

Highlights from Lyme Bay in 2019

Unlike the gorgeous summer of 2018, the weather was far more unpredictable in 2019 with high winds preventing several of our trips taking place. In the event we managed to run just two, one in August and another in October.



Common Dolphin

As usual we sailed out of Brixham in Devon, aboard the 'Spot-On!' with skipper Ross Parham at the helm – himself a knowledgeable and eagle-eyed marine wildlife enthusiast. With around nine hours at sea on each trip, and cruising at an average speed of 8-10 knots, we covered large parts of Lyme Bay and, in the process, enjoyed some great wildlife encounters.

The late August departure was noted for some superb encounters with Common Dolphins. 160 were counted and they gave prolonged views which included bow-riding antics. A number of Harbour Porpoise were seen and a couple of Atlantic Grey Seals.



European Storm Petrels

It was a spectacular trip for seabirds with over 200 Manx Shearwaters encountered along with a couple of Balearics and 3 Great Skuas. With some 'chumming' helping to lure these birds in, the group were treated to close views of 18 European Storm-petrels. Other species seen were Gannet, Arctic and Common Terns, Kittiwake, Fulmar, Guillemot, Razorbill and Common Scoter.

The highlight of our October excursion was undoubtedly a feeding shoal of 30 Bluefin Tuna, a rare sight in these waters. Up to 25 Common Dolphins were seen, 9 Harbour Porpoise and 6 Atlantic Grey Seals.

A big passage of Kittiwakes was noted (an estimated 600) and good views were had of a number of Arctic and Great Skuas. Only 2 Manx Shearwaters were seen but also 2 Balearics and a single Sooty.



Atlantic Grey Seal

Other seabirds recorded were 500 Gannets, 6 Puffins, 10 Razorbill, 300 Guillemots, 3 Common and 1 Arctic Terns and 3 Fulmars.



Arctic Skua

In addition 4 Meadow Pipits and 2 Swallows were recorded heading south across the bay.

Our Lyme Bay cruises have not only been a great experience for those who joined the trips, but have also generated valuable survey data for the marine charity Marinelife. This dedicated band of marine biologists have been working with statutory conservation agencies to evaluate the

importance of the Bay for priority species such as the Balearic Shearwater, Bottlenose Dolphin and White-beaked Dolphin. For the latter species, Marinelife has proposed the creation of a marine nature reserve (Marine Conservation Zone) to operate in partnership with the Wildlife Trusts. The data obtained from Naturetrek trips has formed a key body of supporting evidence for this proposal.

These highly sought-after trips run yearly and to ensure you do not miss any of the action, please contact David Shute on 01962 733051 or email davidshute@naturetrek.co.uk.

