

Marine mammals

Update/Revision History: Revised by Ian Cumming, January 2006.

Pinnipedia: Seals

Common seal; *Phoca vitulina*: Widespread, breeding on sandbanks at Tentsmuir, Tay Bar and Eden Estuary in June and July. They can be seen hauled out at many places round the coast of Fife. The Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU) count for 2004 was 414.

Grey seal; *Halichoerus grypus*: Widespread. Began breeding in the 1970's on the Isle of May (overflow from the Farne Island population). The numbers of pups born each year increased steadily till 2000, when 2133 were born. The numbers have now levelled off at around 1900 each year. Small breeding populations occur on Inchkeith, Inchmickery and Inchcolm (total <100 SMRU). Hauls out at Tay Bar, Edenmouth and on rocks at Balcomie, Seafield, Braefoot Bay and the Isle of May.

Cetacea: Dolphins and whales

Common porpoise; *Phocoena phocoena*: Widespread, but seen more often in the Firth of Forth than in St Andrews Bay. Frequently at Tay Bar.

Bottle-nosed dolphin; *Tursiops truncatus*: Seen all year but more numerous from June to October. 40-60 have summered off the Fife coast every year since 1992. Photo IDs have proved that they are from the Moray Firth population. Have been seen attacking common porpoise on several occasions.

White-beaked dolphin; *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*: Regular offshore (10km).

White-sided dolphin; *Lagenorhynchus acutus*: Infrequent offshore. 2 live stranded at Elie in 1991 were successfully returned to the sea.

Common dolphin; *Delphinus delphis*: Sporadic offshore. Occasional strandings (Eden estuary in 2000, Kenly burn in 2002).

Striped dolphin; *Stenella coeruleoalba*: 3 stranded Aberdour and Limekilns Feb 1996.

Risso's dolphin; *Grampus griseus*: Occasional offshore.

Long-finned pilot whale; *Globicephala melas*: Infrequently offshore.

Killer whale; *Orcinus orca*: Sporadic offshore, but groups have been seen in the Forth Estuary even as far as the Forth Bridge almost annually since 1994.

False killer whale; *Pseudorca crassidens*: 7 stranded near St Andrews 1935. No sightings since.

Bottle-nosed whale; *Hyperoodon ampullatus*: C.50 in Tay 1937, 1 in Forth 1978.

Sowerby's beaked whale; *Mesoplodon bidens*: Occasionally stranded: Crail 1978, Pettycur 1996, Kirkcaldy 2000.

Sperm whale; *Physeter macrocephalus*: Occasional visitor. 6 off Isle of May 1992. 1 stranded at Airth after spending 10 days near the Forth Bridges in March 1997.

Minke whale; *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*: Common summer visitor often seen near Isle of May, from Kinraig, and St Andrews Bay. Up to 7 have been seen between Anstruther and the Isle of May.

Humpback Whale; *Megaptera novaeangliae*: Infrequent visitor but becoming more frequent: 1 Inchcolm 1997, 1 breaching off Fife Ness 1999, Fife Ness 2001, 1 Burntisland 2003.

Fin whale; *Balaenoptera physalus*: 1 stranded Kirkcaldy 1903. No recent sightings.

Blue whale; *Balaenoptera musculus*: 1 stranded Aberdour 1858. No recent sightings.