



Manx Wildlife Trust



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Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises

Whales, dolphins and porpoises can often be seen off the island's coast

Cetaceans, the collective term for porpoise, whales and dolphins, need to surface to breath and this gives us a great opportunity to glimpse into their extraordinary lives, lives which are spent in the water, where they eat, socialise and even give birth.



They are superbly adapted for life at sea and are powerful swimmers, some species are incredibly acrobatic and playful, capable of leaping out of the water, often for what seems like the sheer joy of it.

Although several species have been recorded in the Irish sea, the most commonly seen cetaceans around the Isle of Man are the harbour porpoise, Risso's dolphin, minke whale, bottlenose dolphin and common dolphin.

Porpoises

Harbour porpoises are the smallest species you will see, which can make them difficult to spot in the waves. On a calm day they are often seen close to shore, alone or in small groups. They are very shy of

boats.

Dolphins

Probably the most recognisable of all dolphins, the **bottlenose** is large and robust, growing up to 4 metres. They are very social animals and can often be seen in large groups, leaping out of the water.

Although not the most common, the **common dolphin** is nevertheless very striking and recognisable. Relatively small, at only about 2 metres, they are slender and very agile. Often seen swimming at speed, breaking the water surface frequently and approaching boats to bow ride.

Risso's dolphins are mysterious creatures usually only found in deep, offshore waters, although around the island they come in close to shore. A large dolphin, growing up to about 3.5 metres long, they are quite sociable, often put on

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great displays of leaping and tail slapping the water.

Their body colour turns from a dark grey to almost completely white as they get older, from an accumulation of scars gained from aggression between individuals.



Dolphins and porpoises feed on a variety of fish.

If you want to help protect dolphins and porpoises around the Isle of Man, [Adopt a Dolphin today](#).

Whales

Minke whales are the smallest of the baleen whales, even though they can reach up to 10 metres long. Despite this large size, they can be acrobatic, especially when lunging out of the water to gulp up balls of shoaling fish. Quite solitary animals, they sometimes group together to

feed on a large patch of food, using their baleen plates (made of a hair-like substance) to filter smaller krill and fish species out of the water.



Catching a glimpse

Whales, dolphins and porpoise are regularly seen in Manx waters, here are some of the best viewing spots and times of year to help you find them, good luck!

- Porpoise: The inshore waters off Kallow Point in Port St Mary are a real hotspot.
- Bottlenose dolphins: Large groups off the east coast in the winter months
- Common dolphins: Around the island, but usually only seen in the summer months.
- Risso's dolphins: On the east and south coast, from Douglas Head in the spring down to the Sound by the summer.
- Minke whale: Off the west coast, often a couple of miles offshore, in the summer. The east coast, especially Laxey and Bulgham bays in winter.

Sightings

We're keen to log sightings of cetaceans in Manx waters so, if you are lucky enough to see one, please report it via the Manx Whale & Dolphin Watch website - it's quick and easy to do, and really helps with ongoing research:

www.mwdw.net

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