



Hebridean  
Whale &  
Dolphin  
Trust

# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

*Year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017*



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# Chair's Foreword

**I am delighted to introduce the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust (HWDT) Annual Report for 2017. Our core aim is conservation, and that requires not only research, to improve our understanding of whales and dolphins, but also engagement with both communities and visitors.**

This year was the 15<sup>th</sup> in which our research vessel *Silurian* has criss-crossed Hebridean waters; she has now covered 100,000 kilometres in these surveys, and this year she - or rather our volunteers on board - recorded a record number of sightings of whales and dolphins. To engage the wider public in reporting sightings, we launched our Whale Track app, which makes it easy to send in reports via a mobile device. We continued our wide-ranging programme of school visits and community events, and welcomed over 15,000 visitors to our Discovery Centre in Tobermory.

In August, Alison Lomax took over as Director from Gemma Paterson, who after nine years with HWDT, and two years as Director, has stepped in to a part-time role strengthening our fundraising. We welcomed new staff Karl Stevens and Siobhan Moran for our new Hebridean Whale Trail project, and Lauren Macmillan who joined us providing Media and Communications Officer maternity cover. At our AGM, David Govan and Dale Meegan stepped down as trustees; we thank both, and particularly David for his many years as Treasurer.

After five exciting and enjoyable years I shall be handing over the Chair during 2018 to Jay Butler. I took over in early 2013, and I should like to pay particular tribute to our only office staff of the time, Gemma Paterson and Morven Russell, who spearheaded the journey towards our current position. It has been a pleasure to support our growing set of expert and enthusiastic staff, and I am confident of their continued success with the support of Jay and my other fellow-trustees.

Professor Denis Mollison, HWDT Chair



*Professor Denis Mollison,  
HWDT Chair*

## **Trustees at December 2017:**

Denis Mollison (Chair)

David Govan (Treasurer)

Leanne Blair

Juliana Butler

Philip Cheek

Peter Evans

Jonathan Gordon (Science  
Committee Chair)

Dale Meegan

Tom Walmsley

# A Message from Our Director

**The west coast of Scotland is remarkable. We are lucky to have relatively easy access to world class wildlife experiences right on our doorstep. At HWDT it is our mission to enhance the knowledge and understanding of Scotland's whales, dolphins and porpoises through a participative and community-based approach to research and education.**

At the heart of the charity are the volunteers and communities we work with. This year we were thrilled to launch Whale Track; a new mobile sightings technology developed by HWDT's science lead, Dr Lauren Hartny-Mills, in close consultation with our community sightings network. Whale Track makes it quicker and easier to report animals and survey effort whilst out at sea – where network coverage and Wi-Fi is patchy at best. Now our volunteer network is documenting sightings at double the rate of previous years, and making a very real contribution to our understanding of the presence and movements' of marine mammals locally.

This was also a milestone year for our long-term species monitoring and research programme, during which the team surpassed 100,000 km of survey effort. Working with research partners across the UK the data HWDT collects are channelled into research studies and peer reviewed publications. These publications provide the objective and expert evidence which is essential for effective species conservation. The information HWDT has generated to date is making real impact on the protection of cetaceans in western Scotland; contributing to the identification and designation of marine protected areas for species including harbour porpoise, minke whale and basking shark.

HWDT plays a crucial role in the conservation of Scotland's west coast marine environment and I am delighted to be leading the organisation at this important time.

Alison Lomax, HWDT Director



*Alison Lomax, HWDT Director*

## **Staff at December 2017:**

Alison Lomax (Director)

Ella Potts (Discovery Centre Coordinator)

Frazer Coomber (Marine Biodiversity Officer)

Gemma Paterson (Head of Major Gifts)

Karen Denoon (Finance Officer)

Karl Stevens (Hebridean Whale Trail Manager)

Lauren Hartny-Mills (Science and Policy Officer)

Lauren Macmillan (Media and Communications Officer – maternity cover)

Morven Russell (Media and Communications Officer – maternity leave)

Pauline Massey (Discovery Centre Manager)

Pippa Garrard (Community Engagement Officer)

Siobhan Moran (Hebridean Whale Trail Officer)

# Our Year in Summary

The HWDT marked its 23<sup>rd</sup> year of operation in 2017 by achieving a staggering milestone for our species monitoring and research programme. In July our specialist research vessel *Silurian*, and her crew, surpassed 100,000km of effort based survey – the equivalent to sailing two and a half times round the world.

2017 was a record breaking year for species monitoring aboard *Silurian*. As we sailed through the spectacular landscapes of the Hebridean archipelago, we recorded over 2,800 whales, dolphins, seals and sharks during more than 1,100 sightings events, and logged 3,200 harbour porpoise acoustic detections. Notably, we saw a dramatic increase in sightings for one of our most enigmatic and active summer visitors; common dolphins, with an amazing 24% more sightings of these dolphins recorded, against 2016's already record-breaking figures.

