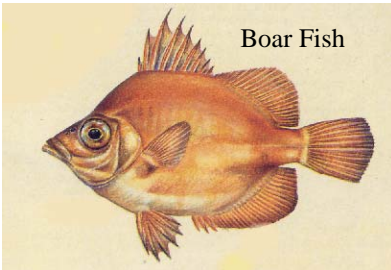


Penzance B.S.A.C.

Conservation Officer's Report

September 2007

A very rare fish, a Boar Fish, *Capros aper*, was recently found alive on the beach at Littlehampton. It was left alive in a rock pool and presumably swam away when the tide returned. These are very rare fish in shallow



coastal waters but are abundant on the edge of the Continental Shelf at depths of 100 metres in the southwest approaches to the English Channel and are probably found at similar depths off Ireland and southern Scotland. Certainly, also abundant off Portugal, and perhaps even in shallow water there. Some are thriving in the British Marine Life Study Society's private aquarium, Shoreham-by-Sea, but it is rarely seen in public aquariums, and the only known display of this fish was for several years at Mevagissey Harbour Aquarium. There are records of many being caught by Cornish fishing boats since 1825

when one caught in Mounts Bay was sent to the British Museum as a very rare fish, as well as several being found stranded on Cornish Beaches since that date.

In July and August, 29 Striped Dolphins were found dead on the coast of Valencia, Spain. It was discovered that they had a virus known as cetacean measles. This is similar to a virus which caused a high death rate among Risso's dolphins in The Mediterranean last winter. An epidemic decimated Striped dolphin populations in The Mediterranean in the early 1990s, and experts hope that this will not occur again. Many cetaceans in the Mediterranean have very low immunity levels due to pollution.

Striped Dolphin



A Second Portuguese Man-of-War was washed up on Porthmeor Beach on Wednesday 18th August, 2 days after a previous stranding. The second creature was still alive and is now on display in a special tank at The Blue Reef Aquarium at Newquay, where it is being fed mysid shrimps. It is being kept in a secure tank so that it poses no threat to visitors, for if anyone comes into contact with its tentacles they would receive painful stings which leave lesions and ulcerations. Some swimmers have died from a sting after going into severe anaphylactic shock. Anyone stung should immediately remove any tentacles and immerse the affected area in either hot or iced water for 20 minutes. Vinegar should not be used as it can make the sting worse.

Marine biologists are searching for an electronic shark tag which is missing— but still transmitting. The device had been fitted to a 2 metre Porbeagle Shark and was detached remotely on Newquay Beach on Sunday 22nd August, but someone found it before the scientists got to its location. As it is still transmitting, the scientists have tracked it travelling to Wadebridge and back to Newquay, and they are appealing for it to be returned. The device has stored data that is important to their scientific work so the recovery of the tag is a priority and they are urging the finder to contact them. There is a £50 reward for its safe recovery.

The largest number by far of sightings during August was of Basking Sharks. There were 121 reports mostly from Pendeen on the north coast around to Mount's Bay, although odd ones were seen off Falmouth and Dodman Point. The largest number seen was 86 in Sennen Bay on the 6th. Harbour Porpoises were reported 32 times, mostly around Penwith but there was a sighting of 15 in Watermouth Bay near Bude and also sightings as far east as Nare Head on the south coast. Bottlenose Dolphins were reported 20 times, 11 of them being the pod of about 8 mostly in the St. Ives area and the rest were of a single or a pair. 10 reports of Common Dolphins included a pod of 200 seen off the Isles of Scilly and another pod of 120 seen off Porthgwarra, other pods were of 3 to 15 dolphins. Risso's Dolphin were reported 3 times, probably 2 pods because pods were seen off Boscastle and Porthgwarra on the same day, and the other sighting was off The Rumps, not far from Boscastle. Single Minke Whales were seen off Porthgwarra on the 20th, off Gwennap Head on the 28th and in Mount's Bay on the 30th. A Fin Whale was seen off Porthgwarra toward the end of the month. There were 6 reports of Grey Seal, from Cape Cornwall to Falmouth, three of which were of several seals hauled out on Black Rock at the entrance to Falmouth Harbour on various days. Compass Jellyfish were seen off St. Ives on three different days.