

SeaWatch SW 2008 observer guidelines

Dear SeaWatch SW Observers

The SeaWatch SW survey at Gwennap Head, Porthgwarra begins in just a few days time. Full details can be found on the project website, which will be updated daily with latest sightings and photos once we are underway: <http://www.seawatch-sw.org>

This note is to provide you with an update on logistics and to give you some tips for preparation. **It is vitally important that all observers (even those who have participated in previous years) read this document carefully, and then complete, sign and return the final page including your contact details, health and safety information, and a disclaimer. This needs to be done before the start of your shift at the watchpoint.**

Important contact numbers

SeaWatch SW co-ordinator (Russell Wynn)

Work: 02380 596553

Home: 01590 622964

Mobile: 07874 930081

Email: rbw1@noc.soton.ac.uk

Address: National Oceanography Centre, European Way, Southampton, SO14 3ZH.

SeaWatch SW project assistant (Alice Jones)

Work: 02380 596544

Mobile: 07786 361081

Email: arj1g08@soton.ac.uk

Address: National Oceanography Centre, European Way, Southampton, SO14 3ZH.

SeaWatch SW accommodation (for Seabird Observers and NOCS students)

Janet Semmens

Ardensawah B&B

Tel: 01736 871520

Email: ardensawah@btinternet.com

Accommodation and food

The list of observers and your observation dates/times are shown in the attached MS Excel file and on the project website. Any problems then please contact me (the project co-ordinator) as soon as possible.

Those people marked in black will need to arrange their own accommodation. Those people marked in green are booked in to the free single room at Ardensawah Farm B&B. **However, note that we can only provide you with a room for the night following your day of observation.** As most of you are travelling from some distance away you will have to arrange your own accommodation for the night preceding your first survey date (see the website for links to a couple of good Cornish accommodation sites).

The B&B is very comfortable and the owner, Janet Semmens, is extremely helpful. If you have any special requests then give her a call to discuss. She provides a packed breakfast/lunch that is ready to take out in the morning, and there is usually enough food to last until lunchtime. There is a place to store wet waterproofs or wetsuits, and free internet access is available. There is a café at Porthgwarra cove where observers can get lunch during the two hour midday break, while pubs and a restaurant are only a short drive away for lunch/evening cooked meals. Note that the

Logan Rock Inn at Treen serves food until 9 pm - useful for those whose shifts finish late in the day.

Arrival on site

Observer shift times are listed on attached MS Excel file and on the SeaWatch SW website. Please make a note of these and adhere to them as closely as possible. If you think you are not going to be able to carry out a shift, e.g. due to late arrival or illness, then contact me as soon as possible so I can try and arrange alternative cover. If at all possible, arrange to arrive the evening before your first shift, and meet the preceding observer to discuss logistics, watchpoint location etc. The watchpoint is about 20-25 minutes walk from the B&B, or 5 minutes in the car (parking is £3 a day at Porthgwarra cove). The location map is on the project website, but it is recommended that you get guidance from the departing observer(s) as to the specific watchpoint location.

Note that the Runnelstone Buoy is 1.5 km offshore of the watchpoint (to the south), and Wolf Rock is about 15 km offshore (to the southwest). A plinth pointing out the location of these two markers is located in front of the coastguard lookout at Gwennap Head. Using these two markers is crucial for estimating distances (e.g. passing birds and visibility), and also for getting other observers onto passing seabirds, cetaceans etc.

Equipment

All observers should have their own binoculars (10x magnification recommended) and Seabird Observers will need to bring their own scope and tripod. A scope and tripod will be available for Marine Wildlife Observers (these are mine so please look after them!). The following equipment will be left at Ardensawah B&B for observers to use (B&B location shown on map on project website, contact details listed above):

2 umbrellas with guy ropes

2 weatherproof clipboards (essential in wet weather)

2 pairs of CB radios and recharging station (use if observers are at different locations)

2 compasses (for taking wind direction measurements)

Recording forms for both Seabird and Marine Wildlife Observers

Scope and tripod for use by Marine Wildlife Observers

It is important that you remember to return any borrowed equipment to the B&B at the end of your stay. If you are not staying at the B&B, and cannot store expensive items (e.g. the scope and tripod) in a secure location overnight, then please leave them at the B&B and pick up each morning. The B&B is en route to the watchpoint. Less expensive equipment (e.g. the umbrellas) can be left in one of the various caves/holes around the watchpoint overnight.

If at all possible please bring a digital camera/camcorder with a decent zoom, as we are aiming to get as many photos of target species, e.g. Balearic Shearwaters, Basking Sharks, Ocean Sunfish and cetaceans, as possible. Images for use on the project website should be Emailed to me.

We have no control over the weather, so make sure you have gear to deal with prolonged sun and rain exposure. Two large fishing umbrellas with a few guy lines are provided, and the watchpoint has rock outcrops in various orientations that provide shelter from most wind directions.

Recording

Copies of the recording forms and recording guidelines will be left at the B&B. I will also Email out a copy of the recording forms to everyone before the survey starts. It is essential that Seabird Observers send a complete daily sightings update each evening, either by Emailing me the full list (using the free internet at the B&B) or via phone when you finish your shift. Seabird Observers should also collect the forms completed by the Marine Wildlife Observers each day.

