



Hebridean  
Whale &  
Dolphin  
Trust

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

*Year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019*



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# Chair's Foreword

**At a time of global climate emergency and devastating biodiversity losses being recorded across the UK and the rest of the world, HWDT's mission to protect our uniquely rich Hebridean seas has never been more critical.**

The scale of the threats facing our oceans and wildlife became increasingly clear during 2019. Reports on the UK missing its environmental targets, coupled with the scale of biodiversity losses recorded, triggered climate strikes across the country and 'climate emergencies' were declared by governments all over the world – including here in Scotland.

HWDT's long-term research programme is generating the evidence that drives effective marine conservation, and our education and engagement work is creating vital connections between our coastal communities and our seas.

Fittingly, for our 25<sup>th</sup> year of operation, 2019 was a transformative year for HWDT. The launch of the Hebridean Whale Trail showcased many wonderful land-based whale watching locations, and is enabling us to work with many inspirational conservation groups and community based sustainable tourism projects.

This year we expanded our monitoring activities, braving the wild winter weather on board *Silurian* to collect species monitoring data in every month of the year for the first time in our history. We were also delighted to record that more people than ever before took part in our *Silurian* research expeditions. Whale Track, our community sightings programme, also had a tremendous year with record numbers of sightings logged. Together, the increase in seasonal monitoring data and sightings logged via our app helped us to fill, for the first time, a significant number of seasonal knowledge gaps. We all look forward to being able to build further on this data in the years to come.

In conclusion, I would like to offer my personal and most sincere thanks to everyone who has supported us through this year. Your support is absolutely vital in allowing us to fulfil our mission to better understand, and thus more effectively conserve, our Hebridean whales, dolphins and porpoises.



*Dr Juliana Butler, HWDT Chair*

## **Trustees at December 2019:**

Alexa Kershaw  
Andrew Melville (Treasurer)  
Denis Mollison  
Jonathan Gordon (Science Committee Chair)  
Juliana Butler (Chair)  
Leanne Blair  
Peter Evans  
Philip Cheek  
Tom Walmsley

## **Staff 2019:**

Alison Lomax, Director  
Becky Dudley, Marine Biodiversity Officer  
Emma Burgess, Skipper & Boat Manger  
Gemma Paterson, Head of Fundraising and Communication  
Jenny Worth, Centre Assistant  
Karen Denoon, Finance Officer  
Karl Stevens, Hebridean Whale Trail Manager - until Nov 2019  
Lauren Hartny-Mills, Science and Policy Manager  
Morven Summers, Media and Communications Officer  
Pauline Massey, Centre Manager  
Pippa Garrard, Community Engagement Manager  
Siobhan Moran, Hebridean Whale Trail Officer

**Contract Boat Crew:** Brian Morrison, Charlie Triggs, Quentin Dimmer

# Our Year in Summary

The Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust marked its 25<sup>th</sup> year of operation with the launch of the spectacular new Hebridean Whale Trail; the first of its kind in the UK. Since its launch in June, thousands of visitors have taken part in whale watching from land and learnt about conservation of the Hebrides' globally important marine wildlife and environment.

2019 was the most successful year in the charity's history for our Whale Track sightings community, driven by a monumental increase in the number of at-sea excursions undertaken. With over 1,524 registered users, the platform now holds nearly 12,000 sightings, and contributors have surveyed almost 50,000 km of Hebridean seas.

We've reached out to 18,000 people to share our research and create connections between people and Hebridean seas, and are continually supported by our 140 passionate and inspiring volunteers. We've run 100 headland watches, visited 20 schools, held 47 community events and public talks, delivered two accredited training courses, hosted the world's first Whaley Ceilidh and welcomed visitors and local residents alike to our Discovery Centre in Tobermory.

Record numbers of volunteers took part in research expeditions on board Silurian, helping to launch a new year-round programme of monitoring marine mammals and basking sharks in the Hebrides – notching up over 8,000 km of survey effort.

Notably, in this first year of winter monitoring, the team recorded four species of cetacean in the winter months – common dolphin, harbour porpoise, killer whale and minke whale – adding to a growing body of evidence that the Hebrides is an important area for certain species year-round.

