

"A sign of good weather?"

I find it amusing how Irish people often suggest that the presence of dolphins is a sign of good weather, sunshine on its way, a short winter, or a long summer. Perhaps there is some truth to these old adages, but I'm not too convinced. Regardless of the weather, Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) have taken up residence in the mouth of Cork Harbour since February 2006. Have a listen to the next shipping forecast and see does 'Roche's Point automatic' fare better than any other meteorological station in the country. I put their presence down to an enticing mix of cod, mackerel, whiting and bass in the area. I'm frequently out in the harbour and surrounding area and only twice have I not encountered these animals since February. The big question is, are these the same animals that have been sighted since then? The problem is, these animals have frustratingly indistinct dorsal fins, and my photo I.D. shots all appear identical. Not much use at all!

Given that the pod has consistently comprised eight individuals with at least three juveniles and perhaps upwards of two very large animals (close to 14ft, presumably adult males), I reckon it is very possibly the same pod of animals. If so, this has been the longest residency recorded of any cetaceans in Cork Harbour, even longer than that of the famous Killer Whales (*Orcinus orca*).

The animals have been displaying some amazing behaviour – the usual Bottlenose Dolphin antics of backwards somersaults, breaching up to 10ft high, throwing fish into the air and fluke-slapping. I have also observed more bizarre behaviour – they seem to be using the channel marker buoys to trap fish, particularly when the tide is flowing

fast. During one sighting in February, the pod circled a very dazed-looking seal pup which was battling with a salmon half its size. Curiosity was soon satisfied, it seemed, and they swam off.

While I hope these dolphins stay for a while longer, I am concerned that they might receive the same abuse that the Killer Whales did. There are a lot of inexperienced people at the helm of pointlessly fast pleasure craft in the harbour. "Fun Season" usually falls on a summer bank holiday weekend. It involves boats, jet-skis, alcohol, sunburn, and too much horsepower. Cetaceans add another factor to this circus, as these people often find themselves with an obsessive compulsion to harass anything that swims. Last summer, I was

in my father's boat watching a large pod of Bottlenose Dolphins in the harbour when I was advised by a muppet in a c.30ft speed boat to "Drive fast, straight into the middle of them, they love that, Boyyy!" Enough said. Also, just recently, I witnessed reckless driving around this pod by a local angling charter whereby he circled the pod tightly, quite quickly, four or five times.

I recommend that anyone with even a vague interest in cetaceans gets down to Roche's Point and has a look at these animals, they put on a great spectacle – all you need is a pair of binoculars, a deck chair and some popcorn!

– Report by Conor Ryan



IWDG News

IWDG News is published by the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group. You are free to reproduce text, but please acknowledge IWDG. Photographs may only be used with photographer's permission.

IWDG ADDRESS

Republic of Ireland:

IWDG, Merchants Quay,
Kilrush, Co Clare, Ireland
Email: simon.berrow@iwdg.ie
Website: www.iwdg.ie

Northern Ireland:

Ian Enlander, Commonwealth House,
35, Castle Street, Belfast BT1 1GU
Phone: 048 (028 in NI) 9054 6610
Email: ian.enlander@iwdg.ie

Text & Editor

Faith Wilson

Design & production

Cóilín MacLochlainn

IWDG DIRECTORS

Eithne Griffin, Emer Rogan, Frances Bermingham,
Vincent Murphy, Kevin McCormick, Ian Enlander,
Fiacc Ó Brolcháin

IWDG COMMITTEE

IWDG Co-ordinator:

Dr Simon Berrow

Secretary:

Pádraig Whooley
Dereen, Rossmore,
Clonakilty, Co Cork
Tel: (023) 38761
Email: padraig.whooley@iwdg.ie

Membership Secretary:

Mick O'Connell
Coolcummisk, Beaufort
Killarney, Co Kerry
Tel: 087-632 8106
Email: mick.oconnell@iwdg.ie

Treasurer:

Phyllis Ryan

Committee members:

Ian Enlander (chairman), Faith Wilson, Tracey
Floyd, Mick O'Connell, Louise McAlavey, Nick
Channon, Dave Wall, Kevin McCormick

WEBSITE

www.iwdg.ie

MEMBERSHIP SUBS

Student: €12 (Sterling £10)
Unemployed: €12 (Sterling £10)
OAP: €12 (Sterling £10)
Waged: €25 (Sterling £20)
Family: €35 (Sterling £25)
Corporate: €125 (Sterling £90)
Contact the Membership Secretary

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of *IWDG News* or the IWDG. Although we try to ensure that all information contained in this newsletter is correct, IWDG cannot be held responsible for any problems arising as a result of this newsletter's contents.

Any item or product advertised in *IWDG News* is not necessarily approved or recommended by IWDG unless specifically stated.

Editorial Comment

2006 has been a busy year to date for the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, and our local and national media coverage of cetacean-related events (particularly in relation to stranded animals, both live and dead) has never been greater. The media has a keen appetite for stories of whales and dolphins and many journalists are increasingly surprised to learn of the diversity of species found in Irish waters. As ever, the IWDG website has been a tremendous asset in dealing with such requests, as there is a wealth of information on sightings, strandings, species profiles, etc, available to all on www.iwdg.ie and journalists and radio presenters can be directed to it during an event when personnel are busy dealing with the event at hand. It was interesting to see material from the IWDG website articles literally reproduced word for word by such notable broadcasters as the BBC during the recent Larne Lough sighting, subsequent live stranding and humane killing of the first confirmed Sei Whale recorded in Irish waters since 1914!

With continued funding from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Environment and Heritage Service (Northern Ireland), the Marine Institute and the Heritage Council for ISCOPE II, the group continues to lead the way in gathering and disseminating biological information in the country. The IWDG is now approached by other conservation NGOs for advice on how to manage and interactively present biological records on behalf of those who gather them.

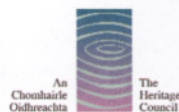
All of these activities require funding and, like all NGOs, we are constantly looking for new and innovative ways to raise money for the core activities of the group in areas of policy, education and research. You can help through continued membership, purchasing of IWDG merchandise such as our DVD and companion field guide, and by attending events such as our whalewatching weekends. We welcome any further ideas (or donations) you may have!

Faith Wilson Editor



RTE Mooney Goes Wild team on board *Muc Mhara*, the new IWDG RIB.

The new IWDG
Rigid Inflatable Boat
(RIB) was kindly
funded by the
Heritage Council



IWDG obtains new research vessel

In May 2006, a new 6-metre research vessel was delivered to the IWDG. The XS 600 Deluxe RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat) was imported from Barnett Marine in the UK and is equipped with depth sounder, VHF radio, compass and GPS. Other equipment includes radar reflectors and a deck light to enable work at night. The vessel has seating for three persons but is able to carry a maximum of 10 passengers. With a 115hp Mercury Optimax outboard engine, which is designed for increased fuel efficiency and low emissions, the boat can easily reach speeds in excess of 30 knots.

The RIB is generously funded by the Heritage Council and will enable the IWDG to conduct inshore monitoring programmes for cetaceans as well as assist during marine

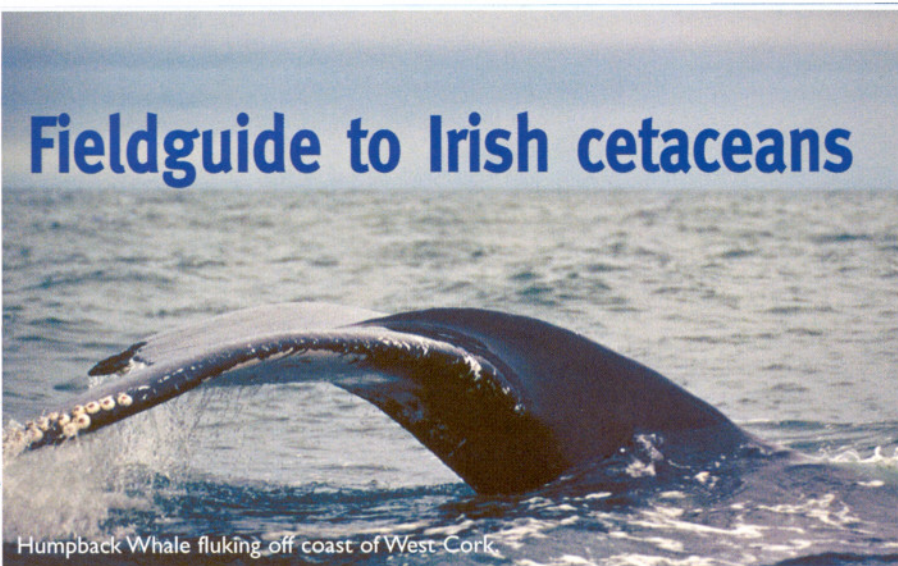
mammal strandings and at public events around the coast. The RIB has been named '*Muc Mhara*,' which is Irish for harbour porpoise. Thanks go to Irish Ferries who provided free passage for the RIB and towing vehicle from Holyhead to Dublin on board the *MV Ulysses*.

In addition to IWDG work, the new RIB has also been used to assist Joanne O'Brien from GMIT to recover a TPOD from Galway Bay, to facilitate RTE (*Mooney Goes Wild* from Cork Harbour and RTE News in the Shannon Estuary) and assist the BirdWatch Ireland Corca Dhuibhne Branch to carry out a seabird survey on the Maharees, Co Kerry, where 150 new Storm Petrel nests were located on previously unsurveyed offshore islands.

