



This newsletter has been designed to enable you to get an idea of what kind of experience you will have should you join us on one of our cruises.

Mon 1 Oct | Diving dolphins Hjalmar Borge guests had a real treat this morning. Getting ready for a scallop dive near Duart Castle they spotted five bottle nosed dolphins approaching the boat.



Surely this was the same group that entertained Mark on Friday night in nearby Caignure? Mark urged the divers to get in the water quickly because the inquisitive dolphins would probably stay.



They did and, sure enough, the dolphins showed an interest in them (above). They dived underwater to check the neoprene clad humans out and hung about whilst they completed their dive. There was much showing off with leaping clean out of the water and tails wagging in formation...even that hilarious balancing upright whilst wriggling backwards thing! In all they hung around the boat for about 40 minutes, and bow rode once the vessel set off, delighting the crew and the divers with their playful antics. Photos: Mark Henrys, Matt Baron, Ylva Powlett

Tue 2 Oct | New St Kilda dates Our "Focus on St Kilda" cruises are filling up amazingly fast next year...as are some of the other itineraries too. We've managed to squeeze another St Kilda cruise in during June...prime time for seabirds.

Thu 4 Oct | Bye bye Big John Our favourite relief skipper Big John had an interview with ferry company Cal Mac today. We weren't in the least bit surprised to hear they offered him a full time job on the spot. Good news for him but sad news for us as he won't be able to skipper any of our cruises next year. We can only hope he hates the job and leaves before next summer. No, seriously, best of luck John...but you know you are welcome back anytime!

Sun 7 Oct | They're back!!! The exuberant bottle-nosed dolphins made a bee-line for Hjalmar Bjorge again today. They must have decided they like living in the Sound of Mull as this is the the third encounter we have had in ten days. As the boat was travelling south from Tobermory to Caignure there were three bow-riding and the other two were keeping pace with the wave off the bow, just near the front of the boat. Photos: Nick Eden



Sat 13 Oct | Entertaining otter Mark was sitting in the wheelhouse of Hjalmar Bjorge in Tobermory enjoying a quiet cup of tea at 0730 this morning when a nearby movement caught his eye. He saw an otter climb onto the visitor pontoons, roll on its back, crack a crab open and slide back into the water. It quickly reappeared, this time climbing onto one of the tied up dinghies, and proceeded to eat another snack. It then toddled across to a

nearby small boat, went inside and had a good mooch about before disappearing into the harbour waters.

Later that day, in Loch Drumbuie, a couple of golden eagles and one sea eagle was seen.

Mon 22 Oct | A flit to France Hjalmar Bjorge finished a short diving weekend today. We are not working next weekend then two more early November before we finish for the season (apart from our regular pre-Christmas dive charter). As well as saying good-bye to guests today we waved off Ylva who has been offered a great cooking job in France over the winter...although, why cooking for a single client in a French chateau is more desirable than catering for 12 hungry divers in stormy seas off the coast of Scotland in November, is beyond me?!!! Kirsty - who has worked for us in many roles before - will be cooking on the next couple of trips.

Sat 27 Oct | Feathered first prize A photograph by Chris Gomersall of a knot roost flock at Snettisham RSPB reserve in Norfolk entitled "Fluidity" has won a major award. Some of you will have had the pleasure of meeting Chris aboard Chalice or Hjalmar Bjorge in his role as guide/leader on a number of our wildlife cruises.



The photograph, right, was judged the overall winner in the 2007 European Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition, run by the GDT (Gesellschaft Deutscher Tierfotografen) in Germany. It was one of nearly 9000 entries by 573 photographers from 26 European countries. The competition is now in its seventh year, and Chris is the first British winner. Results were announced today at the International Nature Photography Festival In Lünen, Germany and Chris was there in person to receive his prestigious award. Photo: Chris Gomersall

To see a larger version of Chris' photo, plus the other competition winners, visit GDT's website at <http://www.gdtfoto.de/>.

Wed 31 Oct | Charity cheques Returning guests will know that several years ago Hannah and Mark decided to make a £5 donation to one of two local charities for every cruise guest who booked on any of our boats. Our guests are also given the option of doubling this by paying an additional £5. Today we are delighted to have written cheques for £550 to Argyll Animal Aid and £1050 to Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team. Of the total donation of £1600 the sum of £275 came from our very generous passengers this year who opted to pay an extra £5 per head to the charities. Big thanks go to...