We worked with colleagues at Scottish Environment LINK to campaign for public support for a new Scottish Environment Act and Scottish Government proposals to designate Marine Protected Areas for basking shark, minke whale and Risso's dolphin, which were first proposed by HWDT back in 2011.

As a founding member of the Scottish Entanglement Alliance we continued our research to understand the impacts and risks of entanglement in creel lines in Scottish waters. Preliminary results were presented by HWDT at the World Marine Mammal Conference.

We would like to give a warm and heartfelt thank you to the volunteers, donors, members, corporate partners and funders who have supported and contributed to our work in this landmark 25<sup>th</sup> year, and towards our vision of healthy Hebridean seas for whales, dolphins, porpoises and people.

# Species Monitoring & Research



Silurian conducting winter monitoring surrounded by snow-capped hills – winter 2019

## **SILURIAN RESEARCH EXPEDITIONS**

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2019 was a landmark year for our Silurian monitoring programme. For the first time in our history, Silurian surveyed Hebridean seas every month of the year.

120 volunteers joined a record 23 research expeditions on board Silurian, together we surveyed 8,289 km of Hebridean seas.

The new winter expeditions will provide insights into the year-round presence and distribution of marine mammals and basking sharks in Hebridean seas for the first time. The winter programme complements our extensive summer monitoring programme, now in its 17<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.

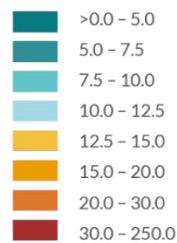




Silurian and volunteer crew surveying Hebridean seas – 09.2019

2019

Visual and/or acoustic survey effort (km)



Silurian visual and/or acoustic survey effort, January to December 2019. Total survey effort (km) displayed on a grid of 50 km<sup>2</sup> cells. Base maps © OpenStreetMap Contributors, openstreetmapdata.com.

## SIGHTINGS SUMMARY

We recorded 1,292 sightings of cetaceans and other marine megafauna, documenting 3,436 individual animals.

- 9 marine mammal species, 1 shark species and a Eurasian river otter were recorded.
- Harbour porpoise remained the most commonly encountered species - which has been the case since surveys began - accounting for 36% of the total sightings.
- It was another record year for common dolphin sightings with 101 observations of 1,347 individuals recorded, an increase from the previous all-time high of 93 sightings and 1,340 individuals in 2017.
- 95 sightings of 123 individual minke whale were recorded on Silurian with, a 53% increase from last year (62 sightings) and a 30% increase from the previous record in 2003 (73 sightings), yet the proportion and overall sighting per unit effort for minke whale sightings is comparable to previous years.
- 2 separate killer whale communities were recorded; sightings included a highly recognisable male called Busta, and a female called Razor from the Northern Isles Community, and the iconic West Coast Community bulls, John Coe and Aquarius.

Notably, in this first year of winter monitoring, the team recorded 4 species of cetacean in the winter months - common dolphins, harbour porpoise, killer whales and minke whales, and recorded 182

porpoises acoustically via hydrophone. These sightings and acoustic detections add to a growing body of evidence that the Hebrides is an important area for certain species year-round.

Category	Species	Scientific name	Sighting	Individuals
Identified	Basking shark	<i>Cetorhinus maximus</i>	14	40
	Bottlenose dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	4	29
	Common dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>	101	1347
	Common seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	166	198
	Grey seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>	277	336
	Harbour porpoise	<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	461	885
	Killer whale	<i>Orcinus orca</i>	3	7
	Minke whale	<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>	95	123
	Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	1	1
	Risso's dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>	9	50
	White-beaked dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</i>	18	98
Unidentified	Unidentified baleen whale	N/A	3	3
	Unidentified dolphin	N/A	27	199
	Unidentified seal	N/A	90	90
	Unknown	N/A	23	30
<b>Total</b>			<b>1,292</b>	<b>3,436</b>

Silurian monitoring programme sightings summary by species, January to December 2019.