Cover Photograph: Bottlenose Dolphins © Philip Daly

Fieldguide to Irish cetaceans

© Pádraig Whooley



Humpback Whale fluking off coast of West Cork

A GUIDE TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE WHALES AND DOLPHINS OF IRELAND
By Jim Wilson, with Simon Berrow
Irish Whale & Dolphin Group, 118 pages, €12.99
Many colour photos, drawings and maps
ISBN-10: 0-9540552-2-5
ISBN-13: 978-0-9540552-2-6

By Andrew Malcolm

Until now, it was not possible to buy a definitive guide to our native cetacean species. In fact, the best book I could find when I first started looking hopefully out to sea gave me some useful clues on how to recognise such exotic creatures as the Pantropical Spotted Dolphin, which is not an animal one would normally expect to encounter swimming in the chilly waters off the Waterford coast! With the publication of *A Guide to the Identification of the Whales and Dolphins of Ireland*, written by Jim Wilson with the assistance of Simon Berrow, the omission of an authoritative and comprehensive guide to Irish cetaceans exclusively has been rectified.

Conveniently-sized to fit in the pocket and, inspirationally, spirally bound, this manual is perfect for the field, with chapters on where, how and when to find whales, dolphins or porpoise at your nearest coastal location. Knowing what to wear, what equipment to bring and how to record your day's sightings are all covered extensively. Stunning photographs and drawings help with identification, and notes on behaviour

and links to species with similar characteristics should help both novice and comparative expert alike to learn more about these sometimes frustratingly illusive creatures.

There are also ideas that are unexpected and extremely welcome. Colour-coded maps show the distribution of the species that have been recorded in Irish waters, together with pages of drawings of lateral and linear views of skulls of all the cetaceans that may strand on our shoreline. On this second innovation, it is important to note that, realistically, our first meeting with a whale or dolphin is most likely to happen while walking on the beach and either coming across a carcass, or more improbably, a live stranded cetacean.

Overall, this is a very welcome addition to my whale-watching back-pack, although I do have some slight reservations. Firstly, I find that sometimes the text tends to read a little like the script for a video guide. Also, for myself, a to-scale chart at the start of the book, with a linked index to each species found throughout, would have been a welcome addition. This would have helped with the slightly confusing Species Profiles section, where the animals are listed in order of likelihood of occurrence rather than appropriate family. This last idea was, I feel, a rather subjective and perhaps unnecessary complication to an otherwise excellent effort.

John de Courcy Ireland: an appreciation

By Fiacc Ó Brolcháin



As a nation, we have never loved the sea enough or taken the opportunities that the waters around us offer. Dr John de Courcy Ireland's life work was to address this problem, and his

commitment to his chosen calling was all-consuming. As a maritime lobbyist, author, historian, lecturer, linguist and teacher, Ireland has never had an equal to John de Courcy Ireland.

As a young man, he spent some time at sea but returned to Ireland to take up a teaching post in the school attached to St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, where he taught geography by means of a large map of the world and the 'shipping list' that was then published in the daily newspapers. This method of teaching led many of his pupils to take up a sea-related career in later life. As a founder member of the Maritime Institute he was influential in the development of Ireland's maritime policy, especially in the formation of BIM and Irish Shipping.

In his later years, John de Courcy Ireland travelled the world to lecture on Ireland and the sea. He wrote ten books, all related to the sea, and was responsible for bringing to this country's attention the great influence Irish people such as Admirable Brown, founder of the Argentinian Navy, had on the formation of seafaring history.

Marine Institute's Marine Mammal Observer bursaries

This year, for the first time ever, the Marine Institute has included two marine mammal observer (MMO) bursaries in its Summer Bursary Programme. The IWDG delivered a marine mammal observer training course to the bursary students before they headed out to sea on the *RV Celtic Explorer* on the 15th July. The IWDG congratulates the Marine Institute for its addition of marine mammal observer bursaries to its growing list of marine science bursaries. The addition of MMO bursaries is especially relevant in light of the recent recommendations of the IOSEA report (see article, page 11).

Millipore donation

The IWDG would like to thank John Quirke of Millipore Ireland BV, Carrigtwohill, Cork, for the generous donation of a second-hand laptop computer, and John's wife for her donation of a digital projector. This equipment will be put to good use in the coming year.

Order your copy now! Available from Simon Berrow, IWDG, Merchants Quay, Kilrush, Co Clare, Ireland, for €15 (Stg£10) including p&p, and from all good bookshops.

IRISH SCHEME FOR CETACEAN OBSERVATION AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

ISCOPE, a three-year initiative undertaken by IWDG, has been completed. The project enabled the IWDG to demonstrate our abilities to organise national data collection schemes (stranding and sighting), validate records to ensure quality control, and disseminate and interpret the information received.

ISCOPE was the first funding the IWDG received to run these schemes since the IWDG was established in 1991. Cetacean stranding and sighting schemes are now acknowledged nationally as environmental monitoring indices.

During ISCOPE, we delivered 41 public talks and 26 training courses, including field trips, in 12 counties. An ISCOPE exhibition was organised at ENFO in Dublin and is currently touring the country. A total of 35,000 individual items were printed to support ISCOPE, including recordings forms, laminated identification guides and posters, in addition to the 80,000 print-run ENFO produced to support the ISCOPE exhibition. Four slide packs were produced and are available to members of the IWDG who might like to present a talk locally. These packs are now complemented by an interactive DVD covering not just species identification but also whale-watching field skills and the recently published *Guide to the Identification of Whales and Dolphins of Ireland* (see review, page 3).

Number of records received

The number of sighting records received has increased steadily at around 20% per annum, with about 8,500 received by 2005. An objective of ISCOPE was to improve seasonal and geographical coverage and this was notably achieved along the west and northwest coasts (Counties Clare to Down). The numbers of stranding records reported have also been steadily increasing, with c.100-120 strandings reported each year, reaching an all-time high of 128 in 2004. A total of 840 effort watches have been carried out at 78 sites distributed throughout the island of Ireland. The IWDG sightings database includes details of 619 watches from 36 sites that were carried out up to 2001. Thus in total the IWDG has data from 1,754 watches from 93 sites. The total number of hours watched now exceeds 2,689. All data, including sightings, strandings and effort watches have been uploaded onto our web server for online interrogation.

Although the ferry surveys began before ISCOPE started, they now form part of the core activities of ISCOPE, and routes have been expanded. Monthly surveys are now being conducted on the Dublin-Holyhead, Rosslare-Pembroke and Larne-Cairnryan



© John Rafferty

Bottlenose Dolphins, Arranmore Bay, Co Donegal, July 2006 (See article, page 7).

routes. The IWDG also conducted surveys on ten cruises onboard the Marine Institute research vessel, *RV Celtic Explorer*. Copies of ferry and cruise reports can be downloaded from www.iwdg.ie/shops. In addition to our proposed tasks, the IWDG was requested to initiate a trial-monitoring programme of the two Special Areas of Conservation designated for harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) at Roaringwater Bay, Co Cork, and the Blasket Islands, Co Kerry.

In order to disseminate this multitude of data, the IWDG has spent considerable time and resources developing the website www.iwdg.ie and allowing online interrogation of the datasets. Website traffic has grown steadily from 4,000 unique requests per month at the start of the project to around 24,000 by April 2005, demonstrating a real increase in interest.

ISCOPE seminar

The final act of ISCOPE was a seminar hosted by the Marine Institute in Oranmore, Co Galway, in June 2006. The objectives of the seminar were to present the results of ISCOPE to our partners and obtain feedback on the recording schemes. We also wanted to pull together the cetacean research community in Ireland to discuss future survey requirements and the creation of a Joint Irish Cetacean Sightings database. Over 80 people attended the seminar from a range of government departments and agencies, as well as IWDG members and recorders. The feedback from the seminar has been very positive and the

IWDG has received praise from all regarding the quality of its work and publications.

- A copy of the project report can be downloaded from <http://www.iwdg.ie/categories.asp?cat=67&search=ISCOPE>.

ISCOPE II

The IWDG has received a three-year commitment to run ISCOPE II. Under ISCOPE II, we propose to continue to increase awareness of cetaceans in Irish waters and encourage people to participate in biological recording, but more emphasis will be placed on improving data handling, manipulation and dissemination. We will also increase our commitment to the use of Ships of Opportunity to survey waters that cannot be covered by land-based observations.

We aim to continue to develop the database to enable better interpretation of the data in order to easily derive monitoring indices. This will include establishing baseline or reference values for sighting rates and relative abundance, both geographically and seasonally. This will be carried out in consultation with the NPWS to ensure monitoring requirements under the Habitats Directive are being fulfilled.

- If anybody is interested in getting involved in ISCOPE II, or organising a public talk or course to promote whale and dolphin recording at which we will come and deliver, please contact Simon Berrow or Pádraig Whooley.

Simon Berrow, ISCOPE Co-ordinator

ISCOPE is funded by the Environment and Heritage Service (Northern Ireland), the Heritage Council, the Marine Institute and the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Ship surveys



© Pádraig Whooley

Common Dolphins off the south coast of Ireland.

