022

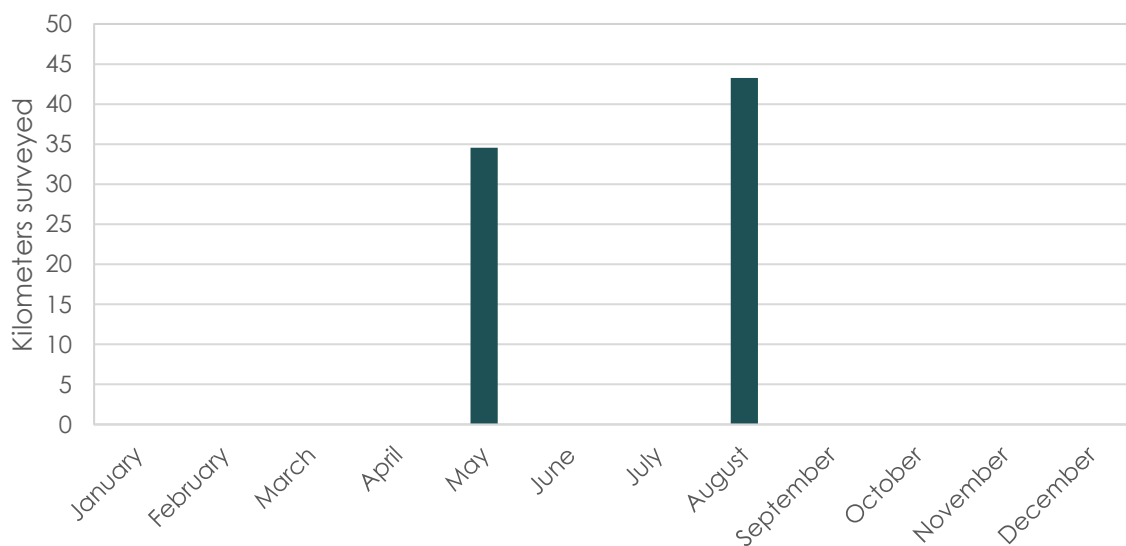


Figure 1: Temporal distribution of the kilometers of boat-based surveying during 2022

LAND-BASED SURVEYS

Table 2: Land-based survey effort and cetacean sighting rate during 2022

Location	Hours of effort	No. of intervals	% cetacean +ve
Calf Lighthouses	10	40	27.5
Calf East	34.5	138	18.1
Calf West	19.5	78	6.4
Marine Drive	17.75	71	18.3
Niarbyl	17	68	32.4
Point of Ayre	3.75	15	0
Port St Mary	9.75	39	84.6
TOTAL	112.25	449	

Temporal distribution of effort in 2022

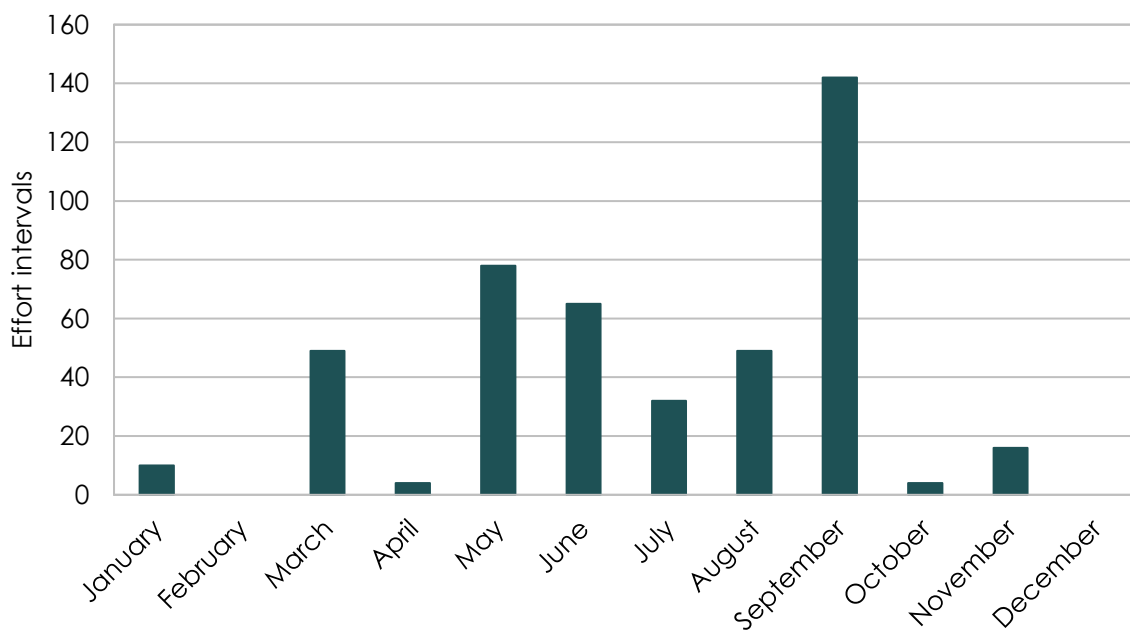


Figure 2: Temporal distribution of land-based effort intervals during 2022

Table 3: Number of cetacean and shark positive intervals, different sightings, and different individuals of each species recorded during land-based surveys in 2022

Species	No. of +ve intervals	No. of different sightings	No. of individuals seen
Bottlenose dolphin	4	1	20
Common dolphin	3	2	60
Harbour porpoise	75	67	152
Minke whale	8	4	5
Risso's dolphin	15	5	38
Unidentified large cetacean	1	1	1
Unidentified dolphin	6	4	13
Basking shark	2	2	2
TOTAL	114	86	291

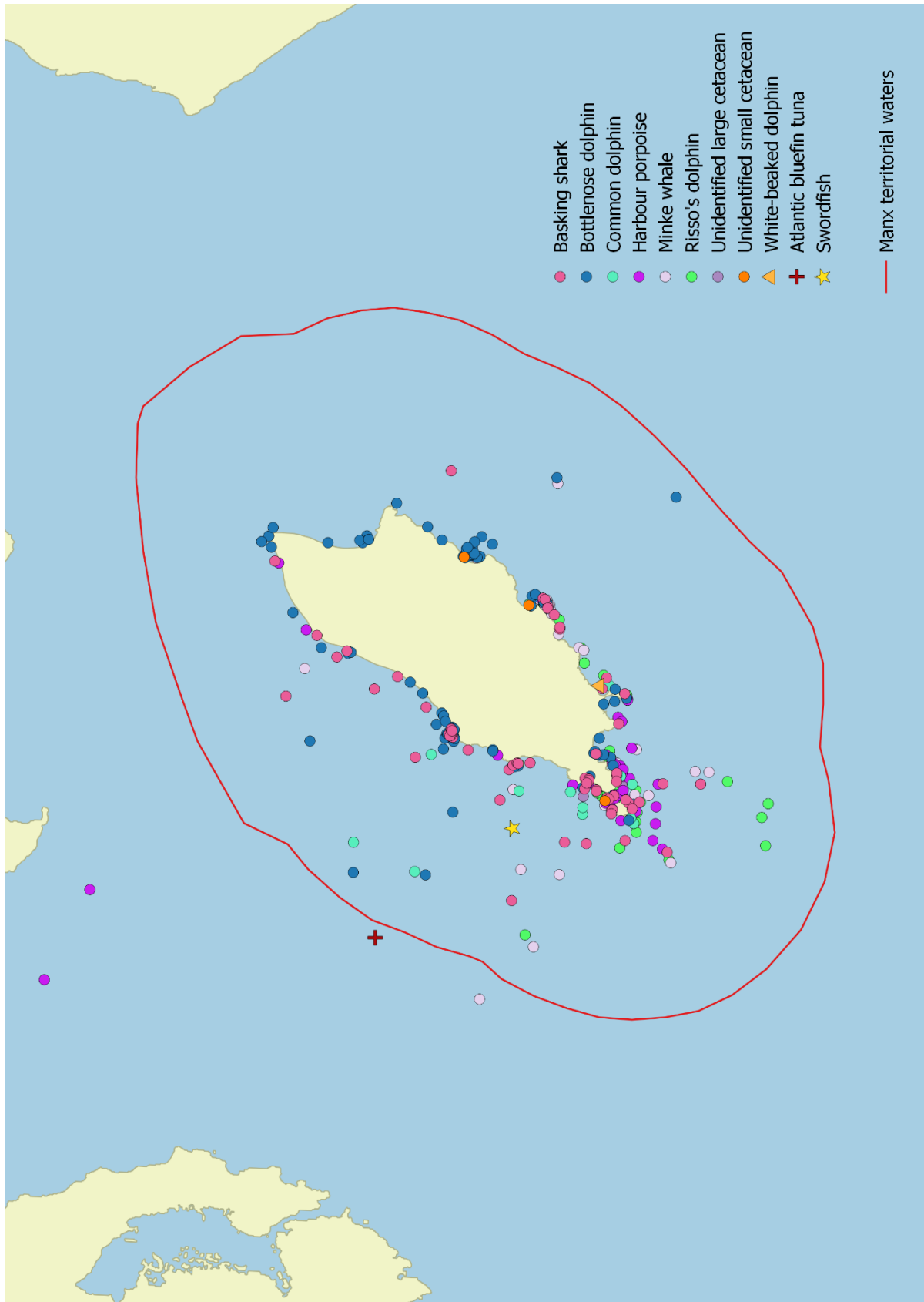
PUBLIC SIGHTINGS

Table 4: Total number of opportunistic sightings, individuals and juveniles of each species observed during 2022.

*includes 1 sighting of 20 individuals tentatively identified as white-beaked dolphins

Species	No. of sightings	No. of individuals	No. of juveniles	% of total sightings
Bottlenose dolphin	57	953	151	20.7
Moonlight & Starlight	77			27.9
Common dolphin	16	553	119	5.8
Harbour porpoise	51	163	16	18.5
Minke whale	36	54	1	13.0
Risso's dolphin	33	215	9	12.0
Unidentified small cetacean	4*	65*	16	1.4
Unidentified large cetacean	2	7	0	0.7
TOTAL	276	2010	312	
Basking shark	68	79	13 (<4m)	

Figure 3: Distribution of public cetacean sightings during year



SPECIES

Bottlenose dolphin – *Tursiops truncatus*

In 2022 there were a total of **58** sightings of bottlenose dolphins and **77** sightings of Moonlight and Starlight combined from boat-based, land-based, and public sightings.

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

In 2022 there were a total of **18** sightings of common dolphins combined from boat-based, land-based, and public sightings.

Harbour porpoise – *Phocoena phocoena*

In 2022 there were a total of **124** sightings of harbor porpoise combined from boat-based, land-based, and public sightings.

Minke whale – *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

In 2022 there were a total of **40** sightings of minke whales combined from boat-based, land-based, and public sightings.

Risso's dolphin – *Grampus griseus*

In 2022 there were a total of **38** sightings of Risso's dolphins combined from boat-based, land-based, and public sightings.

Basking shark – *Cetorhinus maximus*

In 2022 there were a total of **70** sightings of basking sharks combined from boat-based, land-based, and public sightings.