## ACOUSTIC MONITORING

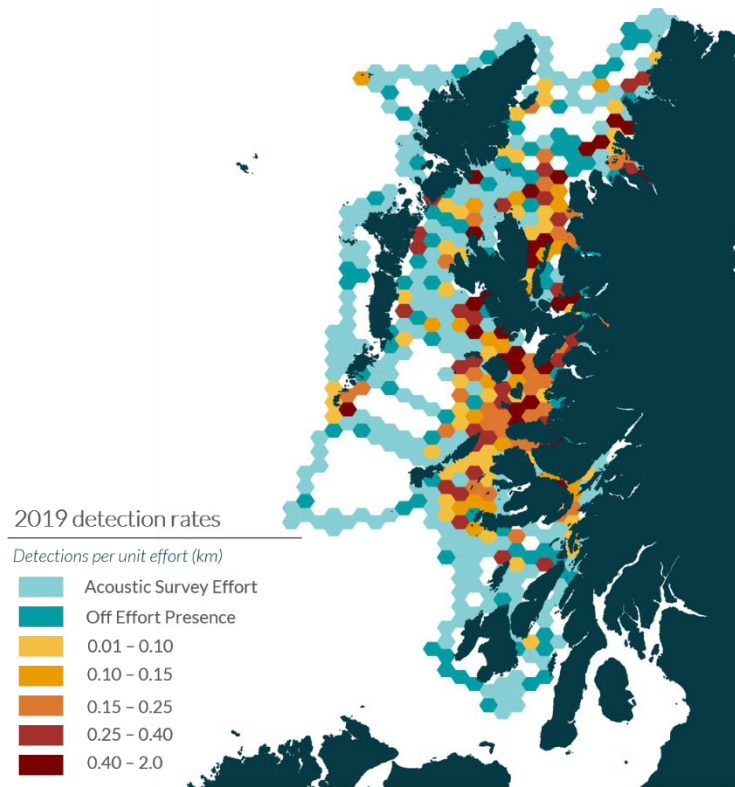
Passive Acoustic Monitoring plays a key role in HWDT's species monitoring, as it provides an accurate and consistent way to record the presence of cetaceans.

The hydrophone is deployed during all surveys and passive acoustic monitoring software, PAMGuard is run to make a continuous broadband recording and run detectors for porpoise and dolphin clicks.

- 7,078 km of acoustic survey effort was conducted on board Silurian.
- Volunteers carried out 2,595 'listening stations'; a minute of active underwater listening to record identifiable, audible sounds.
- 1,256 harbour porpoises were detected during 1,226 acoustic events.
- Dolphin whistles and clicks were recorded on 108 occasions and snapping shrimp 1,393 times. Man-made sounds were also recorded; sonar activity was recorded on 66 occasions, vessel noise 545 times, and acoustic deterrent devices (ADDs) 234 times.



Harbour porpoise, the most frequently seen species during *Silurian* research expeditions – Coll, 04.06.2019



Acoustic harbour porpoise detections per unit effort (km), January to December 2019. Displayed on a grid of 50 km<sup>2</sup> cells. Base maps © OpenStreetMap Contributors, openstreetmapdata.com).

## WHALE TRACK: COMMUNITY SIGHTINGS NETWORK

HWDT maintain a community sightings dataset of more than 28,000 marine mammal and megafauna sightings, and associated effort for the west coast of Scotland dating back to 1992.

It was another record-breaking year for our community sightings network, Whale Track. Our community of citizen scientists continued to grow helping to monitor Hebridean marine life on an unprecedented scale.

- 6,430 sightings were recorded on Whale Track, a 69% increase from last year's previous record, making this the most successful year for community sightings in HWDT's 25 years of operation.
- A record 689 people joined our Whale Track community, a 28% increase on last year.
- A monumental 197% year on year increase in the number of effort-based sightings submitted, by our network of at-sea surveyors.
- 30,000km of Hebridean seas surveyed for cetaceans on Whale Track excursion mode, recording 3,991 effort-based sightings.