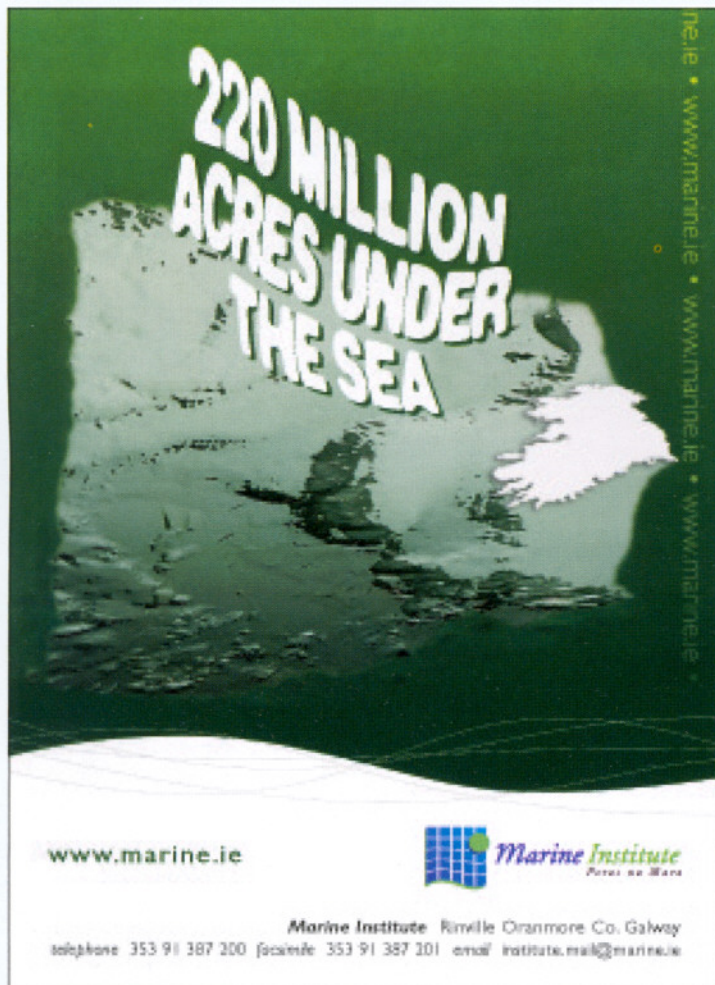
September will see the recommencement of IWDG surveys off the west coast of Ireland where we will join a Marine Institute deep-water fisheries survey. In October, we will conduct our annual survey off the south coast during the Marine Institute's Celtic Sea Herring Acoustic Survey, and for the rest of the winter we will survey from a variety of ships including the *Celtic Explorer* and other research vessels. Ship survey effort will focus on the autumn and winter seasons for the next three years. In a new development for IWDG Ship Surveys, we will also be conducting surveys on board Irish Navy vessels as they conduct their patrols around the Irish coast. Once again, we thank the Naval Service and the Marine Institute for their ongoing support of IWDG surveys.

Ferry surveys

The IWDG Ferry Surveys continue to go from strength to strength in the Irish Sea, facilitated by Irish Ferries and P&O Ferries. There have been plenty of sightings of Harbour Porpoise and Common Dolphins, as well as Minke Whales and Risso's Dolphins.

A meeting of the Atlantic Research Coalition (a network of researchers conducting cetacean surveys on board ferries in Europe) was held at the European Cetacean Society conference in Gdynia, Poland, in April. At this meeting it was agreed to use our joint data sets with a view to creating a simple model of cetacean distributions across NW Europe. Such data could be used to examine the influence of factors such as global warming on cetaceans in Europe.

A request was also received from the SCANS II project for porpoise data from our ferry surveys, and the IWDG has passed this data on. We hope to compare our results with the results of the SCANS II survey to see how well the ferry survey data reflects the population data recorded during the SCANS II survey.

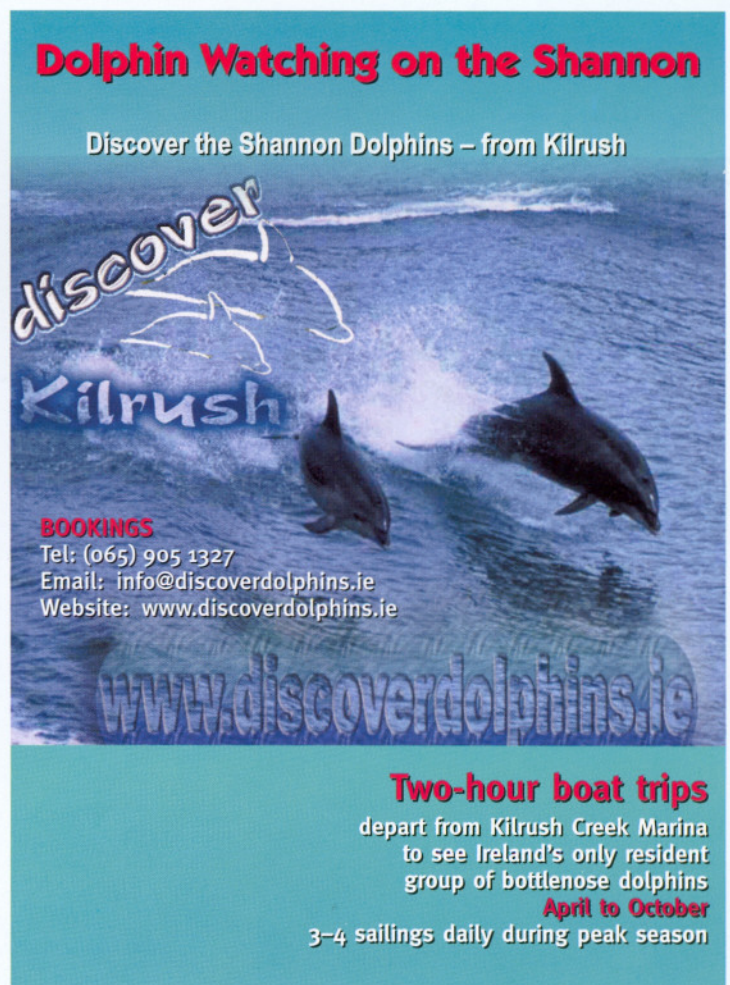


220 MILLION
ACRES UNDER
THE SEA

www.marine.ie

Marine Institute
Foras na Mara

Marine Institute Rinnville Oranmore Co. Galway
telephone 353 91 387 200 facsimile 353 91 387 201 email institute.mail@marine.ie



Dolphin Watching on the Shannon

Discover the Shannon Dolphins – from Kilrush

discover
Kilrush

BOOKINGS
Tel: (065) 905 1327
Email: info@discoverdolphins.ie
Website: www.discoverdolphins.ie

www.discoverdolphins.ie

Two-hour boat trips
depart from Kilrush Creek Marina
to see Ireland's only resident
group of bottlenose dolphins
April to October
3-4 sailings daily during peak season



Minke whales, basking sharks delight off Inishowen

By Emmett Johnston

After a disappointing 'constant effort watch' on 2nd June with perfect sea conditions, my enthusiasm for whale-watching was starting to fade...while 'priority work' was piling up on my desk. On Monday, we landed on Inishtrahull, Ireland's most northerly island. A few days spent on breeding bird surveys there is like stepping into another world.

Tuesday morning and we arose to dead calm seas and perfect visibility, which is an extremely rare event at Malin Head. Telescopes and bins came out and within 60 seconds we had our first sighting of a Basking Shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*) about 100m off shore. Then it started: five, six...no, wait...twelve, and even more; at one moment we had over 20 in view.

We then saw our first cetacean sighting, Minke Whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) feeding about 2-3km off the east end of the island. First we thought it was a group of 4-5, but as we started to pan the scope, more and more kept coming into view. Twenty plus separate animals was our final count at about lunchtime. Mix in a spattering of Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) sightings and our day was made.

Relaxing that evening on the heli-pad beside the lighthouse – no scope or bins; just taking in the view –we caught a once-in-a-lifetime moment. What we now believe to have been a Humpback (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) leapt clean out of the water and dived back with a mountain of a splash.



© Emmett Johnston

Minke Whale off Inishtrahull, Co Donegal.

There was silence during those few seconds. "Did you just see that?" was the loud shout as we leapt to our feet. We saw another great splash about 4-5 miles out towards the north Antrim coast minutes after.

Following a description from Des Mills, skipper of the *Barracuda*, about an 8-metre Minke that had passed under his boat earlier that day, we headed out the following afternoon. With our hearts thumping, we hit the tidal meeting line about three miles off Inishtrahull. Birds were diving all over the place, Basking Sharks passed under and around the boat, and as we drifted in silence we started to hear the Minke blowing. Within 10 minutes we were surrounded by several of them feeding, breaching and blowing. My camera was on overdrive but the digital wouldn't take pictures fast

enough. We were all ecstatic, hairs raised on end. Three hours later and, after finding a dead baby porpoise, we reluctantly headed back to shore.

Next morning, it was a little more breezy and we didn't catch the same tide, but the Basking Sharks were there, alright, milling around in pairs! They looked like they were pairing up to mate. The video cameras were whizzing and we were lucky to get some great footage of this activity. Some Minke leapt nearby and we headed in their direction, but a few jumps later and it was just us and the Gannets out there, a bit of a difference from the day before. I can't say I was disappointed. All in all, it was a manic few days, but I have to admit I have definitely caught the whale-watch bug. Bring on those constant effort watches!



© Pádraig Whooley

Fin Whale mother and calf off the coast of West Cork, July 2006.

Fin Whales return on cue

The last Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) of the 2005/6 "whale season" was observed off Ardmore, Co Waterford, on 5th March 2006, which was the latest they've been seen in Irish waters. But we didn't have to wait too long for their return as the first sighting of the 2006/7 season was made in West Cork on 25th June – begging the question, where did they go for the brief three-month period that they were absent from our waters? By mid-July, the whales were being reported in the usual hotspots with increased regularity and in increasing numbers, with upwards of eight being observed inshore on several occasions.

