Shorewatch is a citizen science project, organized by Whale and Dolphin Conservation. It records cetacean occurrence during standardised effort units (watches). In addition to species, time and location of sightings, observers record group size, presence of calves, and sea state.

Observation locations along the coast of Scotland (UK).


Observation protocol: standardised watches (10 min, spaced 1 hour). Trained volunteers.

Statistical models of sighting rate (GAMs with environmental explanatory variables) demonstrate seasonal, geographical and year-to-year differences in coastal cetacean occurrence.

Review and analysis of this successful citizen science programme will identify best practice and ensure usefulness to scientists and policy-makers.

Analysis of the dataset also can help to improve the sighting methodology.

Example: Power to detect different percentages of decline in local abundance (sighting rate) over a 6 year period, as recommended by European legislation) can be estimated. The power to detect such trends depends on the initial sighting rate, the number of watches performed in a year and the rate of decline.

Power to detect declines in local abundance over a 6 year period, depending on initial sighting rate.

Review and analysis of this successful citizen science programme will identify best practice and ensure usefulness to scientists and policy-makers.