



**National Coastwatch**  
EYES ALONG THE COAST

## **Gwennap Head NCI - Wildlife Report January 2019**

Static high pressure caused anti-cyclonic gloom that characterized many days at the beginning of the month; usually grey skies with grey seas that, at times, became slate blue, with a lovely pink glow around the southern horizon, hinting of sunshine elsewhere. It was also calm on such days and any life out there was easy to spot, but it was mostly eerily quiet. What livened things up were frequent sightings of Common Dolphins and Harbour Porpoises, the dolphins in groups of up to 30 and the porpoises always one, two or three. On 10/1, a watch-keeper reported numbers of dolphins feeding under a large group of gannets and gulls moving close inshore under Hella Point, whilst I was observing several groups off Cape Cornwall (there was also a large Minke Whale). It appears that there were a lot of dolphins around during that period. On 20/1, 100's of Gannets were diving by Longships Lighthouse and, soon after they dispersed, a dolphin group came south, past the lookout at great speed and with much leaping, the tiny ones with them jumping as high as the adults.

There was a general lack of birds on both land and sea in the calm weather. Small parties of auks were those most commonly seen with a scattering of Gannets, Kittiwakes and Fulmar. Birds use energy when they fly, so flying on days with no wind is not what they are inclined to do, except when they must. Things livened up later in the month when strong winds and gales drove larger numbers of them inshore. A few Mediterranean Gulls and divers (Red-throated and Great Northern) were the only other species seen in January. The cliffs and the heath were generally quiet, in fact virtually deserted apart from Jackdaws and gulls and the occasional Meadow Pipit. Apart from these the Ravens have been doing their barrel-rolling displays (they will be starting to nest next month), and there were reports of a Magpie (not usually seen up here) and a House Sparrow on winter vacation was chirping on the roof, one morning (another rarity here but plentiful on the farms close by). A wader disturbed from the track as one watch-keeper arrived was most likely a Golden Plover and a Grey Heron flew over the heath on 30/1. Choughs have put in a few appearances. Colour ring reading tells us that our local pair has been here feeding by the lookout and there have been visitors too from elsewhere in Penwith.

No Blue-fin Tuna fish were reported this month. Many scientists are of the opinion that an influx of warm water currents from the south has been the reason for the recent immigration into our waters of this charismatic fish in the last few summers.

The maximum seal count was 8 on 5/1.

Best of the weather events were undoubtedly the rainbows witnessed during squalls and strong winds from the northwest late in the month. One of these, on 20/1, was possibly the closest and most intensely coloured that I have seen from here.

Jean Lawman