A quick interrogation of www.iwdg.ie shows the first reported dates of the arrival of Fin Whales or downgraded categories (most likely fin whales) make for interesting reading, as 50% of these dates are within the same week, the third week in June, with most of the sightings occurring within the same 72-hour period. That's consistency for you!

Fin Whale arrival dates and locations (1999-2006)

Year	Date	Location
1999	20 June	Old Head of Kinsale, Cork
2000	24 June	Old Head of Kinsale, Cork
2001	4 June	Kinsale Gas Fields, Cork
2002	10 May	Galley Head area, Cork
2003	23 June	Celtic Sea area
2004	28 May	Kinsale gas fields, Cork
2005	29 May	Ardmore Head, Waterford
2006	25 June	High Island area, Cork

Such results show the level of useful information that can be achieved from regular "effort" or "timed" watches, which is why the emphasis during the three years of ISCOPE II will be on encouraging more of these watches from areas which have been identified as sites that would benefit from monitoring. – **Pádraig Whooley**

Midsummer morning treat

With a weather forecast of northwest gales and strong gales of Force 9 and more, I was awake at 05:00hrs. Anxiously, I checked our charter boat *Barracuda*, which was at anchor off the pier below my bedroom window at Bunagee Harbour in the north Inishowen peninsula, Co Donegal. Having consistently told Pádraig Whooley that we rarely see Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) up here, there they were in front of me – 3 or 4 of them. I wanted to wake everyone to watch. As it turned out, I didn't have to: the dolphins were with us for the next five days. The weather settled down and they put on a show every day for anyone standing on the pier, walking the

beach, or entering or leaving the harbour, with an amazing display of jumping and bow riding. Dolphins will follow a food source and I'm not sure what these ones were feeding on, but from our boat my daughter Laura saw one surface with a fish in its beak, toss it in the air and catch it as it fell. My son Shaun actually touched one of the dolphins as it rose at the bow of the boat. Unfortunately, whatever the feed source, it must have moved on as we have not seen our dolphins since Sunday, 25th June. Let's hope they come back, as they capped a really memorable month of June off Inishowen. Pádraig Whooley and everyone else, watch this space! – **Des Mills**



© Pádraig Whooley

Risso's Dolphin

East coast sightings

Whale-watchers from the east coast region are no doubt well used to having to make the long pilgrimage to the south or southwest coasts for reliable cetacean encounters. Yet increasingly in recent years, IWDG has highlighted that the early summer period of May and June can indeed offer some good whale-watching potential within a short hop of the nation's capital.

For the fourth consecutive year, Risso's Dolphins (*Grampus griseus*) showed quite reliably off the Wicklow coast, with a minimum of 19 validated sightings, all of which were within viewing distance from shore, between 12th May and 27th June. All sightings were reported along the 15-mile stretch of coastline between Wicklow Head and Bray Head, with the majority being concentrated between Greystones and Wicklow Head. Despite the consistency of sightings in this area, we haven't succeeded in obtaining any photo-ID images of these

Arranmore Bay dolphins

There are times when you experience something you know will stay with you for the rest of your natural days, and on Wednesday 5th July I had the privilege of such an experience: I came across a huge pod of Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) at Arranmore Island, Co Donegal. There were in excess of 100 there, a fantastic sight, something I will never forget.

Several lobster-pot fishermen whom I spoke to that day said they had seen dolphins in large numbers at Owey Island. Every year, we are graced with the appearance of dolphins in the bay, but

dolphins, which, if we could get a "match", would help us establish where this poorly understood species is coming from and going to.

Slightly further up the coast, off County Dublin, there was another run of whale sightings reported to IWDG, all of which were between the 2nd and 5th June. Many were reported by Skerries Yacht Club members taking part in a race to the Isle of Man, where a cluster of sightings were reported from an area 20-25 miles northeast of Rockabill. In the absence of photographic evidence, it was not in most cases possible to confirm their species, although they were most likely Minke Whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*).

So, may this serve as a reminder to those of you living in the Pale, that not all large cetacean activity in Irish waters takes place along our Celtic Sea and Atlantic seaboard.

– **Pádraig Whooley**

never have so many been seen in Rosses Bay at any one time. Watching the dolphins in the wild was studying nature at its best. The dolphins were hunting in a group and had gathered a huge shoal of terrified mackerel into a tight bait ball which broke the surface on numerous occasions in an attempt to get away from the dolphins, only to be picked up by precision-diving Gannets. I stayed with these beautiful creatures for over an hour before I had to go, and even as I left them they continued to ride the bow wave at the front of the boat. Pure perfection. –

John Rafferty



Larne Port

Species Profile

Sei Whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*)

By Pádraig Whooley

Over the years, I've often cited the error in the publication *Whales, Porpoises and Seals from Cape Cod to Newfoundland* where the first two editions of this superb book confused Sei with Fin Whale. The Larne whale saga in July 2006, when our ID skills were put to the test and found wanting, removed my smugness.

This whale went from being a Minke on day one to a probable Fin on day two, and a Sei on day three, with interesting debate on whether it was a Bryde's Whale on day four! All observations were by seasoned observers at distances close to and including point blank range, and were in ideal, yet unusual, circumstances. The debate continued long after the whale had stranded...and bear in mind it was in very fresh condition. It was only after a post-mortem was carried out and all images analysed that we could be certain that it was, in fact, a Sei Whale (pronounced "say").

If this incident highlights anything it's the need for extreme caution when identifying large baleen whales at sea. In the early days of monitoring large whales off the Cork coast, we occasionally described large baleen whales as Sei. This was based largely on land observations at distances of 5-20 miles, using telescopes, and typically in the poor light conditions that prevail in winter when large baleen whale occurrences peak along the south coast. In light of the Larne whale incident, it may be prudent to revisit these records and downgrade them to a more appropriate category such as "blue/fin/sei" or "large whale sp."

The reality is that the vast majority of large baleen whales that are neither Minkes nor Humpbacks, are Fin Whales. We have hundreds of encounters, dozens of photographs and many hours of video footage, showing diagnostic features which support this premise. But we won't always get it right, as invariably the occasional Sei, Blue and, who knows, perhaps even Bryde's Whale, will slip through the net. So, before we assume that all large baleen whales of >30ft length, with a visible blow and that do not tail-fluke, are Fin Whales, we need to consider the following:

- The Sei Whale is smaller at 12-16m; adult Fin Whales are 15-25m in length.
- The Fin Whale's head is uniquely asymmetrical, with a white, right lower jaw, whereas the Sei Whale's "lips" are equally dark on both sides.
- The Fin Whale has "blazing chevrons" on its right flank behind the head, and a pale wash behind the blowhole, features generally absent on the Sei Whale.
- The Sei Whale's baleen plates are black on both sides, but Fin Whale's will have some white baleen running out to the rostrum on the right side.
- The Fin Whale blow reaches 5-7m; a Sei Whale's is neither as tall nor dense.
- Given their smaller size, you will see the Sei Whale's "blow" and dorsal fin simultaneously, whereas a Fin Whale's blow is followed by a long roll of a massive back, before the dorsal fin appears.
- The Fin Whale's dorsal fin sweeps backwards but the Sei's is taller and more erect.



IWDG Fisheries Policy Document

By Simon Berrow

The IWDG has a long history of collaboration with the Irish fishing industry. Fishers from both north and south have consistently supported the IWDG sighting scheme, and the IWDG was involved in initial drift-net trials for albacore tuna. More recently, the IWDG contributed to the DEFRA review of cetacean bycatch and EU Pinger Resolution, and is represented by Dave Wall on the Executive Council of the new NWWRAC (see article below).

Due to this recent involvement in fisheries policy issues and the present uncertain future of commercial fishing in Ireland, the IWDG decided it was important to articulate our position on fisheries and offer some recommendations on fisheries and ecosystem management.

This new policy document makes nine

recommendations, from improving our knowledge of cetaceans in Irish waters (so we can determine the impact of commercial fishing) to promoting an ecosystem approach to managing our marine resources. All new fisheries and gear developments should be subjected to a full Environmental Impact Assessment before being licensed for use. While the IWDG supports the EU Bycatch Resolution 812/2004, more research is urgently required to develop pinger reliability and effectiveness, prior to their deployment in the gill-net and tangle-net fleets. The monitoring requirements laid out in the resolution should be implemented fully. The IWDG also recommends that Ireland signs ASCOBANS without delay.

IWDG supports Marine Protected Areas or No Take Zones; however, they should be

of a large enough spatial scale to benefit predators and should facilitate the assessment of the impact of this management tool on the ecosystem. The IWDG is also concerned that a system be established to enable effective communication between the DCMNR and DEHLG and other stakeholders regarding management. The Irish fishing industry should be expected to achieve 'Sustainable Seafood' compliance for Irish fisheries and fish products, and customers provided with full information on the source of fish and the fishing methods used to catch them.

This new policy document was launched at Fish Ireland in Killybegs, Co Donegal, in June 2006. The document can be downloaded from the website at: <http://www.iwdg.ie/articles.asp?art=1605&search=fisheries%20policy%20document>.

IWDG now represented on fisheries forum

By Dave Wall

The North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council (NWWRAC) Executive Committee met on 27th June in the Harbour Hotel, Galway. Issues up for debate included the cod recovery programme, reintroduction of tuna drift-netting, technical conservation measures and the deepwater gillnet ban. The IWDG holds a seat on the executive.

