

Volunteer Role Profile SeaScapes 'Sea Watch' Observer

About the role:

Cetaceans are a common sight in UK waters, with regular sightings of minke whales, harbour porpoise, white beaked dolphins and even humpback whales, off the North East coastline. Despite this, cetaceans face numerous threats from human activities. If we are to further the protection of cetaceans in our waters then more information on their numbers and locations is required. SeaScapes, Durham Wildlife Trust and Sea Watch Foundation are teaming up to improve data collection in the *Tyne to Tees area* and would like the help of passionate volunteers to become dedicated SeaScapes Sea Watch Observers to help us achieve this.

By becoming a SeaScapes Sea Watch Observer, you will provide important information about how, where and when cetaceans use our coastal waters, enabling us to better protect these animals using conservation measures. Anyone can be an Observer: all you need is enthusiasm, a pair of binoculars (provided) and a little patience. If you enjoy spending time by the coast regularly, why not take time to record what you see – and what you don't?!

We will provide full training on how to undertake dedicated cetacean surveys for all volunteers. SeaScapes Sea Watch Observers will contribute information to a national database on cetaceans by conducting land-based Sea Watch surveys from your local coastline. Tasks involved include:

- Recording cetacean sightings data from a designated 'watching station' on the *Tyne to Tees coast*
- Submitting your survey data to the regional co-ordinator on a regular basis.
- Reporting your sightings, particularly unusual ones, to the regional co-ordinator as soon as possible.
- Helping with outreach events (optional).

We are looking for volunteers who:

- Have a knowledge of the marine environment (or the desire and willingness to learn)
- A basic knowledge of cetacean identification
- First aid qualified (if helping with events)
- Live on the coast and/or near to watching station
- Have good interpersonal communication skills

This role will suit you if you:

- Have a passion for conservation of the marine environment
- Have an interest and knowledge of British cetaceans or the enthusiasm to learn
- **Are able to attend the online Sea Watch Observer training course on Saturday 12th March 2022.**
- Are able to record sightings information accurately and in detail (recording forms provided)
- Are able to survey outdoors for approximately 1 hour

- Are proactive and able to work independently and unsupervised
- Have an understanding of health and safety and the risks involved with working by the sea

Volunteers will be 18 or over, or if 14-18 should be supported and supervised by a responsible adult and have parental/guardian consent to take part.

Dependent on sea watching location. Volunteers should be able to easily reach their sea watching station (preferably within walking/cycling distance of your home/place of work) located along the South Tyneside – Sunderland – Durham - Hartlepool coast.

The benefits of getting involved:

By joining the network of SeaScapes Sea Watch Observers in this region and across the country, you will be contributing to the national database of information held on cetacean species in UK waters and so have a direct part to play in their conservation. You'll learn about the cetaceans frequenting the north east coastline and gain experience in field work, plus:

- Relevant training for the role e.g., Risk Assessments, Health and Safety, Observer training
- Become a valuable member of a professional team
- Experience of working within a large conservation organisation
- Opportunity to learn more about cetaceans
- Opportunity to get involved in a national citizen science project
- Access to our internal volunteer training programme
- Dedicated equipment provided
- Opportunity to meet with other Observers in the area

Important Information:

Attendance at the SeaScapes Sea Watch Observer training course is **essential**. The next online course will take place on **Saturday 12th March 2022** and will be a half day course from approximately **9am until 1pm**.

This role will be based along the Tyne to Tees coastline. We will work with you to choose and assign an appropriate sea-watching station from which to record sightings. This can be close to your home or place of work for ease of access.

There is plenty of flexibility in this role as you can choose when you would like to carry out your sea watches. Ideally you will undertake at least one survey per month but you can complete as many as you wish – the more data we receive the better! As a regular volunteer you will also be invited to attend optional volunteer events and activities throughout the year.

How to apply:

Please contact Dorinda at dkealoha@durhamwt.co.uk or call 0191 5843112 to request an application form.