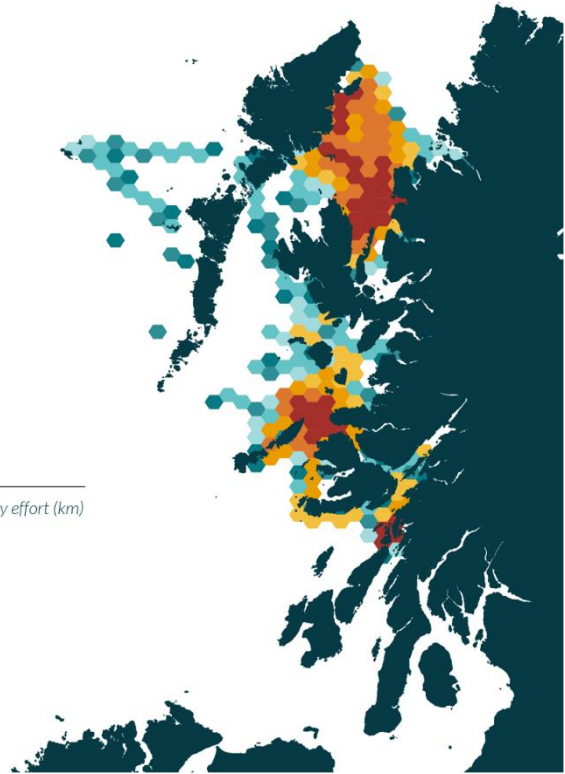
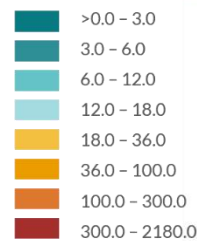
Records logged on excursion mode in the app, provides important information that helps us to understand more about where the animals are, and importantly where they aren't too. This years' dramatic increase is the culmination of continued support from our long-standing data contributors as well as newly fostered connections with seafarers on the west coast.



Watching for cetaceans from Glengorm Estate, Isle of Mull, 19.04.2019

2017-2019

Whale Track operator survey effort (km)



Boat operator survey effort reported on Whale Track from 2017 to December 2019. Displayed on a grid of 50 km<sup>2</sup> cells. Base maps © OpenStreetMap Contributors, openstreetmapdata.com).

## PHOTO-IDENTIFICATION

HWDT have been collating photographs of cetaceans and basking sharks in the Hebrides since our foundation in 1994. It forms an important part of our research, allowing us to gain a long-term insight into the behaviour of individual whales and dolphins living or visiting the Scottish west coast.

We're delighted to report some famous fins returned to Hebridean seas once again.

- Knobble the minke whale is a regular visitor to the Hebrides. First seen in 2002, 2019 was the 14<sup>th</sup> consecutive year Knobble has been recorded in the Hebrides, highlighting the importance of the feeding grounds in the Hebrides for this species.

- In total, there were fifteen confirmed sightings of the West Coast Community killer whale bulls John Coe or Aquarius throughout the year, marking another year without any confirmed sightings of the other members of the West Coast Community.



Legendary West Coast Community bulls, John Coe and Aquarius seen from Silurian - Ardnamurchan, 18.10.2019

## **DATA SHARING**

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Sharing data about marine mammals, which are highly mobile, is important to build a long-term picture of their populations, distributions and the threats they face, and is used by scientists and government bodies to inform conservation policies. So we make sure HWDT data is available for research, education, and conservation purposes.

Data are shared every year with the Sea Watch Foundation and the National Biodiversity Network to ensure cetaceans, seals and basking sharks on the west coast of Scotland are represented in the national databases.

Data was shared with students at the Scottish Association for Marine Science and Heriot-Watt University for research projects investigating the acoustic presence of minke whales on the west coast of Scotland and the fine-scale distribution of basking sharks in the Sea of the Hebrides - now being prepared for peer-review. Data were also provided to a European project to investigate the ecological niches of common dolphins in European Waters.

We painstakingly analysed three years of archived acoustic recordings, using the latest scientific methodology, to identify harbour porpoise acoustic encounters. This data was shared with a PhD student at the Scottish Association for Marine Science to investigate the impacts of acoustic deterrent devices on harbour porpoises on the west coast. This work is due for completion in 2021.

We joined the steering group for the Joint Cetacean Data Programme (JCDP), run by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, which aspires to develop a system to collate cetacean monitoring data. We also began to prepare all of HWDT's data holdings for Scottish Natural Heritage as part of a project to estimate trends in abundance and distribution of cetaceans and basking sharks to inform the development of a mobile species monitoring plan for Scottish territorial waters.

## RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

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Silurian data formed part of the 2.68 million km of at-sea survey data collated in the North East Atlantic between 1980 and 2018, as part of the Marine Ecosystem Research Project on top predators. This research has provided the largest collation of survey data for cetaceans and seabirds, and the most comprehensive distribution maps of these taxa in the North-East Atlantic. We are proud to be the leading source of information for cetaceans on the Scottish west coast. HWDT affiliated authors are highlighted in bold.