A recommendation from Irish South and West Fisheries Producer Organisation (ISWFO) to conduct new trials of tuna driftnets was discussed in detail. The recommendation was made on foot of the implementation of the new EU pinger regulation for gill-net and tangle-net fisheries. The ISWFO proposed that a trial be carried out on the tuna driftnet fishery to assess if pingers may deter cetaceans and prevent bycatch, which was the basis for the initial ban. Although many in the meeting supported the proposal, it was agreed that this issue had to be shelved until a practical and workable pinger, effective against common dolphins, was developed.

A presentation on the status of the proposed Technical Conservation Measures regulation was made by the EU Commission. The Commission informed the meeting that this proposal would be available in late July. The summary given at the meeting was a cause for optimism for those of us who have seen the current EU fisheries management policies as a failure (see new IWDG Commercial Fisheries Policy Document). The commission spokesman indicated a radical change in thinking in EU Fisheries Policy, with new management measures such as zero discards and non-minimum catch size being considered. An example of the waste in the current management system was the revelation that despite so much effort being focused on minimum mesh sizes in commercial trawls, research suggests that 80% of small fish which pass through the cod end of a trawl die anyway. It is hoped that with new ideas like these, the EU may begin to achieve sustainable, ecosystem-based management of fisheries in European waters.



Atlantic White-sided Dolphin

© Gary Burrows, EHS



A Chance to View Close Up The Whales and Dolphins of West Cork

Species include Fin, Humpback and Minke whales, Common and Bottlenose dolphins



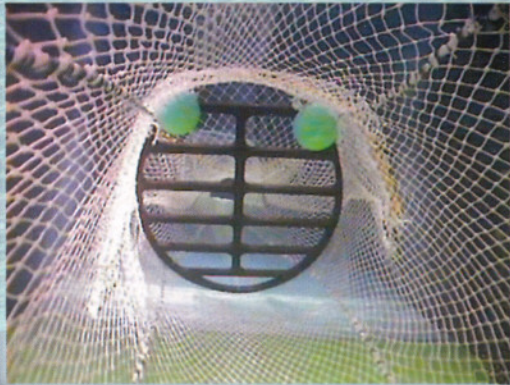
Some of the best whale watching in Europe.

**Call Nic on: 00 353 86 120 0027
Email: nics@whalewatchwestcork.com
Web: www.whalewatchwestcork.com**

Protecting Irish cetaceans and seals

BIM implements environmentally friendly fishing gear scheme providing grant aid for pingers and escape panels

Side and front view of one type of cetacean escape panel that can be considered for grant aid. The orange buoy in the main image shows where a cetacean can escape from the net.



BIM, the Irish Sea Fisheries Board, has launched a new grant aid scheme to assist the fishing industry to introduce environmentally friendly and fuel-efficient fishing methods. The scheme was launched by the Minister of State for Fisheries, John Browne TD, on the 30th of June at the **Fish Ireland 2006 Expo** in Killybegs, Co Donegal.

The programme's main aim is to assist the fishing industry in adopting more selective fishing gears, while also ensuring that fishermen can adapt to the push for an ecosystem approach to fisheries management.

Grant aid of up to 40% is provided for a range of measures aimed at improving conservation methods and fuel efficiency on board Irish vessels. Conversion to more selective fishing gear and conversion to methods with a reduced impact on the environment are central to the scheme.

Preventing the by-catch of marine mammals in fishing gear is one of the many objectives of the scheme, and aid is allocated for gears such as acoustic deterrent devices, or

'pingers,' and cetacean or seal escape panels. Examples of pingers and escape panels that would be considered for funding under this scheme are pictured here.

Conversion from trawling to alternative or traditional fishing

The scheme is consistent with previous programmes introduced by BIM to support the sustainable development of the catching sector. Grant approval is secured only on the strict basis that changes do not lead to an increase in fishing effort or capacity.



Examples of pingers currently available on the market and for which grant aid will be allocated.

gears is also supported in these measures, and grant aid is provided for gears that can be shown to reduce fishing effort on stocks under pressure or gears which are more species-specific. Such gears have significantly lower fuel demands and are considered more environmentally friendly, with low impact on the marine ecosystem.



Bord Iascaigh Mhara
Irish Sea Fisheries Board

For further details on the scheme, please visit our website www.bim.ie, or contact BIM staff directly at fleet@bim.ie, or phone (01) 214 4100



Whaling and the International Whaling Commission (IWC)

By Dr Emer Rogan

Against a background of globally depleted whale stocks by the turn of the 20th century, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) was set up under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, which was signed in Washington DC on 2nd December 1946. The original convention was signed by 15 countries, with membership open to any country that formally adheres to the terms of the Convention; the IWC currently has 70 members (Ireland joined in 1985). The purpose of the Convention is to oversee the conservation of whale stocks and facilitate the "orderly development of the whaling industry." The original schedule of the Convention and subsequent modifications govern the conduct of whaling throughout the world. These measures have broad and varied scope. For example, measures exist which provide complete protection for some species (e.g. North Atlantic Right Whales); designate specified areas as whale sanctuaries (e.g. Indian Ocean and Southern Ocean sanctuaries); set limits on the numbers and size of whales which may be taken, and prohibit the capture of female whales accompanied by calves.

The Commission meets annually and comprises a number of different committees, including the scientific committee. The information and advice the scientific committee provides forms the basis on which the Commission develops the regulations for the control of whaling. These regulations are contained in the Schedule and require a three-quarters majority of the Commissioners voting. Any changes become effective after 90 days unless a member state has lodged an objection, in which case the new regulation is not binding on that country. This procedure is used when a government considers "its national interests or sovereignty are unduly affected" (IWC website <http://www.iwc.office.org/>).

During the 1960s through to the 1980s it was recognised that whale stocks were depleted and quotas on Blue, Fin and Sei Whales in the Antarctic were set to zero, while, at the same time, a new management procedure was adopted by the IWC. However, against a background of declining whale stocks, increasing political pressure (e.g. a UN resolution in 1972 asking for a moratorium on whaling) and an increase in the numbers of countries joining the IWC (which gave the necessary three-quarters majority), the IWC declared a moratorium on commercial whaling, which came into force in 1986. The moratorium was put in place to allow stocks to recover and to allow scientists and managers to carry out comprehensive assessments of whale



© Pádraig Whooley

Minke Whale, West Cork.

species (e.g. obtain up-to-date abundance estimations, to develop robust algorithms to better set quotas for whales (revised management procedure), and, in the event that commercial whaling re-commences on a large scale, the development of a revised management scheme to put in place better management in terms of monitoring, reporting, observers, etc. Additional issues included humane killing methods, illegal trade in whale products, pirate whaling, mis-reporting, and effects of environmental degradation.

As a result of the "objection" rule, a number of countries objected to the establishment of the moratorium, including Iceland (who left the IWC in 1992, but rejoined in 2004) and Norway. Norway did refrain from whaling for a number of years, but set its own catch limits for Minke Whales in 1993 and resumed whaling. Their current quota is set at 1,052 Minke Whales. Iceland and Japan have established scientific programmes which include the lethal take of a number of whale species (under special scientific permit) and included 15 Sperm, 100 Sei, 50 Bryde's, and 1,117 Minke taken in 2005.

In addition, some countries are given quotas under what is termed aboriginal subsistence whaling. Under current IWC regulations, aboriginal subsistence whaling is permitted for Denmark (Bowhead, Fin and Minke Whales), the Russian Federation

(Siberia, Gray and Bowhead Whales), St Vincent and The Grenadines (Bequia, Humpback Whales) and the USA (Alaska, Bowhead and Gray Whales). National governments provide the Commission with evidence of the cultural and subsistence needs of their people.

In addition, small cetaceans (dolphins and porpoises) are also hunted. In relation to small cetaceans, the original Convention does not define a 'whale.' Some governments take the view that the IWC has the legal competence to only regulate catches of large whales (those listed as an annex in the Convention). Others believe that all cetaceans, including dolphins and porpoises, fall within IWC jurisdiction and that the



National Aquarium of Ireland

"Promoting the Conservation of Ireland's Marine Environment"

Located on the Prom in Salthill
Tel: (091) 585100



Ireland's largest aquarium: home to 170 species including Seahorses, Octopus and our gentle giant, the Angel Shark!

- Learn the amazing story of Bradán the salmon, King of Fish
- Hold sleepy Starfish and giant Spider Crabs
- Take part in the daily Feeding Frenzy

convention does not explicitly limit the jurisdiction to larger cetaceans. Many of the smaller cetacean species occur within the 200-mile Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ) and issues of national sovereignty are also invoked during this debate. There is no doubt that proper management and conservation of these species is imperative. Many stocks have been shown by the IWC scientific committee to be under considerable threat from both directed and indirect (entanglement in fishing gear, for example) takes. Indeed, recent information on directed takes of some species show that some species are taken in very large numbers, which is of concern. For example, up to 2,000 Harbour Porpoises are taken in a given year in Greenland, while the quota for Beluga is 220 and Narwhal 310. In 2004, the number of small cetaceans hunted in Japan included 13,789 Dall's Porpoise, 637 Striped Dolphins, 537 Bottlenose Dolphins and 504 Risso's Dolphins.

What is clear is that, at the moment, a large number of both whales and dolphins are killed annually. With the possible exception of aboriginal subsistence quotas, the numbers of large whales killed are set unilaterally and on an ad-hoc basis, outside of anything that could be considered a cohesive management framework.