Staying true to our roots as forerunners of cetacean research techniques in Scotland, in August we launched Whale Track; a first-of-its-kind smart phone sightings app and website. Our goal was to improve the public sightings infrastructure available in the Hebrides, and support community participation in marine wildlife recording at sea. Crucially, the new technology allows anyone to track survey excursions; logging the distance travelled in search of animals as well as the animals encountered. Over one hundred excursions have been submitted through Whale Track in the first 5 months, totalling a distance of 5,500 km and nearly 1,000 hours spent at sea. This technological innovation has made it quicker and easier for people to contribute to our research. As a result we have seen community sightings flood in at double the rate of previous years.

Our long-term monitoring projects prove just how vital the waters of the Hebrides are for the wide variety of species that we are working tirelessly to protect. But data is only the start. Foremost to our conservation aim is sharing what we have learnt with others. In 2017 HWDT reached out to over 20,000 people across the west coast of Scotland. We visited schools, held community events, delivered accredited training courses, worked with project volunteers, and welcomed visitors and local residents alike to our Discovery Centre in Tobermory.

This year we increased our capacity to work with communities further and embarked on a trailblazing new initiative, The Hebridean Whale Trail. Working with communities the project will showcase remarkable marine wildlife and tell the stories that make the Hebrides so special. The launch of the completed Hebridean Whale Trail will form a large part of HWDT's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in 2019.

We would like to wish a warm and heartfelt thank you to the volunteers, donors, members, partners and funders who have supported and contributed to our work in 2017.



# Species Monitoring & Research



Minke Whale spotted in the Sea of the Hebrides – 04.07.2017

## SILURIAN RESEARCH EXPEDITIONS

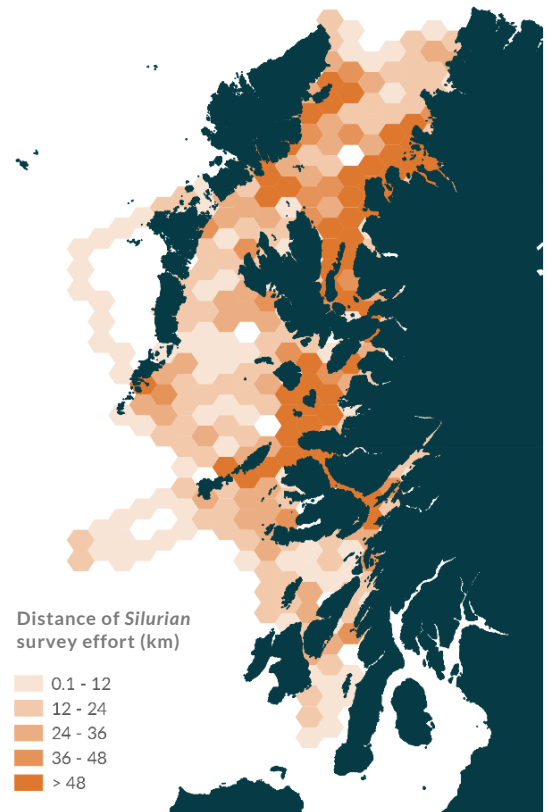
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HWDT operate dedicated research expeditions between April and October each year. We take a different route each trip in order to survey a wide variety of fine-scale environmental variables, (i.e. sea temperature, depth, tidal flow, salinity, etc.) both visually and acoustically (using underwater microphones). Doing so provides a wide scale assessment of cetacean distribution through which HWDT is able to answer questions about population size, habitat preference, site usage, and through our photo identification work, animal behaviour.

*In July 2017 Silurian surpassed 100,000km of effort based survey - the equivalent to sailing two and a half times round the world in search of whales and dolphins.*



Silurian and crew undertaking a research expedition – 16.07.2017



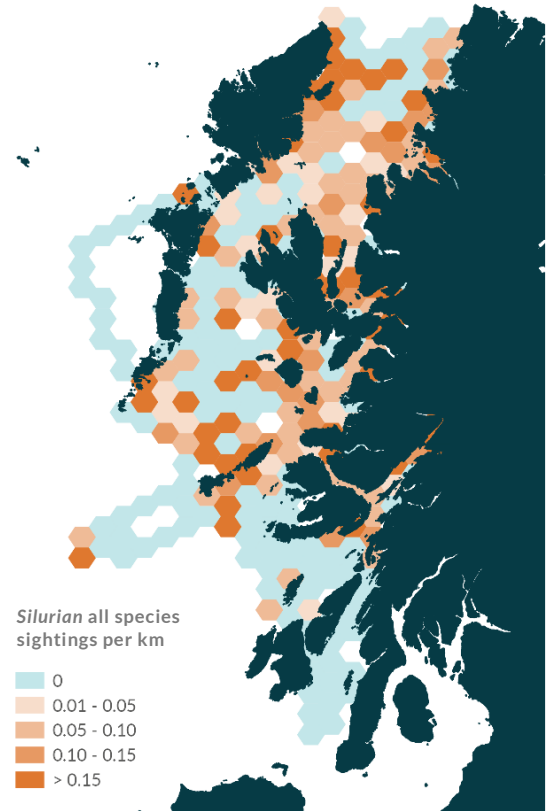
Visual and acoustic *Silurian* survey effort (km), April - October 2017, totaling 8,665km. Displayed in a 100km<sup>2</sup> grid.

Eighty volunteers participated in 14 *Silurian* research expeditions in 2017, surveying 8,665 km of Hebridean Seas, over 121 days. Sixty eight volunteers joined us on expedition surveys and 12 on teen team surveys. Volunteers contributed a cumulative 695 days (16,668hrs) on board *Silurian* in 2017 – that’s the equivalent of almost two continuous years of voluntary time donated this year alone. The majority (78%) of the survey effort was conducted in good weather conditions; Beaufort Sea State 3 or less.

Collectively we recorded 1,116 sightings of cetaceans and other marine megafauna, documenting 2,841 individual animals. Ten marine mammal species, two fish species and 32 bird species were recorded. The harbour porpoise was the most commonly seen species – as has been the case every year since the HWDT’s surveys began – with 363 sightings of 621 individuals. Large numbers of minke whales were encountered, 62 sightings of 80 individuals, similar to numbers recorded in previous years. The team also recorded 93 sightings of common dolphins – the highest total ever, up from 75 sightings in 2016. The encounters included a total of 1,340 individual animals – down from 2016’s high of 2,303, due to smaller group sizes and fewer super pods.



Common dolphins bow riding *Silurian* in the North Minch – 22.09.2017



*Silurian* all species sighting rates, April – October 2017, totaling 1,116 encounters. Displayed in a 100km<sup>2</sup> grid.

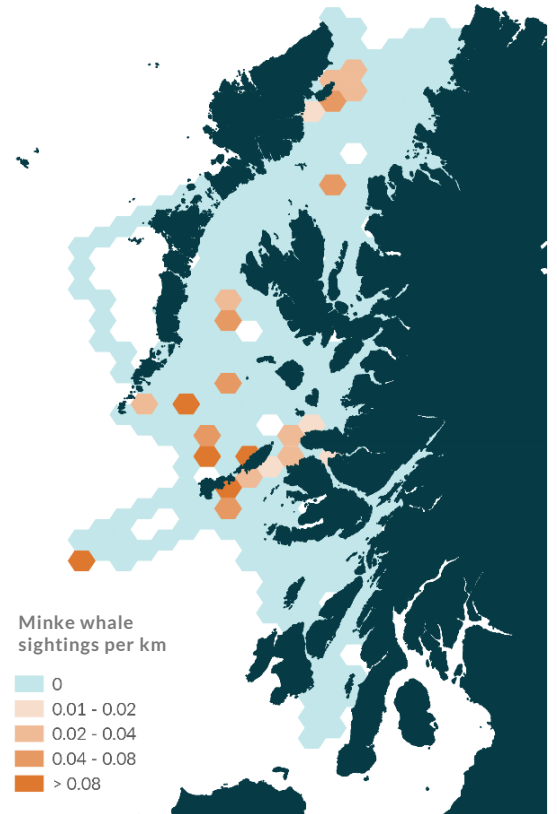
Category	Species	Scientific name	Sighting	Individuals
Identified	Basking shark	<i>Cetorhinus maximus</i>	18	21
	Bottlenose dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	3	12
	Common dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>	93	1,340
	Grey seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	217	231
	Harbour porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	363	621
	Harbour seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	166	192
	Humpback whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	1	2
	Minke whale	<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>	62	80
	Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	6	6
	Risso's dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>	8	58
	Sun fish	<i>Mola mola</i>	2	2
	White-beaked dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</i>	14	74
Unidentified	Unidentified baleen whale	N/A	5	5
	Unidentified dolphin	N/A	29	59
	Unidentified seal	N/A	104	108
	Unknown	N/A	25	30
<b>Total</b>			<b>1,116</b>	<b>2,841</b>

*Silurian* monitoring programme sightings summary by species, April – October 2017.

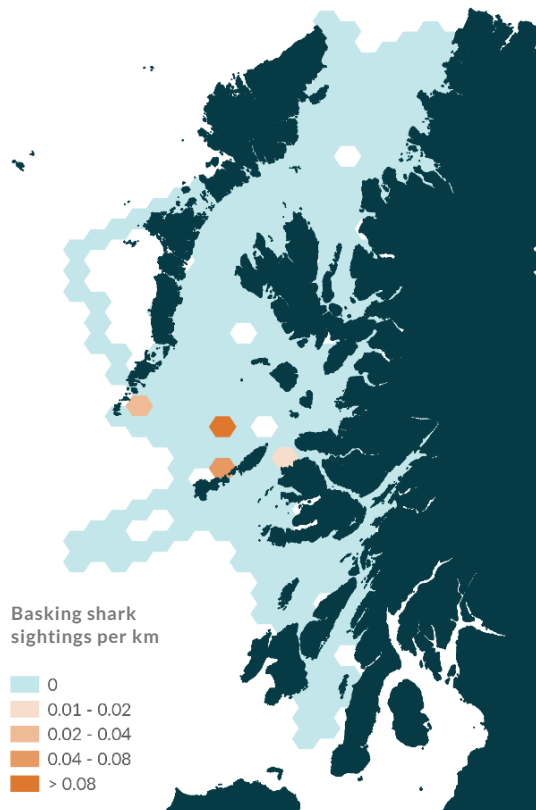




Minke Whale spotted at Stanton Banks – 04.05.2017



Silurian minke whale sighting rates, April – October 2017. Displayed in a 100km<sup>2</sup> grid.