We have been phoning half-day updates into Birdguides on 0333 5772473 (this gets you through to one of their BNE team, who will give you any sea-watching/local news they have received that morning). Birdguides are sponsoring the project, so we have an agreement to exclusively supply them with bird news; I would appreciate it if observers could continue this arrangement if possible. Note that phone reception actually on the watchpoint is patchy, but is generally fine at the cliff top in the vicinity of the coastguard station. **Lunchtime updates should only contain bird sightings, no shark or cetacean news should be given to Birdguides. This is to avoid potential harassment by local boat users.**

Although the recording and logistical elements of the survey are fairly straightforward, it is important for you to recognise that you are part of a team of dedicated volunteers collecting data for a conservation- and science-based study. Essentially we are involved in a three-month sea-watching relay! Consequently, it is crucial that I am made aware as soon as possible of any issues that may prevent you participating in the survey on your selected dates. We have local back-up observers in case of emergency, but please alert me immediately if you foresee any major problems so I can arrange cover.

Completed recording forms should be left at the B&B OR photocopied at the first available opportunity after you return home, and one set posted to: *Dr Russell Wynn, SeaWatch SW co-ordinator, National Oceanography Centre, European Way, Southampton, Hampshire, SO14 3ZH*. Please do not send all of your forms without making a back-up copy first; we don't want all your hard work disappearing into a Royal Mail black hole!

Leisure time

It is recommended that the two-hour midday break be used for adding up morning totals, phoning an update into Birdguides, eating and sleeping! There are also excellent wildlife-watching opportunities in Porthgwarra Valley behind the watchpoint, and a couple of nice sheltered coves below the watchpoint that are safe for swimming and snorkelling. A wetsuit is recommended if you plan to be in the water for more than a few minutes!

SeaWatch SW health and safety information and disclaimer

A primary aim during the organisation of SeaWatch SW is to ensure that you (the volunteer observers) are able to operate safely and efficiently at all times. It is important that you are aware of the potential dangers of working in a rocky coastal environment for long hours in a variety of weather conditions. Listed below are some of the guidelines relating to health and safety:

- Take care when travelling to/from Porthgwarra and Gwennap Head. The lanes in the area are narrow and winding with occasional hazards such as escaped livestock!
- The watchpoint is near a public footpath that is about 5 minutes walk from Porthgwarra Cove and car park, which is a popular tourist area with several houses. In addition, the watchpoint is located directly below the NCI coastguard lookout (manned from 0800-1800 hrs daily). Consequently, in case of emergency, there will always be someone relatively close by. Mobile phone reception is poor at the watchpoint itself, but some networks are effective just inland from the clifftop.
- It is intended that there will always be a minimum of two observers at the watchpoint, an experienced Seabird Observer and one or more supporting Marine Wildlife Observers. Prior to your initial arrival at the SeaWatch SW watchpoint, it is recommended that you have contact with the observers that you are taking over from and handing over to, as well as the observer working alongside you. I will provide a contact list of observers prior to your shift.
- If your watch 'partner' does not arrive within 30 minutes of the scheduled start time, try and contact them via mobile phone (or try their lodgings if you know where they are staying). If there is no sign an hour or so after they are due to arrive, then call the SeaWatch SW co-ordinator, Russell Wynn, on 07874 930081.
- It is important that you are equipped for a variety of weather conditions, including adequate sun protection (e.g. sunscreen, sunglasses, hat etc), wet weather protection (e.g. waterproofs, warm clothing etc) and stout footwear suitable for walking over rugged terrain. A fishing umbrella is provided to observers but bring a spare if you have one (and some guy lines).
- It is crucial that you are rested and comfortable when starting your shift, especially for those observers who are covering several days. It is therefore highly recommended that you take advantage of the daily two-hour lunch break to have a nap, especially on hot days with intense surface glare.
- Make sure you have sufficient food and water for your shift period; extra provisions can be purchased at the Porthgwarra café.
- If conditions are wet, don't sit there getting soaked through if you can move to a more sheltered position nearby. The coastguard station has a display room where you can dry out in extreme conditions.
- The watchpoint is accessed by walking down a rocky headland with grassy patches. The SeaWatch SW website has detailed directions and location maps. If you are uncomfortable with accessing this location, an alternative should be chosen that is higher up and closer to the footpath. It is more

important that you find a watchpoint that is comfortable, provides reasonable shelter from the weather, and is easily accessible to you.

- Please exercise caution when walking to/from and around the watchpoint. Be especially careful in wet and windy weather, and avoid exposed cliff edges.

It is recommended that you print these details and take a copy with you.

Dr Russell B Wynn, SeaWatch SW co-ordinator, <http://www.seawatch-sw.org>

SeaWatch SW observer form

Please print out this page and return to the SeaWatch SW co-ordinator prior to your watch session. It should only take a couple of minutes!

Contact details

Name of observer:

Address:

Email address:

Telephone number (home):

Telephone number (mobile):

Emergency contact details (spouse, partner, relative):

Address and phone number of your accommodation during the survey period (only for those not at Ardensawah Farm B&B):

Health and safety

Please list any obvious health issues that would be useful for us to know about in case of emergency (e.g. heart problems). Note this is not compulsory:

Disclaimer

Please read and sign the following:

I agree to take appropriate care of any equipment provided to me by the SeaWatch SW Project, and to return it at the end of my observation period.

I have read the health and safety guidelines provided to project observers.

I am a volunteer observer and my participation in SeaWatch SW is entirely at my own risk. I accept that the SeaWatch SW Project, its co-ordinator and its collaborative partners are not responsible or liable for any loss, accident or personal injury incurred by volunteer observers during observation periods, or while travelling to/from the watchpoint.

Signed:

Date: