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Conservation Officer's Report
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A dead Bottlenose Dolphin with its tail cut off was discovered floating in St. Ives harbour on Thursday 11th October. It is not absolutely clear what caused its death, but it certainly had its tail severed and there were line markings on the body, so it is likely that it had become entangled in nets and drowned, and the tail would have been cut off to remove it from the net when it was hauled up.

There is a local pod which is regularly seen around West Cornwall comprising about a dozen animals, as well as one or two solitary dolphins and a pair of young males and it is a big concern of The Wildlife Trust and the Marine Strandings network that if every now and again one of them gets caught in gill nets, the pod will not be able to survive around Cornwall.

Throughout September a very rare colonial hydroid *Apolemia uvaria*, became quite common, for they were turning up all along the south coast of Penwith. This creature is, like the Portuguese-man-of-War, a colony of different creatures, and has long tentacles hanging from a floating bladder, which can be 30 ft long. The parts seen were all short broken off pieces of the tentacles, These short pieces, called Pearl Chains, are still alive and able to give anyone a nasty sting, but not as dangerous as the Man-of-War. The strange fact is that no one reported seeing the full creature with the floating bladder, so where did all the pieces of living tentacles come from? There



were reports of seven cast up Portuguese-man-of-War stranded on various beaches during August, and I wonder if these were misidentified, and were in fact the remains of *Apolemia uvaria*.

Other rare finds were very large Sea Hares, *Aplysia depilans*. The common species of Sea Hare in our waters is *Aplysia punctata* which can reach 20cm extended length but usually found less than 10cm. long, but *Aplysia depilans* can reach 30 cm in length and is usually associated with warmer waters of the Channel Islands, Atlantic France, the Mediterranean and West Africa.

By counting the rings in the shell of an Oceanic Clam dredged up off Iceland researchers at Bangor University have been able to calculate its age at 405 to 410 years old, making it the longest-lived animal every discovered. A similar clam in an Icelandic museum was discovered to be 374 years old, so this clam, nicknamed "Ming" is at least 37 years older. It was given the name "Ming" after the Chinese dynasty in power when it was born.

There were 12 reported sightings of Bottlenose Dolphins during October, all from the early part of the month, up to the 18th. However there were 8 other reports of unidentified dolphins, which were probably Bottlenose Dolphins, including, a sighting of three seen off Newquay on the 21st. Common Dolphins were reported 8 times, and there were 2 other sightings of pods of 50 plus and 200 plus which were probably Common Dolphins. There was one report from an aerial survey of 30 or more Risso's Dolphins around the Longships Lighthouse on the 12th. Minke Whales were sighted 4 times, a pair and 2 singles off Gwennap Head and another from The Scillonian. Blows or spouts of another whale off Gwennap head could have been a Humpback. Harbour Porpoises were sighted 17 times including pods of 19+ and 25 or more.. Ocean Sunfish were still being seen up to the 13th of the month, with 6 reports up to that date. Other reports from divers have been large Sea Hares. A Triggerfish was caught off Penarrow Head with two parasitic Goose Barnacles attached to scar tissue on its head. These barnacles are usually found attached to larger sea creatures like whales. There have been 59 dead cetaceans found stranded on Cornish beaches this year up to the end of September, 31 of these were Common Dolphins, 19 were Harbour Porpoises, also one Striped Dolphin and a Bottlenose Dolphin. 7 other carcasses were badly decomposed and not identified. Top of the list of strandings were Grey Seals, there were 42 including 7 pups. With this number of losses, one wonders how the seal population seem to remain viable around Cornwall. Other creatures stranded were a loggerhead Turtle and 7 Portuguese-man-of War.