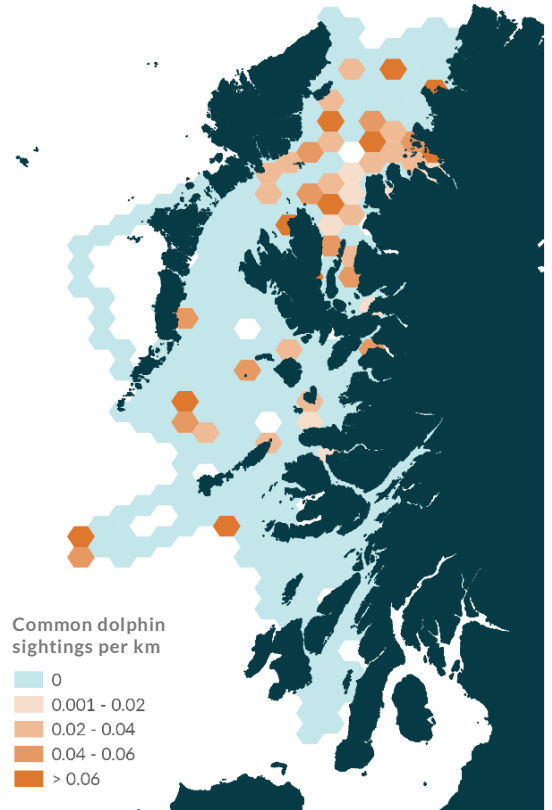
Silurian basking shark sighting rates, April – October 2017. Displayed in a 100km<sup>2</sup> grid.



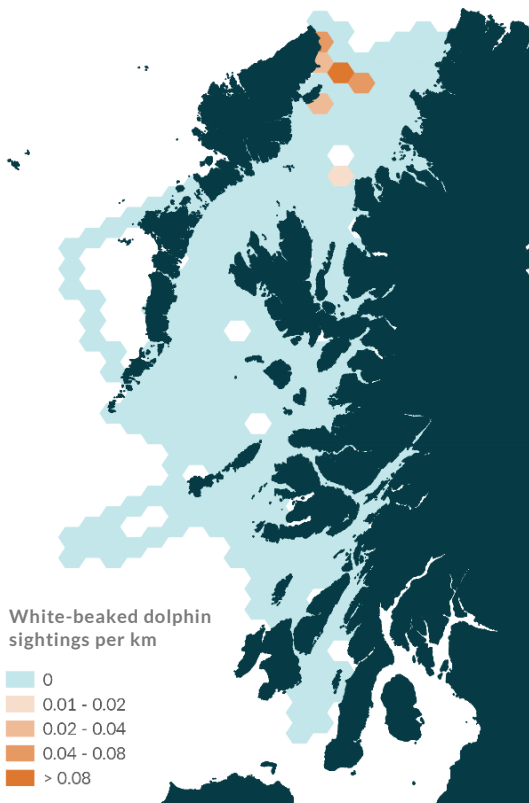
Basking shark spotted in the Sea of the Hebrides – 10.08.2017



Common dolphin spotted north of the Small Isles – 18.07.2017



Silurian common dolphin sighting rates, April – October 2017. Displayed in a 100km<sup>2</sup> grid.



Silurian white-beaked dolphin sighting rates, April – October 2017. Displayed in a 100km<sup>2</sup> grid.



White-beaked dolphin spotted in the North Minch – 19.06.2017





*“This was an opportunity of a lifetime, which I sincerely hope to repeat in the near future.” David, Silurian survey volunteer, 2017*

HWDT volunteers and crew on *Silurian* survey no.11 from Ullapool – 07.09.2017

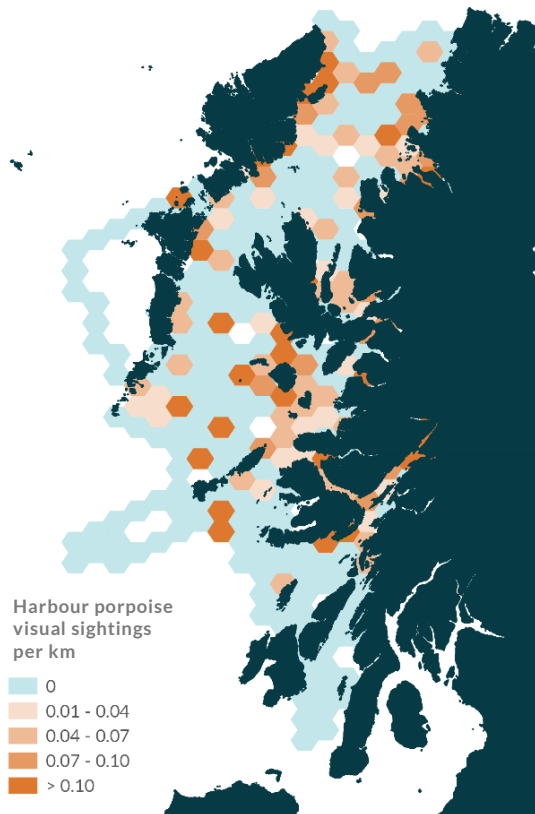
*“It's the best first-hand exposure an aspiring young marine biologist can get!”  
Oliva, Teen Team participant, 2017*



