

Disappearing Dolphins

Researchers are concerned about the lack of dolphins in the Bay of Biscay.

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Common dolphin.

Marinelife's Biscay Dolphin Research Program has been conducting monthly scientific whale, dolphin and seabird surveys in the English Channel and Bay of Biscay for the last 13 years.

Because of this program and others, the Bay of Biscay has become a hotspot for whales, dolphins and seabirds. However, this summer there has been an obvious dearth of sightings.

Early indications have shown that during June and July, the total number counted of the three main dolphin species, common dolphin, striped dolphin and bottlenose dolphin, are down by around 80 percent compared to the same time last year.

Members of Marinelife are worried that this apparent decline in sightings of both dolphins and seabirds, could indicate a large reduction in fish stocks due to overfishing or a change in distribution of fish stocks due to temperature changes.

"Whatever the cause of the disappearance of dolphins this summer, it shows both how vulnerable they are and how alarmingly quickly local declines can occur when environmental conditions change," said Marinelife's research director Tom Brereton. "The changes highlight how we need to act quickly, to address major issues such as climate change and overfishing."

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