



# Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust

research education conservation

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## PRESS RELEASE

### First 'Summer Visitors' are reported to HWDT

Tobermory-based Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust (HWDT) have received the first reports of summer visitors to the west coast of Scotland. A basking shark, minke whale and a pod of common dolphins were spotted off the west coast of Tiree in the week beginning the 28<sup>th</sup> March. Although the sighting reports are early, in fact the earliest HWDT have received to date, the scientific organisation can't speculate too much on the reasons. Sandra Koetter, HWDT's Sightings Officer, explains, "We can't assume that these animals aren't around at this time of year, it may be that density is lower during this time, moreover there are generally less people at sea in comparison to the summer months to encounter cetaceans and report their sightings". This highlights the need for more study to better understand the marine environment off the west coast of Scotland, especially at this time of rapid development of the marine renewables industry in this area.

These sightings follow an appearance of a pod of seven bottlenose dolphins that arrived in Tobermory Bay on St. Patricks Day and treated spectators to an acrobatic display. Morven Summers, Volunteer Coordinator, says "These sightings herald a fantastic start to the season. *Silurian*, HWDT's research vessel, will depart this week to begin her 10<sup>th</sup> season surveying the Hebrides – hopefully encountering these early arrivals."

HWDT asks the public to help build a better picture of the local marine environment by reporting sightings to HWDT. This information is important because it contributes to HWDT's understanding of where and when particular species occur. Sightings can be reported online at [www.hwdt.org](http://www.hwdt.org).