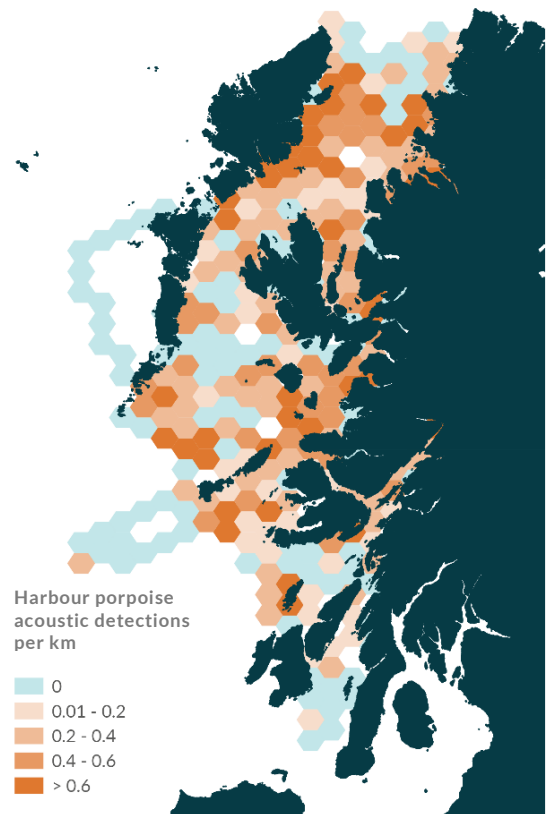
Teen Team participants surveying from the mast – 09.08.2017

## ACOUSTIC HARBOUR PORPOISE MONITORING

HWDT is a pioneer in the field of underwater acoustic monitoring – *Silurian* recorded its first cetacean sounds on a towed hydrophone back in 2002. Since then, HWDT has compiled a comprehensive acoustic dataset, spanning 15 years, comprising of over 6,000 hours (250 continuous days) of underwater recordings. As well as species monitoring these recordings are increasingly called upon to assess the changing soundscape of the west coast marine environment and the potential impact of acoustic pollution on the populations, distribution and behaviour of cetaceans in the region.



*Silurian* harbour porpoise sighting rate, April – October 2017. Displayed in a 100km<sup>2</sup> grid.



*Silurian* harbour porpoise acoustic detection rate, April – October 2017. Displayed in a 100km<sup>2</sup> grid.

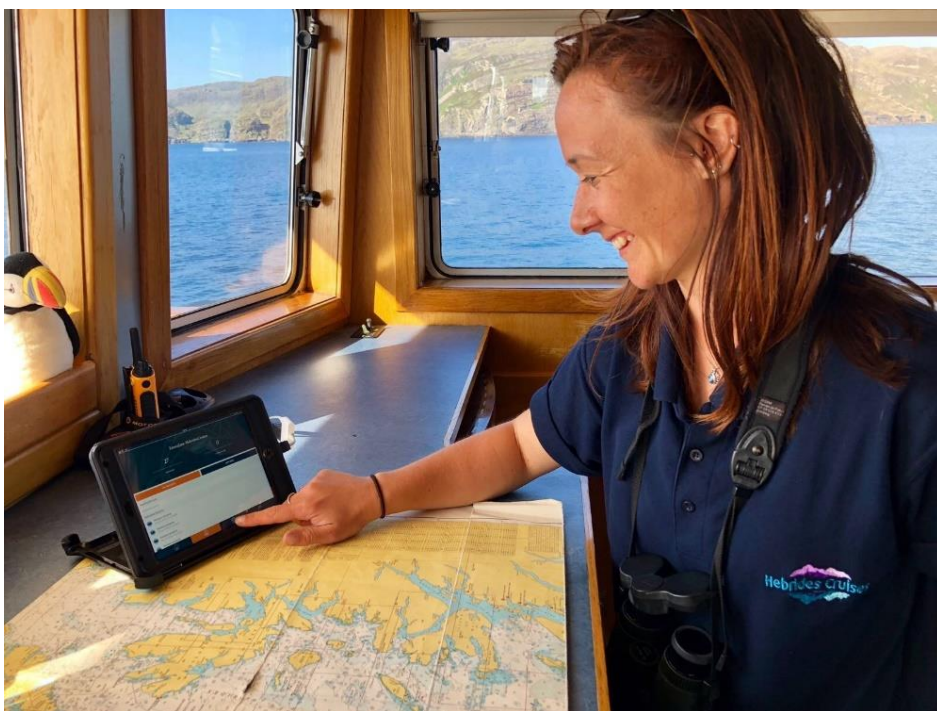
Passive Acoustic Monitoring plays a key role in HWDT’s data collection, as an accurate way of recording the presence of inconspicuous species, such as the harbour porpoise. In 2017, 7,907 km of acoustic effort was conducted on board *Silurian* and 3,231 harbour porpoise acoustic detections were recorded. The distribution of porpoise detections is widespread throughout the Inner Hebrides and Minches. In addition to monitoring porpoises we carried out 2,496 minutes (42 hours) of active underwater listening, recording identifiable, audible sounds. We recorded 133 dolphin whistles and 82 dolphin clicks, as well as 867 instances of snapping shrimp. Manmade sounds were also recorded on surveys, with ship noise recorded 10% of the time and acoustic deterrent devices recorded 14% of the time.



