

Marine Creatures of the South-West

H E L P U L H I N S
The region is host to a wealth of large marine creatures. Drive your boat with respect for them and follow the code.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000) it is an offence to kill or injure cetaceans (dolphins, porpoises and whales) or to disturb cetaceans and basking sharks. To do so intentionally or recklessly may result in a prison sentence.

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN

At over 3 metres, bottlenose are one the largest dolphins commonly seen in UK waters, easily recognisable with their tall dorsal fin, short snout, bulbous head and pale grey colouring. They live close to shore in small family groups and are often seen leaping in the waves. They like shallow sandy bays where they can rest and nurse their young.



HARBOUR PORPOISE

This small porpoise (1.5 metres), has a compact body, no beak, and distinctive short dorsal fin. They are rarely acrobatic, shy of boats and often difficult to see. They occur in small groups, except at good feeding sites such as the strong tidal streams around some headlands. Prone to being caught in fishing nets, their numbers are declining around our coast.



BASKING SHARK

These gentle giants, which can grow up to 11 metres long, feed on the smallest of creatures, called plankton. The basking shark swims along the surface of the water with mouth agape, filtering the plankton out of the water passing through their mouth and gills. They are the World's second largest fish and are usually seen during the warmer months.



ATTENTION BOAT OWNERS

Marine Creatures Protection Scheme

Bottlenose dolphins and other large marine creatures are regular visitors to the south west. They are highly intelligent animals, sensitive to disturbance and can be hit by propellers. If dolphins approach the boat or bowride, maintain a slow speed and course until clear. Dolphins should never be chased or harassed in an attempt to make them bowride.

When watching marine creatures please follow the simple guidelines:

CODE OF CONDUCT

- KEEP** your distance. Never go closer than 100m (200m for two boats), with no more than three boats at any one time
- NEVER** drive head on to, or move between, scatter or separate marine animals. In particular dolphins spend no longer than 15 minutes near the animals
- AVOID** groups with mothers and young
- MAINTAIN** a steady direction and slow 'no wake' speed
- NEVER** dispose of any rubbish and contaminants into the sea
- NEVER** try to swim with the dolphins and basking sharks for your safety and theirs

For details of marine wildlife watching training and accreditation scheme please visit the WISE website: www.wisescheme.org.uk



MAXIMUM TIME 15 MINUTES

www.english-nature.org.uk

www.cornwall.gov.uk

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

www.whalesoc.org



If you witness any harassment, please report the boat (its type, colour, name and any registration number) and the details to the Police on 08705 777444. Please report any sightings or strandings to the Environmental Records Centre on 01872 240777. Thank you for your help.