



**National Coastwatch**  
EYES ALONG THE COAST

## Gwennap Head NCI - Wildlife Report July 2019

We saw the Risso's Dolphins again this month when a pod of 8 passed the Runnelstone on 11/7, many were pale individuals and, even at that distance, they were easily visible as their tall dorsal fins cut the surface. They were travelling west in the typical manner of surfacing 2 or 3 times to breathe before submerging and moving a considerable distance before appearing again. They were off to Sennen - I know that because they were reported there soon after. Earlier, on 6/7, a pod of 5 Bottlenose Dolphins had gone west, this time inside the Runnelstone.

Small numbers of Harbour Porpoises were also seen.

Seabird numbers and variety were disappointingly low this month compared with last year. We saw Manx and Balearic Shearwaters, Puffins, Storm Petrels, Great Skua, Common Scoter and Sandwich Terns but no big numbers of any apart from Manx. Interestingly, although Storm Petrels seen by day on the sea were few and far between, local ringers set up mist nets on Hella Point just after dusk on 2/7 and caught no less than 120. This is not unexpected as non-breeding, immature petrels prospect many rocks and islands around Britain for possible future nest sites and, as with breeding birds, they come onto land in the safety of darkness (gulls are likely predators). Among them were petrels that were already ringed - they had been caught in Pembrokeshire, Gwynedd, County Mayo, and Spain.

Our local Chough pair successfully fledged 3 young on 7/7. This was a second attempt. After an initial failure - we are not sure what happened but it may have been predation - they moved to another site not far from the original. This year has been a big success overall with 12 pairs fledging 38 young that we know about. On 11/7, we saw the adults launch a vigorous attack on the local Raven pair when they ventured too close to their area. Some spectacular dive-bombing took place and the Ravens were driven off. Thankfully, the climbing fraternity were very respectful of the climbing ban on routes close to the nest.

There has been some indication of early migration and dispersal in a few returning Sand Martins, a juvenile Pied/White Wagtail and parties of Swifts at the end of the month possibly leaving Britain and migrating south. Locally, 2 colourful adult Rose-coloured Starlings caused a stir among birders at Nanjizel. Small resident birds which have visited the lookout area include Linnets, Stonechats and Rock and Meadow Pipits.

The heather and Western Gorse is in the peak of bloom as I write and it is worth stopping and imbibing the air if it is sunny and warm because the heather smells wonderfully sweet and subtle. The Dodder (red grass) has clusters of tiny pale pink flowers clinging to the stems more so than usual probably because due to the dry weather early on.

Grayling, Small Copper, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, various whites, Red Admiral butterflies and many bees and hoverflies have enlivened the cliff-top throughout the month. Our corpse collector watch-keeper notched up a Daddy longlegs spider, a centipede and a small Tortoiseshell butterfly all found dead inside the building.

Jean Lawman