## WHALE TRACK: COMMUNITY SIGHTINGS NETWORK

The HWDT community sightings network recorded 2,344 sightings of cetaceans, sharks and other species of marine megafauna in 2017 - 70% more sightings than in 2016.

A large focus in 2017 has been on improving our public sightings infrastructure, to support community participation in marine wildlife recording at sea in the Hebrides. In August HWDT launched Whale Track; a first-of-its-kind smart phone sightings app and website. This technological innovation has made it quicker and easier for people to contribute to our research work. Crucially, the development allows anyone to track excursions at sea (where the distance travelled is recorded as well as the animals encountered) even in locations without phone signal or Wi-Fi. In the first five months (August-December) 279 people have registered. Already 118 excursions have been submitted through Whale Track, totalling a distance of 5,578 km and nearly 1,000 hours spent at sea.



Hebrides Cruises wildlife guide logging sightings on Whale Track



Whale Track has forged new partnerships between researchers, businesses and individuals. Rather than simply educating, the project actively involves people in tracking the movements of coastal species like bottlenose dolphins and unravelling the mysteries of more elusive species like killer whales. Since Whale Track launched we have seen community sightings flood in at more than double the rate of previous years.

## PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

HWDT has collected and held data regarding minke whales, bottlenose dolphins and killer whales in the Hebrides since 1991, 1992 and 2000 respectively. The data and coordinating photos are analysed to identify the presence of identifiable individuals and maintain up to date photo-identification (photo-ID) catalogues. Data are collected both from dedicated research surveys on board *Silurian*, and from the Community Sightings Network. Thousands of photographs were submitted and catalogued in 2017, primarily from two sources *Silurian* and whale-watch company Sea Life Surveys.



*The most commonly sighted individual in the minke whale catalogue, with a total of 48 sightings since 2002, is known as Knobble (FD27). This individual whale has been recorded off the north coast of Mull every year since 2006.*

Knobble the minke whale on a visit to the west coast of Scotland

The bottlenose dolphin photo-ID catalogue contains individuals from two distinct populations the Inner Hebridean Community and the Sound of Barra Community. The minke whale photo-ID catalogue contains a total of 235 recognisable individuals based on photographs of the dorsal fin and other identifiable features such as coloration and other marks and scars. 28% of individuals featured in the catalogue have been seen on more than one encounter.

The West Coast Community killer whale community now number just eight individuals (four females, four males). Some individuals, have however not been seen in recent years and in all the years we have been following this group we have never seen them with a calf. In 2017 sightings of individuals from the West Coast Community were recorded by the Community Sightings Network but were not recorded on *Silurian* surveys. The easily identifiable John Coe is the most commonly sighted individual in this group, the last verified sighting of John Coe was on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2017.

## RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

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HWDT aims to use its data to increase the understanding of the cetacean species and populations which inhabit the waters of western Scotland. Our staff also collaborate on peer view publications and provide data to relevant government agencies. Below are the peer-reviewed publications and submitted manuscripts co-authored by HWDT staff in 2017. HWDT affiliated authors are highlighted in bold.

### PUBLISHED:

**Ryan, C.**, MacLeod, G., Dinsdale, C., and Cook, S. Long-term association between a solitary short-beaked common dolphin *Delphinus delphis* and a harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*. *Aquatic Mammals* 43(1):113-115, January 2017.

### IN PRESS:

**Ryan, C., Bolin, V., Shirra, L., Garrard, P., Putsey, J., Vines, J. and Hartny-Mills, L.** The development and value of whale-watch tourism in the west of Scotland.

Findlay, C.R., Ripple, H.D., **Coomber, F, Froud, K. , Harries, O., van Geel, N.C.F., Calderan, S.V.,** Benjamins, S., Risch, D. and Wilson, B. Mapping widespread and increasing underwater noise pollution from acoustic deterrent devices.

## STUDENT PROJECTS

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Each year we work with university students, sharing data to tackle questions that are aligned with our research objectives.

### COMPLETED STUDENT PROJECTS

Jessica Owen. Climate Change and the Cetacean Community of north-west Scotland: 2004 - 2015. BSc Geography, University of Leeds.

### STUDENT PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

Ruby Musgrove-Ward. Classist Conservation? A Critical Review of the Relationship Between the Pursuit of Environmental Protection and Class Status. BSc Wildlife Conservation, University of Kent.