### PUBLISHED:

Waggitt, J. J., Evans, P. G. H., Andrade, J., Banks, A. N., Boisseau, O., Bolton, M., Bradbury, G., Brereton, T., Camphuysen, C. J., Durinck, J., Felce, T., Fijn, R. C., Garcia-Baron, I., Garthe, S., Geelhoed, S. C. V., Gilles, A., Goodhall, M., Haelters, J., Hamilton, S., **Hartny-Mills, L.**, ... Hiddink, J. G. (2020). Distribution maps of cetacean and seabird populations in the North-East Atlantic. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 57(2), 253-269. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.13525>

### CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS:

In December 2019, the HWDT staff attended the World Marine Mammal Conference in Barcelona, one of the biggest meetings of its kind, bringing together more than 2,700 people from 95 countries to share the latest developments and research happening in marine mammal science and conservation around the world. HWDT's work was well represented at the conference, with staff represented as lead and co-authors on posters and presentations. During the conference HWDT contributed to workshops and attended presentations covering topics including climate change, entanglement, marine tourism, education and outreach.



HWDT's Science and Conservation team at the World Marine Mammal Conference - Barcelona, Spain, 06.12.2019

**Dudley, B., Hartny-Mills, L., and Lomax, A., (2019).** *A celebration of 25 years of marine mammal research on the west coast of Scotland.* World Marine Mammal Conference, Barcelona, Spain.

**Hartny-Mills, L., Dudley, B., van Geel, N., Bland, L., Lomax, A., and Gordon, J., (2019).** *Entanglement survivors; Assessing the impact of non-fatal entanglements on Scottish minke whales.* World Marine Mammal Conference, Barcelona, Spain.

**MacLennan, E., Brownlow, A., Dearing, K., Dolman, S., Hartny-Mills, L., Jarvis, D., and Philp, A., (2019).** *Capturing fishermen's knowledge to understand the scale and impacts of marine animal entanglement in Scottish waters from a conservation, welfare and economic perspective.* World Marine Mammal Conference, Barcelona, Spain.

**Van Geel, N., Hartny-Mills, L., Hastie, G., and Wilson, B., (2019).** *Bottlenose dolphins in the Sound of Barra (western Scotland): A community with the potential to flourish, or one doomed to disappear?* World Marine Mammal Conference, Barcelona, Spain.



# Conservation & Policy



HWDT's Flagship Silurian carrying out conservation projects in the Hebrides – summer 2019

## SCOTTISH ENTANGLEMENT ALLIANCE

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As a founding member of the [Scottish Entanglement Alliance](#), we continued our research into the prevalence and extent of entanglement seen in live minke whales over the last 25 years. Marine mammal entanglement in fishing gear is a global problem, and a growing concern in Scottish waters. HWDT have partnered with five other organisations to form the Scottish Entanglement Alliance (SEA), which aims to understand the impacts and risks of entanglement in creel lines in Scottish waters by working with the Scottish inshore fishing industry. Preliminary results were presented by HWDT at the World Marine Mammal Conference in December. The results of the project will be released in 2021.

## MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

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HWDT responded to a long-awaited Scottish Government consultation on proposals to designate four Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Scottish waters. We strongly support the designation of these sites, which include the Sea of the Hebrides for basking shark and minke whale and North East Lewis for Risso's

dolphin. The proposed Sea of the Hebrides site represents the first MPA for whales in the UK and the first basking shark MPA in the world.

Three of the proposed sites (Sea of the Hebrides, North-east Lewis, and Southern Trench) are based on third party proposals submitted jointly in 2011 by HWDT, Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC) and Cetacean Research and Rescue Unit (CRRU). Data collected by HWDT contributed to the scientific evidence that demonstrated the importance of the areas on the west coast.

We are currently awaiting a designation announcement from the Scottish Government.

## **SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT LINK**

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As a member of Scottish Environment LINK (SEL) we work alongside our marine conservation colleagues to champion the protection of the west coast marine environment and its incredible wildlife. We worked with SEL colleagues to voice concerns, provide evidence and recommendations across a broad range of issues including climate change, circular economy, tourism, and deposit return system.

