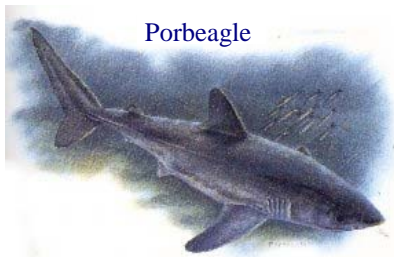


Penzance BSAC Conservation Officer's Report June 2007

Unfortunately for the Porbeagle Shark they are worth about £2 per kilo, that's about £500 to a fisherman for an adult shark, and they are worth a lot more by the time it ends up on a plate in a top restaurant as "veau-de-mer". This is not a fish you can buy in a chip shop. A few years ago a Newlyn boat, "The Prevail" using a 6 mile long-line baited with mackerel, returned to harbour weighed down with 64 adult porbeagles, and in the next nine days landed 63 more. The Shark Trust, a conservation body, condemned the targeting of this particular shark as short-sighted and potentially dangerous. Their dismay is based on a grim fact of biology. Sharks are slow growing, mature late, and produce few young. Unlike Cod, which lays thousands of eggs, the porbeagle gives birth to just four pups a year, and that is after a nine months pregnancy. Allowing for the numerous hazards awaiting a young shark, this provides for a population increase of between 5 to 7 per cent per year.

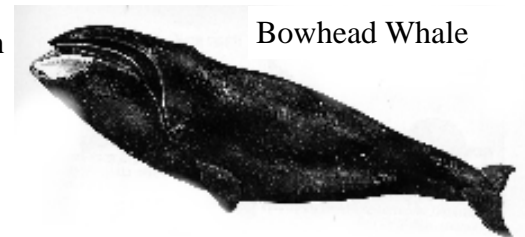


Porbeagle

Once you factor in fishing pressure from fast modern vessels equipped with ling-lines or vast seine nets the sharks have no chance. Far more are being caught than can be replaced. At a meeting in Oxford to discuss the global plight of migratory open water sharks, the Shark specialist Group of the World Conservation Union agreed that practically every species of large shark found in European waters are heading for extinction. And the problem is entirely man made. Despite mounting threats and evidence of decline, there are no international catch limits for open sea sharks. We are blindly fishing them into oblivion. As far as the North-east Atlantic and the Mediterranean are

concerned, the solution is in the hands of the European Union which has powers to impose regulations throughout the area, and they eventually agreed to act. The EU regulates fishing by means of TAC or Total Allowable Catch and last year they agreed on the size of the TAC—an annual EU quota of 174 tons. According to the Fisheries Council's press release last December, the TAC on porbeagle was adopted. **Except that it wasn't.** It transpired that the proposal was torpedoed at the last minute by EU Fisheries ministers. The argument, it seems, fell apart on a technicality. TACs are made to conserve stocks, but the porbeagle had become too depleted to warrant a TAC. Behind the wordplay conservationists strongly suspect intervention by France and Spain. Despite growing public concern, it seems the EU Commission was swayed more by self interested fishing lobbies than the arguments of conservationists and scientists.

The IWC, International Whaling Commission's annual meeting in Anchorage Alaska has seen deadlock on its second day over Greenland's plans to expand its Inuit Whale Hunt. The West Greenland bid proved unusually controversial. It wanted to increase the number of Minke Whales taken from 175 to 200 and include 10 Humpbacks and 2 Bowhead Whales for the first time. I have not heard the final outcome of that meeting.



Bowhead Whale

There were 16 reported sightings of Bottlenose Dolphins during May, 10 of those reports were of a pod of 6 to 8 travelling between Penzance and Perranporth, and the other reports were of the two well known Bottlenose that visits harbours. There was another pod of 6 off Port Quin on the 30th, probably a different pod because 6 were seen off Cape Cornwall on that day. Only two reports of Common Dolphins, one of which was of 6 being chased by Bottlenose off St. Ives on the 15th and the other report was of a 100 or more 36 miles north of St Ives, some of which were bow riding a fishing boat for a while. 12 Risso's Dolphin were seen off Fowey on the 3rd and 2 Risso's Dolphin were in St. John's Lake, between Torpoint and Millbrook on the 8th and the 9th of May. There was only one report of Harbour Porpoises, 5 off St Anthony Head on the 12th May. There were 14 reports of one or two Basking Sharks, all between Mounts Bay and the Avarack near Pendeen on the north coast. A few of them were reported to be about 30 ft long. There were 5 sightings of Grey Seals reported.

3 Common Dolphin were found stranded during April, one at Falmouth Harbour, another at Perranuthnoe and a third at Carlean Cove near Poltesco. A Harbour Porpoise was found stranded at Mousehole a Grey Seal on the Isles of Scilly and a Grey Seal pup at Wanson Mouth, Widemouth Bay.