

## **Whales at St Abbs**

Whales are large, magnificent, intelligent, aquatic mammals. They breathe air through blowhole(s) into lungs (unlike fish who breathe using gills). Whales have sleek, streamlined bodies that move easily through the water. They are the only mammals, other than manatees (seacows), that live their entire lives in the water, and the only mammals that have adapted to life in the open oceans.

In recent years whales have become more common in the seas around Berwick, with many sightings reported each year. (See the log for 2007 below.)

One of the best places to look for whales is at St Abbs Head and although they can be seen at any time of the year they are more numerous during August and September.

Cetaceans are not easy to see, especially when there is a swell on the sea. Often the only view one has is of a small fin (particularly if it is a porpoise), and if the sea is rippled in any way that can be easily hidden.

The best way to conduct a watch is to continually scan the sea surface with the naked eye, interspersed at intervals with binocular scans.

During the scans, either with the naked eye or with binoculars or telescope, look for any disturbance of the sea surface. More often than not this will be the result of a wave breaking the surface, but it is generally the first sign of a cetacean as it surfaces. Watches are best conducted on calm days when there is little surface turbulence for this very reason. If waves are continually breaking it becomes very difficult to pick out instances when the surface has been broken by a whale or dolphin. If seabirds are seen circling or diving in an area, it is worth checking these out with binoculars since dolphins or whales may well be associated.

Local sightings should be reported to Liza Cole, St Abbs and Eyemouth Volunteer Marine Reserve Ranger, email – [lcole@nts.org.uk](mailto:lcole@nts.org.uk)  
website – <http://www.marine-reserve.co.uk>

All cetaceans observed should be logged with the Sea Watch Foundation on either the simple sightings recording form (for repeat records that do not need a description or details of behaviour) or a more detailed cetacean sighting recording form.

Recording forms

<http://www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk/sightings.php?uid=29>

Identification sheets

<http://www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk/speciesid.php>

John, January 08

## **Cetaceans**

### **St Abbs Area**

**2007**

<b>Date</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Grid Ref</b>
<b>Indeterminate whale</b>			
2-Feb-07	1	Coldingham Bay	NT 922 666
3-Feb-07	1	Coldingham Bay	NT 922 666

<b>Indeterminate dolphin</b>			
16-May-07	2	Petticowick	NT 905 693

<b>Bottle-nosed Dolphin, <i>Tursiops truncatus</i></b>			
15-Feb-07	20+	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
12-Aug-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
4-Sep-07	2	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694

<b>Minke Whale, <i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i></b>			
6-Jul-07	1	Petticowick	NT 905 693
15-Jul-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
2-Aug-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
3-Aug-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
5-Aug-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
6-Aug-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
9-Aug-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
10-Aug-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
11-Aug-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
12-Aug-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
18-Aug-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
24-Aug-07	1	Off St Abbs Harbour	NT 922 673
26-Aug-07	2 ad, 1 juv	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
29-Aug-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
30-Aug-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
2-Sep-07	3	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
4-Sep-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
6-Sep-07	4	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
7-Sep-07	4	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
8-Sep-07	1	Coldingham Bay	NT 922 666
15-Sep-07	3	Black Gable	NT 916 691
16-Sep-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694

<b>Risso's Dolphin, <i>Grampus griseus</i></b>			
15-Jul-07	3 ad, 1 juv	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694

2-Sep-07	1	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
12-Sep-07	3 ad, 1 juv	Black Gable	NT 916 691
15-Sep-07	3 ad, 1 poss 2 juv	Black Gable	NT 916 691
16-Sep-07	2	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694

**Harbour Porpoise, *Phocoena phocoena***

15-Jul-07	4	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
5-Aug-07	2	Starney Bay	NT 918 677
9-Aug-07	1	West Hurker	NT 907 696
18-Aug-07	4	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694
2-Sep-07	16	St Abb's Head	NT 916 694

**Liza Cole      Ranger**  
**St Abbs voluntary marine reserve**