

## **Scotland's Seas - Beatrice Wishart MSP**

Hello, my name is Beatrice Wishart and I am the Member of the Scottish Parliament for Shetland, and I am also the Nature Champion for the Orca.

Orcas, also known as killer whales, are highly intelligent and social whales, that form tight-knit family groups known as 'pods'. They are one of the world's top marine predators and they are known to feed on fish, porpoises and, in Shetland and Orkney, on seals.

Scotland's seas contain dynamic marine ecosystems, which support more than 8,000 different species.

At the base of the food web are different types of plankton, tiny organisms that are crucial in producing oxygen and are an important food source for many species, including mackerel, herring and one of the gentle giants of the deep—the basking shark.

Many of Scotland's fish species, including herring and mackerel, form large groups, called 'schools', and they move together to find food and better protect themselves from predators.

Seabirds all rely on Scotland's fish species for food, and they can be seen diving or swooping down to snatch their underwater prey.

Marine mammal species like minke whales, orcas, common dolphins, and bottlenose dolphins can also be spotted in Scottish waters, and Scotland is one of the best places in the world to see dolphins, especially from land!

And many people don't know that Scotland's waters are also visited by some of the biggest animals on the planet, including the humpback whale, the sperm whale and sometimes even the largest animal ever known to have lived – the blue whale.