Abigail Haines. Impact of military sonar on dolphin acoustic behaviour. BSc Marine Biology and Oceanography, Plymouth University.



# Evidence for Change



The HWDT team on-board *Silurian* in Tobermory Bay – 24.08.2017

The data collected by HWDT's long-term monitoring projects contributes vital evidence to underpin cetacean conservation in western Scotland. HWDT provide this data to governments, researchers and NGOs. As a member of Scottish Environment LINK we work alongside our marine conservation colleagues to champion the protection of the west coast marine environment and its incredible wildlife.

## **MEMBERS OF SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT VISIT TOBERMORY**

In September, HWDT welcomed members of the Scottish Parliament's Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee to our base in Tobermory to share our research experience and demonstrate the importance of the area which has been identified as a potential nature conservation Marine Protected Area (ncMPA) for minke whale and basking shark. The sun was out, the sea was calm, and the group were lucky enough to see two minke whales feeding in the proposed Sea of the Hebrides (ncMPA), as well as several harbour porpoises in the Sound of Mull. A public consultation is expected on two proposed protected areas for minke whale, basking shark and Risso's dolphin in late 2018. HWDT first proposed these sites back in 2011, alongside WDC and CRRU, and are proud to have worked with the dedicated volunteers who collected the data that contributed towards proving the importance of these areas.



# Engaging Coastal Communities



Kilchoan Primary 'Scanning our Seas' with HWDT at Ardnamurchan Point - 31.08.2017

We believe in making the marine environment accessible to all. In 2017 we provided educational experiences for over 20,000 people in our dedicated Discovery Centre in Tobermory, on our boat *Silurian*, and by visiting schools and working with communities across the whole of the Hebrides.

## **MARINE EXPLORER SCHOOLS PROGRAMME**

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To enhance our well-established schools programme in 2017 HWDT developed a new outdoor learning session 'Scanning our Seas', taking pupils out to local headlands to watch for whales and dolphins. Using specialist research equipment, school pupils recorded the weather, and the number of birds, boats and whales encountered. This new session was delivered for 160 pupils from 11 primary schools and one high school. Outdoor workshops were complemented by 23 classroom sessions, for 276, pupils covering a range of topics including 'Whales within our Waters', 'Hebridean Habitats' and 'Evidence for Change'.

*"My favourite part was when we went watching and using the big binoculars." John P5*

## THE FLOATING CLASSROOM

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Our famous floating classroom visited 14 primary schools and one high school around Skye and Ullapool. We ran 31 'Silurian Adventurer' workshops for 301 pupils over two weeks of visits. These boat-based, hands-on education workshops bring marine science to life and inspire young people to take pride in the local marine environment.



Students from Elgol Primary on-board *Silurian's* floating classroom at Kyle of Lochalsh - 25.04.2017

*“Fantastic visit! I think you maybe have some future HWDT volunteers in the making! So relevant for where we live. Thank you!” Elgol Primary School.*

## YOUTH TRIPS

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To tackle social exclusion, we ran a fully funded residential Youth Trip, for five young carers and their leader from Crossroads Young Carers, Cowal and Bute. This three-day residential trip on board *Silurian* taught practical teamwork skills, sailing experience, and marine mammal science, crucially getting the young people out into the quiet wilderness of the Hebridean marine environment. The experience had a huge impact on some individuals, who have since volunteered on full survey expeditions, joined us at events in Scottish Parliament and attended community open boat events to share their experience.



Silurian volunteer learning to helm on a Youth Trip - 27.07.2017

*“My concentration improved and I am now more aware of the wildlife around me and more passionate and caring about my environment.*

*This experience also proved to people, especially teachers that I could do something, I proved myself!*

*I believe in myself more now and with what I can achieve in life, I am now more positive about my skills and qualities and I know that I can achieve anything if I believe.” Isla, Youth Trip (2016) and Teen Team (2017) participant.*

## TALKS, EVENTS & TRAINING COURSES

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To support local communities and encourage involvement in citizen science, we ran a series of community outreach events. Approximately half of these events involved outdoor learning, including 10 public sea watch events and five community open boat events.

*During our public sea watch events, 158 people learned how to survey for marine life from their local coastline, and submit their sightings using Whale Track.*

One hundred and sixty-six people joined us on board *Silurian* – in Armadale, Kyle of Lochalsh, Portree and Ullapool – to explore the research vessel, ask questions about our surveys and learn more about Hebridean cetaceans. Outdoor events were coupled with an evening talk, providing a chance for people to learn about HWDT's key research findings from the past decade. We ran 10 public talks, for 251 people. Following each event, local people went away with a greater understanding about they can contribute to science and get involved in conservation.

HWDT delivered two WiSe accredited responsible wildlife watching training courses in 2017. The first was a public course which accredited nine local marine professionals. The second was a bespoke course for Majestic Line, accrediting all six of their skippers on how to approach wildlife and minimize unintentional disturbance to the animals encountered on their cruises.