As a member of the [Fight for Scotland's Nature](#) campaign, launched in 2018, we continued our call for a Scottish Environment Act to protect Scotland's nature after Brexit. In May, alongside our SEL colleagues, we responded to the Scottish Government's consultation on Environmental Principles and Governance – as did 12,000 others via the campaign. In June, together with 96 other organisations we [wrote to the First Minister](#) to ask her to take action to protect, enhance and restore our environment by bringing forward a new Scottish Environment Act. These collective actions show the strength of support that exists for strong new environmental laws and institutions in Scotland post-Brexit.

HWDT joined with our conservation colleagues across the UK to express our disappointment with the lack of ambition and progress made to improve the state of the UK's seas. The latest assessment of Good Environmental Status (GES) from the Marine Strategy part 1 was the first since 2012. It's a stark warning; UK Seas are in a poor state, with only 4 out of 15 indicators meeting GES. The lack of ambition in the setting of targets and resources to monitor, assess and regulate the marine environment have led, in large part, to the current poor state of UK seas. HWDT believes these deficiencies must be urgently addressed and together with 18 members of Environment Links UK support: [Seas Our Future: A vision for UK seas](#).

# Engaging Coastal Communities



Pupils from Lady Lovat Primary School matching minke whales – 24.09.2019

Our Community Engagement Team worked with over 18,000 people in 2019, inspiring more people to care for our marine environment by creating lasting connections between people and Hebridean seas.

## **HEBRIDEAN MARINE EXPLORER SCHOOLS PROGRAMME**

We expanded our well-established schools programme to include mainland schools in the coastal towns of Oban and Mallaig, as well as working with schools on the Isle of Mull. A total of 900 children took part in our interactive workshops, delivered in 20 schools across the region.

This year local pupils have become our first ever Whale Detectives in a brand new workshop. Based on real scientific research, children uncovered stories about local animals that can be seen from our shores year after year. Pupils loved getting involved, identifying whales from photographs and sightings reports collated by HWDT. Using their detective skills they tracked the movements of locally well-known animals, including Knobble the minke whale, using maps. The session provided a fantastic introduction to the study

of whales and what we can learn about these ocean giants locally, and globally with the help of community sightings and photographs.

*“Fantastic workshop – well-pitched with just the right amount of information. Activities were extremely well planned and engaging. Also, a great opportunity at the end for questions, from which we learned so much”* **Bunessan Primary School Teacher.**

We supported young people to gain awards, Tobermory High School pupils achieved their John Muir Award Discovery Award and Teen Research Expedition participants completed the residential section of their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award on board Silurian. HWDT also work with older students, including visiting students from Scotland’s Rural College, University of East Anglia, and St. Andrews and University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI).

## THE FLOATING CLASSROOM

This year, 11 primary schools visited our acclaimed floating classroom in Dunstaffnage and Mallaig Marinas, marking our first ever visits for some schools. Some of the groups even spotted seals and an otter in the harbour, leaving a lasting impression on the pupils. These unique and adventurous sessions inspired over 200 future sailors and scientists, giving children a reason to love and care for our fragile oceans.



Mallaig Primary pupils have a close encounter with a seal on board Silurian – 10.09.2019



*“My daughter (age 10) loved visiting your boat. Since her trip, she has been researching marine biology and has decided she wants to go to University in Glasgow to study this.”*  
**Parent of Pupil, Mallaig Primary School**

## SPONSORED TEEN BERTHS

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To make our Teen Research Expeditions accessible to as many young local residents as possible we secured donations to sponsor two berths, and HWDT heavily discounted a further two places. The expeditions provided young people from the local area with an opportunity to sail in to the heart of the action and collect vital data, to help conserve Scotland’s whales, dolphins and porpoises.

Young people had fun, encountered killer whales, showed perseverance, gained sailing experience, developed research skills, increased self-confidence, worked as a team, overcame personal challenges, learnt about conservation, met new people and made friends. Three of the four individuals are hoping to continue building their at-sea experience, with dreams of a career on the water.



