

Giant ocean sunfish seen off Cornish coast

25 July 2006

An aerial survey has reportedly detected a sudden influx of the world's largest bony fish -- the giant ocean sunfish -- into Cornwall's coastal waters.

The marine wildlife survey was conducted off the southwestern tip of Cornwall last week by researchers from the University of Exeter's School of Biosciences, Britain's Marine Conservation Society, and the Cornwall Wildlife Trust, fishupdate.com reported.

Scientists said they counted 19 sunfish within a two-hour period. A similar survey conducted two weeks earlier found no sunfish.

The ocean sunfish - called Mola mola -- can grow to more than 10-feet in length and weigh more than 2.4 tons. The sunfish are so named because of their habit of lying on their side on the sea surface as if sunbathing.

Sunfish are generally believed to be a warm water species, but they have been seen more frequently in British waters during recent years -- a possible indication of climate change, fishupdate.com said.

The monthly surveys are designed to monitor the different species of marine wildlife visiting Cornwall's waters, fishupdate.com said. The latest survey also detected basking sharks, porpoises, seals and jellyfish.

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