Since the moratorium, tensions between the "orderly development of the whaling industry" and the conservation of whale stocks have increased. Some governments, such as Japan, Iceland and Norway, argue for a resumption of commercial whaling, arguing from cultural, sustainability and demand perspectives, whereas others such as the UK will not contemplate the lifting of the moratorium until it is fully satisfied that whale stocks are completely recovered, methods used to kill whales are humane, and that rules and management are enforceable. Others (e.g. New Zealand, Australia) are completely opposed to the resumption of commercial whaling irrespective of stock size. Some attempts have been made to progress what most see as a stalemate situation within the IWC, including the so-called "Irish proposal." But up until the recent annual meeting in St Kitts and Nevis, the "like-minded" anti-whaling countries had the majority.

However, this year, the balance changed, with the "pro-whaling" countries winning some votes by a simple majority (as opposed to a three-quarter majority) and passing a resolution which states *inter alia* that "the moratorium which was clearly intended as a temporary measure is no longer necessary,"... "many species and stocks of

whales are abundant and sustainable whaling is possible;"... "scientific research has shown that whales consume huge quantities of fish, making the issue a matter of food security for coastal nations and requiring that the issue of management of whale stocks must be considered in a broader context of ecosystem management, since ecosystem management has now become an international standard."

It is difficult to predict what will happen next. Next year, the US takes its turn to chair the Commission, and in a year where the quotas for subsistence hunting are due for renewal, it is probable that negotiations will be entered into, but it is very difficult to see a way forward on an issue with such polarised views. More countries on both "sides" may join, other countries may leave, views may become more entrenched, there will certainly be more rhetoric and posturing, continued discussions on cultural values, humane killing, sustainability, market sampling and the demand for whalemeat, and no doubt compromise will be spoken about – but can anything change? Will anything change? While there may be a great deal of political uncertainty, what is absolutely clear is that the current situation is completely untenable. Something needs to change.

Irish Offshore Strategic Environmental Assessment (IOSEA)

By Dave Wall

Over the past six months the IWDG has been involved in an environmental assessment of oil and gas exploration in the Slyne, Erris and Donegal basins, off the west coast of Ireland. The assessment looked at the environmental impacts that will arise out of a new round of oil and gas exploration, including acoustic disturbance that will be created by seismic surveys and drilling rigs. The IOSEA steering group consisted of representatives of state agencies, NGOs, academia and the oil and gas industry.

The IWDG's main focus was in integrating measures to mitigate the effects of acoustic disturbance on marine mammals in the area. To this end, the IWDG was pleased that the following mitigation measures were included:

- 1) The National Parks and Wildlife Service, IWDG, Marine Institute and CMRC (University College Cork) were involved in drawing up a set of mitigation measures for seismic surveys, including the use of Marine Mammal Observers. The IOSEA report recommends that these measures be implemented in the IOSEA area and also incorporated into the Petroleum Affairs Division's Rules and Procedures, which would mean their implementation in all future seismic surveys in Irish waters.
- 2) The IOSEA report recommends that a workshop on Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM) be held within the next six months. This workshop will assess the current use of PAM in seismic surveys and how PAM would best be utilised as part of mitigation measures for marine mammals in seismic surveys in Irish waters.
- 3) Where more than one seismic survey will take place in the same area at the same time, the IOSEA report recommends that a separation of at least 100km should exist between survey vessels, thus allowing an area of safe passage for marine mammals between the seismic vessels.

A number of other recommendations were made and the IWDG will work with the statutory agencies involved to ensure that the guidelines, workshops and additional measures are implemented in time for the 2007 seismic survey season.

• A full copy of the IOSEA report can be downloaded from the Petroleum Affairs Division website: www.pad.ie.

**Dolphin & Nature
Boat Trips**

at the
Mouth
of the
Shannon

Phone: (065) 905 8156

**DOLPHINWATCH
CARRIGAHOLT**

on the Loop Head Peninsula, Co. Clare
www.dolphinwatch.ie



Sei Whale live-strands at Larne



© Peter Rippon, Larne Times

Sei Whale live-stranded at Island Magee, Co Antrim, 27th July 2006, the first Irish sighting of this species since 1914.

By Pádraig Whooley

IWDG member Peter Steele informed us early on 25th July of a large Minke Whale in Larne Lough, Co Antrim. The whale was swimming in circles, suggesting it may have been disorientated. Throughout the day, Peter positioned his 10-metre whale-watching RIB between the whale and shoreline, preventing it from live-stranding. By 15:00hrs the whale had been coaxed into deeper water and towards Ballylumford power station at the mouth of Larne Lough. It failed, however, to leave the lough on the falling tide, the jetties at Ballylumford posing too great a barrier.

Local co-ordinator Ian Enlander observed the whale in the lough early the following morning. The whale appeared not to be swimming as strongly as the previous day, with signs that it was listing on its side. A vet was put on standby in the event of a live-stranding. It also became clear when viewing the images that this was not a Minke Whale. There were several features suggesting it was one of the balaenopterids, among which were signs of a chevron behind the head, a large splashguard around the blowhole and evidence of a powerful 3 to 5-metre vertical vapour plume. The consensus was that this was either a Fin or a Sei Whale.

Although the whale appeared to be in good body condition, the animal's behaviour suggested it was in poor condition and that this event would result in its live-stranding. However, it was decided by those present that the whale would be given every opportunity to leave the lough. That evening, the whale succeeded in navigating around the Ballylumford jetty and there was cause for optimism when it passed the lighthouse at Ferris Point, with open water in front of it. But the arrival of a ferry and a flood tide at around 19:00hrs drove it back into Larne Lough, where it spent a second night.

Every effort had been made to prevent the whale from stranding and to encourage it out to open water. It was the considered opinion on day three that it should now be left to its own devices, without human intervention. To facilitate this, the PSNI were persuaded to declare a 300-metre exclusion zone around the whale; they deployed a boat to ensure this was adhered to, and the Harbour Master issued a notice to all commercial vessels in the area.

The whale live-stranded on Island Magee, near Kilcoan, at around 15:00hrs. Bryan Muskett, a vet, arrived quickly on the scene and after an initial assessment it was decided to put it down. After consultation with James Barnett of BDMLR, four intra-muscular injections of 15ml of Immobilon, supplemented with 200ml of Phenobarb, were administered at 17:00hrs. It expired at 19:30hrs, some 150 minutes after receiving the dosage. This is the largest cetacean to have been put down by lethal injection in Ireland.

Tissue samples were collected for IWDG, which will confirm the species' identification and give us an idea as to which population of Sei Whales this animal belonged to. A post-mortem was carried out by Tony Patterson, Agro-Food and Biosciences Institute, on 28th July. The initial results indicated that it was a young male Sei Whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*) with no obvious signs of injury or health issues. Interestingly, its stomach was empty, yet its intestines were full of food, suggesting it had recently fed. Its identification was based on the black colour of the baleen plates on both sides, and the absence of a white lower right jaw, which would be present had it been a Fin Whale.

A debate continued on this species' identification, as there was an outside chance that it was a Bryde's Whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*), which would have been a first for the British Isles. Analysis of all available images ended this debate, which clearly showed a single longitudinal ridge running from the tip of the rostrum to the blowhole. By process of elimination, there is now collective

agreement among cetacean researchers on both sides of the Irish Sea that it was a Sei Whale. The difficulty in establishing this whale's species highlights the challenges in identifying accurately large baleen whales at sea. This is an important record as it is the first confirmed record of a Sei Whale in Ireland since 1914.

IWDG would like to thank Peter Steele of North Irish Lodge, Dr Declan Looney, Ian Enlander and John Milburne of the Environment and Heritage Service (NI) for their input over the three days. Our thanks also to the PSNI, Larne Harbour Master, the Coastguard and the people of Larne for their co-operation throughout.

See explore and discover A life under the sea....

We Open Daily

Mon-Fri: 10am-6pm

Sat: 11am-6pm.

Sun: 12noon-6pm

Visit the Seal Sanctuary

www.exploris.org.uk

Portaferry, Co. Down

Tel: 028 4272 8062

EXPLORIS

the northern ireland aquarium

EXPLORIS AQUARIUM IS A FULLY
ACCESSIBLE ARDS BOROUGH COUNCIL
TOURISM FACILITY



Three counties, one Humpback

By Nick Massett & Faith Wilson

It all started, as it so often does, with a phone call. We've a great network going here on the Dingle Peninsula and a recent recruit has been Jonathan Smith who is working on a BBC wildlife documentary in the area. July 14th at 08:30hrs and he's on the phone to report a large pod of Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) just off Inch beach in Dingle Bay.