Teen research crew on board Silurian – 15.10.2019

*“It taught me to stay positive, inspired a deep interest in marine conservation and also made me feel like I had really made a difference to the research. Without being sponsored I would never have been able to gain all of these amazing skills, experience, memories and friends.”* **Teen Research Volunteer**

## EVENTS & TRAINING COURSES

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HWDT delivered training courses in Skye and Ullapool, to equip seafarers with skills and a nationally recognised WiSe Scheme accreditation in responsible wildlife watching. In total, 22 people from across Scotland attended from 13 different whale watching or marine tourism related businesses. These courses provide skippers and crew with guidance on how to approach wildlife and minimise unintentional disturbance to any animals they encounter on their excursions.

We expanded our educational activities with cruise ship passengers, working with our partners Majestic Line and Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic to deliver 23 talks, reaching over 400 people visiting Tobermory.

Whilst visiting Dunstaffnage, Mallaig and Tobermory with our floating classroom, we opened Silurian to the public, running four events for over 200 people. These events provide the local community with a great opportunity to explore the research vessel, ask questions about our surveys and learn more about Hebridean cetaceans. At each event, people went away with a greater understanding about they can contribute to science and get involved in local conservation projects.

## DISCOVERY CENTRE

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The Centre opened five days a week in April and May, seven days a week June – September and the October holidays, totalling 177 days visitors could learn about Hebridean seas, and engage with our work.

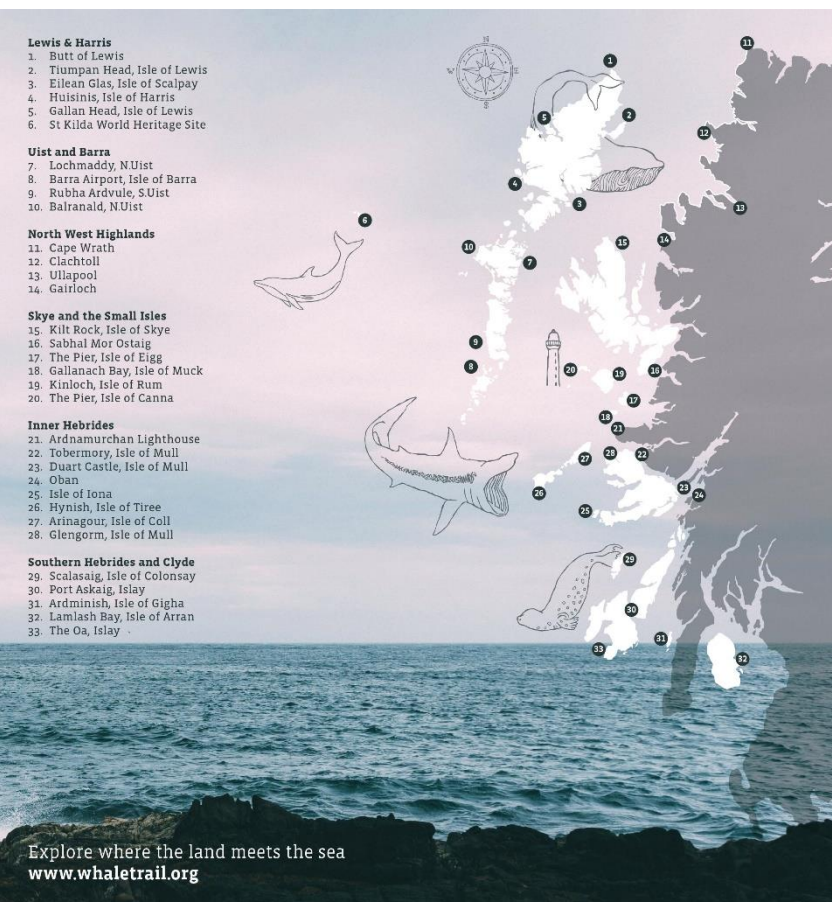
Our Tobermory based Discovery Centre welcomed over 14,600 visitors. More than 3,200 participated in engagement activities in addition to browsing the interpretation displays and gift shop, a 30% increase on last year. Visiting families succeeded in winning at our room escape game, and learned about whale and dolphin biology by attending our ‘Teeth & Bones’ talks. Hundreds of visitors traipsed across the headlands

with us to join us on land-based whale-watches. And it was definitely worth it! 2019 saw some incredible sightings from land including minke whales, bottlenose dolphins, porpoise and the occasional otter. While we were out and about at community shows and special events local residents joined in with our activities and had a friendly chat.