## DISCOVERY CENTRE

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The Discovery Centre opened seven days a week from 3<sup>rd</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> September, and three days a week in October and November, visitors had more opportunity to engage with our work in 2017 than ever before with 209 opening days to choose from.

*Our Tobermory based Discovery Centre welcomed 15,439 visitors in 2017.*

Of the 15,000 visitors, 1,251 participated in pre-booked engagement activities such as Bones Box Workshops, Whale Watch Workshops, Kids Clubs, and Science Talks. Workshop were most popular in the Easter and Summer school holidays. Science Talks proved popular all season. Fifteen guest speakers delivered evening Science Talks and the number of attendees doubled compared to 2016.



## THE HEBRIDEAN WHALE TRAIL

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At HWDT we think the Hebrides are a pretty special place. The dramatic landscape, clear waters and nationally rare marine life of Scotland's west coast brings many thousands of visitors to Hebridean coastal communities each year. However, many people, visitors and local residents alike, are unaware that whales, dolphins and porpoises can be seen regularly and with ease from shore in the Hebrides.



Scanning for cetaceans from a view point at Glengorm, Mull – 29.07.2017

Through The Hebridean Whale Trail project we are supporting communities to showcase their amazing land-based whale watching sites, uncover the rich cultural heritage linked to these places and encourage the public to take part in sustainable marine tourism activities and report sightings via Whale Track.

*Together we will champion the west coast of Scotland as one of the best places to watch whales and dolphins in Europe.*

The project began in August 2017, the initial community consultation phase is underway and potential Whale Trail locations have been identified across the mainland west coast, and Inner Hebrides. In November the project was presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference in Glasgow. The completed trail will launch in 2019.

# Finding the Means



Keeping watch from the helm on *Silurian* – 08.08.2017

A small charity from a small town, we are making a big difference. But we couldn't do it without our supporters. From project grant funders to individual members and one time donations, we look after every penny we are gifted.

## OUR SUPPORTERS

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Individual supporters make a big difference to HWDT. The financial contributions made by *Silurian* volunteers are crucial for the continuation of the long-term species monitoring programme. Over 200 members and animal sponsors are the heart of our supporter network paying regular annual subscriptions making our core work possible year after year. Nearly 2,500 visitors purchased items in the Discovery Centre gift shop, raising over £11,000 to support our work in 2017.

We launched our first Christmas Challenge with the Big Give Foundation which raised over £5,000 for our Sails for Whales campaign from 60 individual donors and the Reed Foundation. We were supported by a range of organisations that contributed towards our work. We hosted a fundraising charity gig, in collaboration with folk artists, Sarah Smout and Sophie Ramsey, performing as part of a national tour. The

British Photography Awards selected HWDT to be a charity partner in 2017. Plus a range of businesses donated equipment and services including; NASTS and Maplin, Nature Picture Library and Opticon.

HWDT are grateful for every legacy and donation which were gifted in 2017. Thank you.

## VOLUNTEERS

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We quite simply couldn't achieve all we do without the amazing volunteers who give up their time and skills to help us deliver our research and education activities. This year over 100 volunteers have collectively contributed more 1,500 days to the charity, equating to an in-kind contribution of £130,000. From volunteers who participate in *Silurian* surveys to professional scientists, HWDT are proud to work with a wide range of people who share our values.

In 2017 four graduates took part in HWDT's unique volunteer placement. Spending six months with our team in Tobermory, Matt Clements, Siobhan Moran, Chris Sharples and Eilidh McManus, worked across many of our projects and objectives. As well as working on their own discrete projects (i.e. photo ID research) the team welcomed thousands of Discovery Centre visitors; running daily workshops to communicate the results of our research. They also joined our crew on-board *Silurian* to assist with delivery of HWDT's long-running scientific surveys and provide support for our core research programmes.

*“This placement was an amazing experience to work towards conserving unique species found in British waters with a like-minded, impassioned team who are working hard to make a real change”* **Matt, Silurian Support Volunteer**

## COMMUNICATING OUR WORK

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In 2017 we launched a new look, mobile first website alongside the new online sightings infrastructure for Whale Track. We produced updated literature and a refreshed logo to better reflect the organisations people and values and effectively communicate with our supporters and wider community. We published 50 news articles, which resulted in a combined 160 items of press coverage (online and print) and 11 TV and radio interviews, including an item on [BBC Breakfast](#).

Our support and engagement on social channels continued to grow in 2017. We published two editions of our supporter magazine Wave and a monthly e-newsletter (April-October). We released a short film, produced by volunteer Nick Owen Williams, about the Discovery Centre. The film was available on interactive screens across Scotland in 2017.

## PARTNERSHIPS

In 2017 we embarked on a new collaboration with Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic in which HWDT delivered talks and provided wildlife guiding on selected trips. Contribution forms were provided to guests by the globally recognised charter company to inform passengers of our work and encourage donations. This partnership enabled HWDT to reach a new audience, of over 250 people, with our marine conversation message whilst raising more than £18,000 in passenger donations.

## FUNDERS

HWDT would like to acknowledge all of its funders, who provide essential grant monies for salaries, capital work, project work and core running costs.