The 3-metre RIB is thrown onto the roof of the car, engine in the boot and the Rapid Response Unit [RRU] is ready for action; all we need now is a siren and flashing dolphin light. At Inch, I check in with Jonathan who has lost contact with the bottlenose whilst being distracted by a breaching whale! This is getting silly now, but there it is in the middle of the bay, the vague outline of a distant whale breaching repeatedly. We load the boat with camera gear and what not, Georgia my three-year-old takes up position in the bow, and I gun the eight-horse engine for all she's worth. Now, Dingle Bay is a fair expanse of water and the limitations of our RRU soon become apparent, although sea conditions are perfect. Two hours slip by, we've seen nothing, and spirits are beginning to wane. Back-up arrives in the form of Chips Chipperfield to spot for us from a cliff-top vantage, and a faint glint on the water rekindles our optimism. Then out of the corner of my eye the arching back of a wartorn 'Minke' (?) slips under behind us. All eyes astern now and thirty feet away the ugliest looking 'Minke' you've ever seen, with flared



The young male Humpback at Inverin in County Galway.

blowholes, knobby rostrum, gnarled skin and the scarred stump of a dorsal surface again bearing down on us. Holy moly, the dark body, and disproportionately long white pectorals glide under our stationary boat. The stunned silence of realisation that this is in fact a Humpback (*Megaptera novaengliae*) is only broken when the animal bumps off the hull. Wooohh, that's not cool, large whale, small boat, three-year-old daughter, and it's certainly not in the whalewatch guidelines. It surfaces again just in front of us with the classic 'vee' blow and its pocked and scarred body (5m long, tops) give testament to a juvenile that's had a tough upbringing. This is bizarre – what's it doing here? We shadow this strange animal as passively as we can for some time, until it is lost to us. We're ecstatic from the experience, quite extraordinary and totally contrary to any kind of expectation. I love it when this happens, our understanding of cetaceans turned upside down yet again. I want to tell everyone and yet no one about this. Fungi town is just up the coast from here and the circus could very easily descend on an animal in the confines of the bay. I quietly hope that it is gone tomorrow, the mysterious

enigma that wouldn't show us its fluke undersides and be catalogued.

15th July: a phone-call. It's Mick O'Connell out on the Blaskets where the humpback is breaching and pectoral slapping but not fluking, funnily enough.

Almost a week passes and Pádraig Whooley receives a phone-call from the Gardaí in Inveran, Co Galway, reporting a dead whale on the beach. Rory Thynne, who is on-site, provides a description of a c.4m-long baleen whale and the County Council are asked not to bury the animal until a post-mortem is conducted. The post-mortem carried out by Dr Simon Berrow and Joanne O'Brien confirm that this is a juvenile Humpback, and close examination of the BBC footage confirm that it is in fact the same animal as previously observed in Inch.

Subsequent reports received indicate that the animal was first noticed in Galway Bay on 17th July, indicating it had travelled along the coastlines of Kerry, Clare and Galway in under a day and a half.

Where did this young animal get its energy from for such a journey, as the 'pm' revealed that its stomach was empty?

photo
denismacsweeny
shop

43 Marlboro Street
Cork
Phone: 021-4272546
Phone: 021-4274812

Merchants Quay S.C.
Cork
Phone: 021-4278691
Phone: 021-4274812

Denis MacSweeney Photoshop

We Stock a full range of Binoculars,
Telescopes, Tripods and
Digital SLR Cameras

Telescopes/Binoculars/Tripods

Carl Zeiss
Nikon
Manfrotto
Giotto



Digital SLR Cameras

Canon
Nikon



Full range of professional
lenses new and second hand

www.denismacsweeny.com



Canon



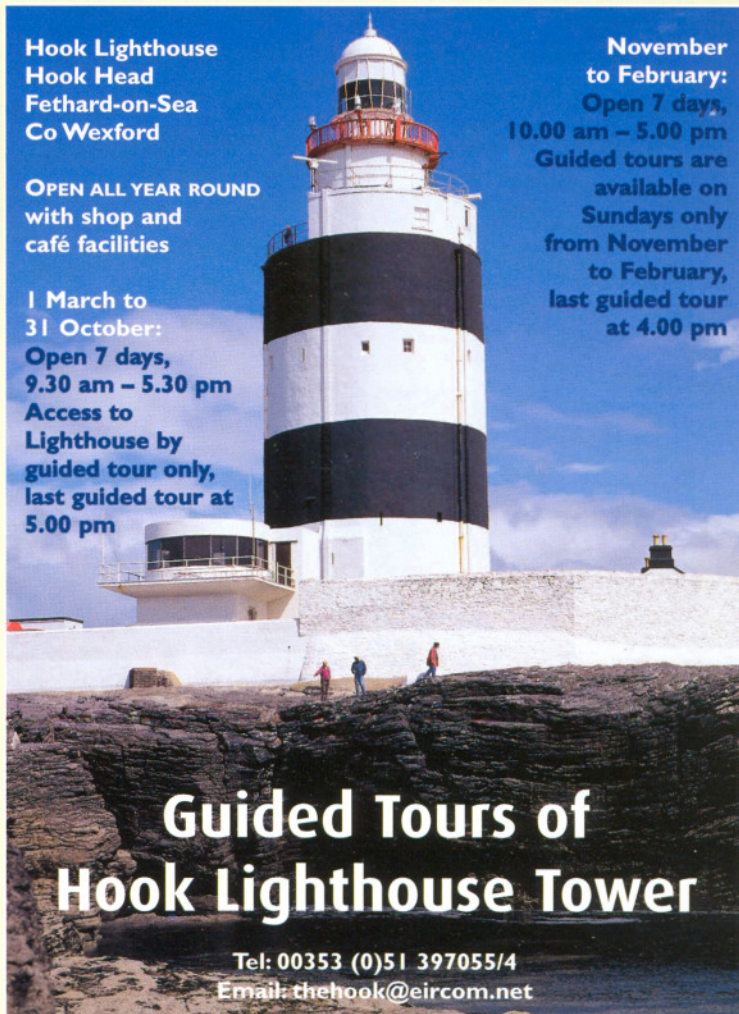
Manfrotto

Hook Lighthouse
Hook Head
Fethard-on-Sea
Co Wexford

OPEN ALL YEAR ROUND
with shop and
café facilities

1 March to
31 October:
Open 7 days,
9.30 am – 5.30 pm
Access to
Lighthouse by
guided tour only,
last guided tour at
5.00 pm

November
to February:
Open 7 days,
10.00 am – 5.00 pm
Guided tours are
available on
Sundays only
from November
to February,
last guided tour
at 4.00 pm



Guided Tours of Hook Lighthouse Tower

Tel: 00353 (0)51 397055/4
Email: thehook@eircom.net



Striped Dolphins beach in Carlingford Lough

Don Campbell, who was first on the scene, describes the event...

At about 2:00pm on Friday, 10th March, I noticed two fins in the bay quite close in to the shore. The tide was ebbing, with low water about two hours away. The bay dries out at low water and, at around 3:30pm, one of the animals beached on the east side of the bay, followed quite quickly by the other. We then contacted the Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) and IWDG personnel in Cork University.

Advice was to keep them cool with water and seek the services of a local vet if they continued to beach. Armed with a bucket and a hoe (couldn't find a shovel), I went to the dolphins and created water pools and poured it on them to keep them cool, taking care to avoid the blowhole. There was quite a strong NW wind, considerable cloud and occasional heavy showers, so I think they were cool enough. However, they seemed to be very agitated and frequently thrashed their tails vigorously. One, the first beached and the smallest, had some minor wounds with a little blood. This was probably due to the tail thrashing close to rocks. The other had some damage to its dorsal fin, but this looked like an old wound. The incoming tide started giving the dolphins some water

depth and, soon after, people arrived from EHS and the Exploris Aquarium at Portaferry as well as lots of local observers. BBC TV and other local media were close behind. The dolphins (and I) made the 6:30pm news that evening.

My experience has opened up a new insight into dolphins and whales and I have been exploring various websites, together with material provided by IWDG, to satisfy my curiosity.

Gavin Duffy and Martin Moore (of EHS) describe the refloating...

Using a large bag as a sling, we positioned it under the first beached dolphin and began manoeuvring the animal out into deeper water. We carried it out as far we could safely go, then lowered the bag and gave the back end of the dolphin a push and it swam out. We went back to the other dolphin and it soon joined its companion swimming in the bay.

Unfortunately, half an hour later the dolphins came inshore again and, assisted by Lesley from Exploris, the dolphins were brought out into deeper water. As darkness came down, they seemed to have headed for the open water of the lough, so we crossed our fingers and called it a day.

Ian Enlander (of the EHS and IWDG) concludes...

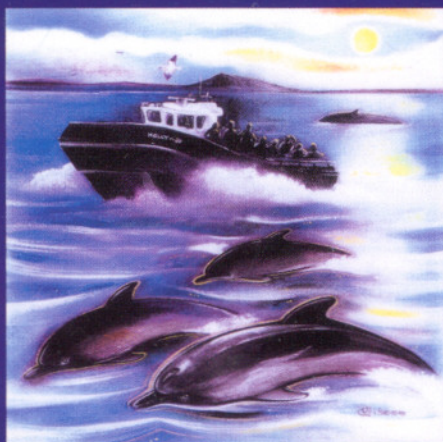
By close of play on the Friday we still did not have a positive identification of the dolphins and, given that dolphins are not too common on the County Down coast, I thought it was worth a trip down on the Saturday morning to see if there was any sign of them. It did not take long to spot one of them, but unfortunately it was obviously dead – re-stranded in the same bay. Clearly a Striped Dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*), it must have beached again during the night. Between myself and colleague John Milburne, we retrieved the body for post mortem. Word soon came through that the second dolphin had been found dead on the other side of the Lough, near Greenore.

It is obviously a natural response when finding such animals to try and rescue them. Given the absence of any obvious signs of injury, their manageable size, and the ease of access to the beach and deep water, everyone's combined effort was well spent. The site is close to the mouth of Carlingford Lough and there was every chance, assuming the animals were in a fit state, that the rescue might have been successful, but unfortunately it was not to be.