We took a deep dive into our ambitions for our Centre, with the support of the Charity Retail Consultancy. A 3-year improvement plan, starting in 2020, has been developed to expand the visitor offer, develop new exhibits and establish the centre as a gateway to explore the Hebridean Whale Trail.

## THE HEBRIDEAN WHALE TRAIL

In June, partners from across the west coast of Scotland joined together to launch the spectacular new Hebridean Whale Trail. A celebration of the amazing diversity of wildlife, the rich culture and heritage, and the vibrant local communities here in the Hebrides.



The Hebridean Whale Trail site map 2019

A website and on-site interpretive materials were developed through extensive community consultation to capture the spirit of the Hebridean Whale Trail. The popular blog series 'Tales from the Trail' encouraged readers to explore the trail through the eyes of the local people who champion their site.



Guided walk to Eilean Glas on the Hebridean Whale Trail - 26.8.19

Community is at the very heart of the trail. We provided educational and outreach activities in collaboration with trail partners, to monitor marine wildlife and engage with visitors and local communities. Volunteers spent hundreds of hours watching for wildlife during these events and recorded hundreds of cetacean sightings; vital data for conservation programmes. We also ran a community knowledge exchange, which brought together 36 partners from across the Hebridean Whale Trail to share their experience and strengthen our community connectivity across our remote geographic region.

*“Isn’t it wonderful how whales and dolphins make us feel? I feel so blessed to have visited such a magical place.”* **Abi Bailey, UHI Marine and Coastal Tourism student placement 2019**



# Finding the Means



The world's first 'Whaley Ceilidh' fundraising and celebration event – 01.11.2019

At a time of global climate emergency and biodiversity loss across the UK and globally, HWDT's mission has never been more critical. Every penny of support is vital to help us continue our work to safeguard Hebridean seas for whales, dolphins, porpoises and people.

## OUR SUPPORTERS

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Individual supporters make a big difference to HWDT. More than 250 members and animal sponsors are at the heart of our supporter network paying regular annual subscriptions making our core work possible year after year. Our local supporters joined us for a foot stomping evening of fun at our first 'Whaley Ceilidh' fundraising and celebration event in November, raising nearly £1,000 for the charity.

The financial contributions made by Silurian volunteers are crucial for the continuation of our long-term species monitoring. Volunteer payments raised over £79,000 for our survey and research activities. Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic provided contribution forms to encourage guest donations,

raising over £18,000 to support our work. Discovery Centre visitors purchased items in our gift shop, raising £12,000.

In April, The McDermott family gifted £1,124 to support our mission to conserve Hebridean seas in memory of their late son, Mr Niall Cameron McDermott.

## VOLUNTEERS

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HWDT is proud to work with a wide range of people who share our values. This year 140 volunteers supported our charity and participated in our work. Land-based volunteers alone donated nearly 400 days to the charity to deliver research, education and engagement activities. A record number of volunteers joined our research expeditions on board Silurian, collectively contributing thousands of volunteer hours to survey Hebridean seas all year-round.

Six passionate and talented conservationists volunteered to join our team. Hannah Lightley, Hannah Snead, Maja Hanmer, Milo Mole, Rian Harris and Tierney Carter worked across our conservation, education and community projects, supporting HWDT's mission to protect our rich Hebridean seas.

*“Volunteering with HWDT gave me the confidence to push myself into new experiences where I learned as much as I taught. At the end of my placement I had gained invaluable new skills to support my career in conservation.”*

***Rian Harris, Education Volunteer 2019.***

## COMMUNICATING OUR WORK

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Before coming to HWDT, Silurian was used in the filming of the original Blue Planet series in 2000. So we were thrilled nearly two decades later to welcome the team from BBC Blue Planet UK on-board Silurian to feature the important conservation work she is doing now as HWDT's flagship on the programme.

We published 63 online news articles, which resulted in a combined 343 items of press coverage (online and print) and 14 TV and radio interviews, with a particular buzz around the launch of the Hebridean Whale Trail in June. Just six months after its launch, the Hebridean Whale Trail was a finalist in the 'New National Treasure (UK)' category of the National Geographic Traveller Reader Awards.

## PARTNERS

HWDT is grateful to businesses who pledged support and raised vital funds for our conservation efforts.



## FUNDERS

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





*“Tapadh leat!”*