West Cork Marine Tours

Close Encounters with Dolphins & Whales

See porpoises, dolphins, seals and whales on a four-hour sea voyage on board the "Holly Jo" with skipper Colin Barnes in the coastal waters of West Cork



Phone Colin on (086) 327 3226

Cost of 4-hour whalewatch trip: €30 (adults), €20 (under 16s)



ENVIRONMENTAL INFO
information on the environment / eolas ar an gcomhshaoil



Looking for information on the Environment?

ENFO may have the answer!

there are now 7 easy ways to make contact with Enfo

1. **Write to:** Enfo, 17, St Andrew Street, Dublin 2
2. **Telephone:** 01-888 3910 or 1890 200 191 (local)
3. **Fax:** 01-888 3946
4. **E-mail:** info@enfo.ie
5. **Website:** www.enfo.ie
6. **Visit:** The drop-in centre at 17, St Andrew Street, Dublin 2 (off Dame Street) and see the exhibition, visit the children's corner, see environmental videos and access the library's database and internet facilities
7. **Check out:** The Enfo information stands at your Local Authority office or County/City Library

it's easy | to make a difference

Network

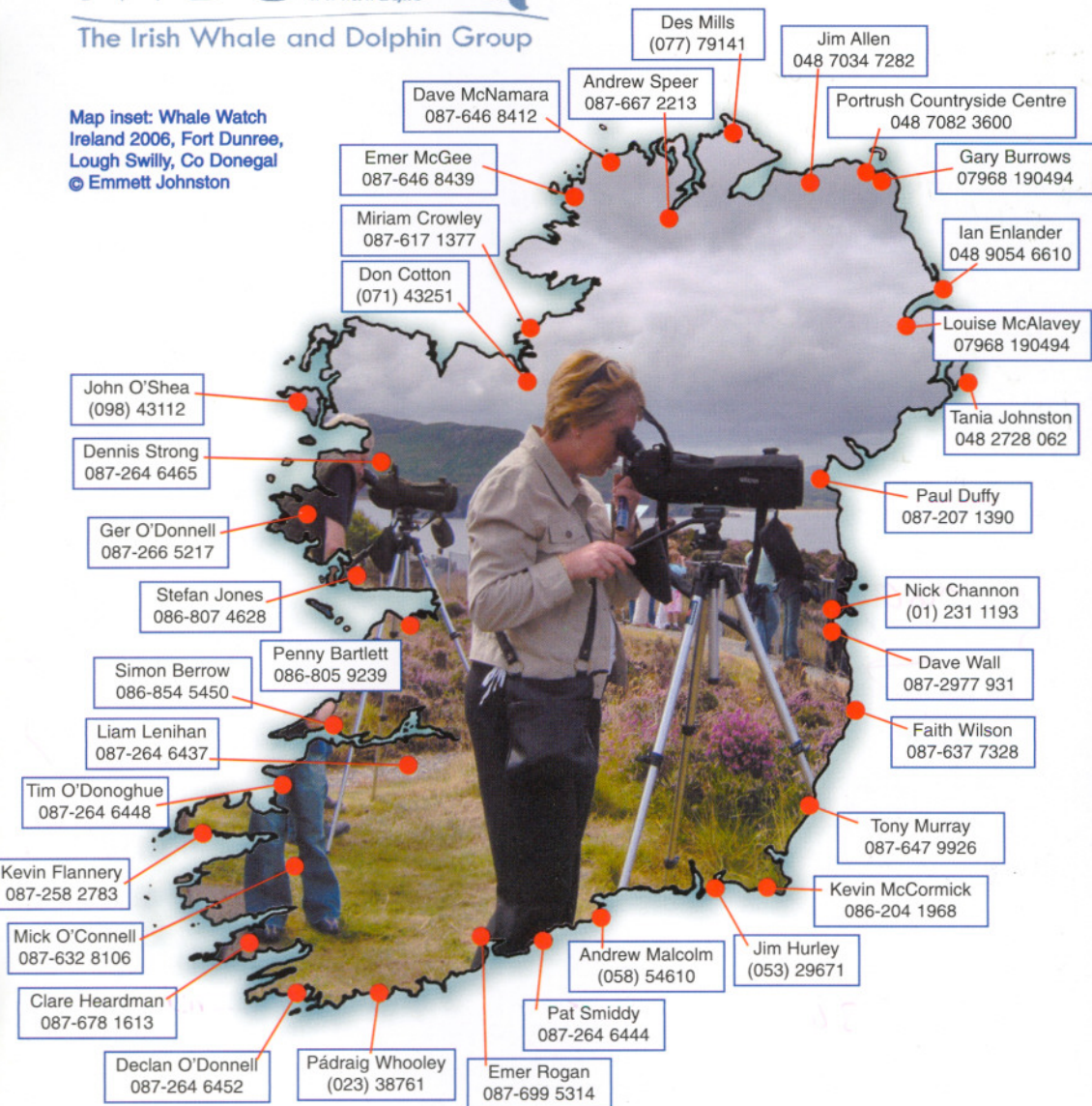
€ IWDG contacts around the coast

The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group has a network of contacts who will visit stranded animals and collect records of those sighted at sea. If you find a whale, dolphin or porpoise washed up, or observe one at sea or from the shore, please tell your nearest contact person.



The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group

Map inset: Whale Watch Ireland 2006, Fort Dunree, Lough Swilly, Co Donegal
© Emmett Johnston



IWDG Co-ordinator

Simon Berrow
Merchants Quay,
Kilrush, Co Clare
Mobile: 086-854 5450
Email: simon.berrow@iwdg.ie

Sightings Co-ordinator

Pádraig Whooley
Dereen, Rossmore,
Clonakilty, Co Cork
Tel: (023) 38761
Email: padraig.whooley@iwdg.ie

Strandings Co-ordinator

Mick O'Connell
Mobile: 087-632 8106
Email: mick.oconnell@iwdg.ie

Dr Emer Rogan
Tel: (021) 490 4197
Mobile: 087-699 5314
Email: emer.rogan@iwdg.ie

Live strandings

National Parks and Wildlife
Service

(01) 647 2404

IWDG

(023) 38761

087-699 5314

086-854 5450

Irish Seal Sanctuary

(01) 835 4370

Ship Surveys Co-ordinator

Dave Wall
Mobile: 087-297 7931
Email: dave.wall@iwdg.ie

Advertisements

Please contact Pádraig
Whooley for rates:
(023) 38761
padraig.whooley@iwdg.ie

Mission statement

The Irish Whale & Dolphin Group (IWDG) is dedicated to the conservation and better understanding of cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoise) in Irish waters through study, education and interpretation.

REGISTERED CHARITY:
No CHY11163

WEBSITE www.iwdg.ie

Yes, I would like to join the Irish Whale & Dolphin Group

Please complete and post (with appropriate fee) to: Mick O'Connell, IWDG, Coolcumisk, Beaufort, Killarney, Co Kerry, Ireland

Waged €25 / Stg £20 Family €35 / Stg £25 Student / OAP / Unwaged €12 / Stg £10 Corporate €125 / Stg £90

First name: _____ Family name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No(s): _____ E-Mail: _____

OR please deduct from my VISA / MASTERCARD / LASER / AMEX card the above sum. (Please state cardholder's address if different from above.)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ Expires □ □

Cardholder's signature: _____ Cardholder's name: _____

Address: _____

Heritage Outlook is a magazine that celebrates Ireland's natural and built heritage.

HERITAGE OUTLOOK

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HERITAGE COUNCIL
ISSN 1893-9777 WINTER 2004/SPRING 2004



THE EAGLE'S RETURN TO DONEGAL
the Golden Eagle reintroduction project

THE IRISH FARMYARD
caring for the heritage of farm buildings

IRELAND'S FILM ARCHIVES
preserving our celluloid heritage

HERITAGE WEEK • BIODIVERSITY AND HUMAN HEALTH • TEXTILE CONSERVATION



The Heritage Council works to protect and enhance the richness, quality and diversity of our national heritage for everyone.

www.heritagecouncil.ie

Produced biannually by the Heritage Council, Heritage Outlook is the only national magazine that focuses on all aspects of Irish heritage.

HERITAGE OUTLOOK

ISSN 1893-9777 SUMMER/AUTUMN 2004



PROTECTING THE BURREN
the case for a new kind of National Park

EXPO 2005
The Ireland Pavilion in Japan

THE LANDMARK TRUST
combining architectural conservation and tourism

HERITAGE EVENTS • ENVIRONMENTAL PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS • GRANTS PROGRAMME 2005



The Heritage Council works to protect and enhance the richness, quality and diversity of our national heritage for everyone.

www.heritagecouncil.ie

Heritage Outlook is a full-colour 32 page magazine with vibrant and varied content. Its extensive readership is diverse and influential, and includes professionals working in the heritage field, state departments, local authorities, non-governmental organisations, community groups, journalists, teachers and academics. Heritage Outlook is for anyone who has an interest in preserving Ireland's heritage. It carries news, provides analysis and offers thought-provoking articles on all aspects of heritage.

- Archaeological objects;
- Heritage Gardens & Parks;
- Architectural Heritage;
- Inland Waterways
- Seascapes & wrecks;
- Landscapes;
- Monuments;
- Geology;
- Flora & Fauna;
- Wildlife Habitats;

AN
CHOMHAIRLE
OIDHREACHTA



THE
HERITAGE
COUNCIL

Kilkenny, Ireland. Telephone: +353 56 7770777.
Fax: +353 56 7770788. www.heritagecouncil.ie

If you would like to receive a copy of Heritage Outlook please email: mail@heritagecouncil.com