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Andy & Tory Bell | Janet & Michael Lyke |
| Carol & Laura Bennett | Jackie & Alec McKenzie |
| Brian & Philippa Boyland | Linda Nicol |
| John Brunt | Peter Nuyten |
| Marc Calhoun | Alan & Gill Reed |
| Mike & Katie Callan | Magnus Robb |
| John W Campbell | Norman & Valerie Robb (twice) |
| Michael Coupe (twice) | Mike Rowell |
| Muriel & Michael Curry | Paul & Caryl Schecter |
| Kevin & Sandra Davis | Christopher & Mary Shaw |
| Harry & Ruth Eden | John, Fiona, Lucy & Simon Taylor |
| Johanna Egar | John & Lynne Tidmarsh |

Carole A Gardner
Betty & Bernard Heath
Hugo Hodge
Phil & Sue Lane
Charles R Lewis

Deborah Tyler
T Murray Watson
Keith Whiffin
Gerwyn Williams

Tue 6 Nov | One eagle alone at Auliston Hjalmar Bjorge returned to Oban today after a long weekend's dive charter. All quiet on the western front as far as wildlife goes except one sighting of a golden eagle at Auliston Point near Loch Sunart.

Sat 10 Nov | Green UK holidays Rosie Millard, writing in the Daily Mail today, points out that the difference in terms of emissions between, say, a holiday in Miami and one in the Lake District is "stark". One person flying from Heathrow to Miami and back is responsible for two tons of carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere whereas a return train journey from London to the Lake District produces about one fortieth of that amount. If you double that distance (and it is actually less than double to get to Oban from London as it is to get from London to the Lakes) you are still looking at a holiday that is 20 times greener in terms of carbon emissions produced in reaching your holiday destination. As if you needed an excuse to come and explore beautiful north west Scotland...but, if you did, surely that is it! Hope to see all you environmentally responsible holiday makers next year!!!

Sun 25 Nov | Whaling petition: Sign it now I'm sure you were as upset and angry as we were to hear Japan have begun whaling again in the name of "research." Japan's self-allocated "scientific" whaling quota for 2007/8 includes more than 1,400 whales of seven different species. This includes 50 endangered humpback whales which have been protected from commercial hunting for more than 40 years. Thanks to marineteam member Sarah for sending us a link to a petition which you can sign electronically. Sponsored by IFAW the petition aims to collect 50,000 names - easy, peasy if you sign it and copy and paste <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/111615377> into an email to all your friends. Thank you!

Mon 26 Nov | Sea eagle numbers soar A news report today reveals that the number of white-tailed sea eagles in Scotland has reached an all time high since the reintroduction programme began more than 30 years ago. There are now 42 territorial breeding pairs (six more than last year) with a record 34 fledglings raised this summer. When these figures are added to young birds that have yet to find a mate and establish a territory, there are probably now around 200 individual sea eagles resident in Scotland. Strongholds continue to be Mull, Skye and the Western Isles. Read more at <http://www.wildlifeextra.com/scotland-eagles981.html>.

Sat 1 Dec | Introducing yacht Zuza Mark and Hannah are thrilled to be offering a new vessel to our guests for 2008 onwards. Joining Hjalmar Bjorge our 22m motor yacht Zuza will provide Hebridean Wildlife and Island Cruises where you will also be able to experience the thrill of sailing...a clean, green means of exploring the marine environment with, quite literally, the wind in your hair! You'll find lots of information about Zuza and our cruises on our website with all next years holidays listed. If you have have any questions about Zuza, or the type of cruising holiday you might experience, just send us an email or call 01631 740595.



Mon 3 Dec | All new website Welcome to the brand new website of Northern Light Charters. If you're a regular reader of our site you'll notice some changes. This new site brings up to date the boats we are using to run our cruises, the dates we have on offer next year and showcases the many wonderful photographs we have been sent by our guests. Do please send us your comments and feedback. We always like hearing from you.

Mon 10 Dec | Favourable first impressions We have now introduced new motor yacht Zuza to recent enquirers and guests and we are getting good feedback and encouraging bookings. Mike and Sheila, who came over from the USA, to take a cruise on Hjalmar Bjorge this year, are returning to try Zuza in 2008 - they have booked three quarters of the available spaces on one cruise for themselves, friends and family!

Tue 11 Dec | New Smoking (No Smoking) Policy Having given the matter a lot of thought we have introduced a total ban on smoking aboard both Hjalmar Bjorge and Zuza. This has been done for insurance reasons and in response to comments from non-smoking guests who greatly outnumber the few smokers we see onboard. If you are a smoker, and are considering one of our cruises, you will now only be able to smoke when you are ashore. We're sorry that this means a small number of smokers who have previously joined us are unlikely to rebook (unless they give up in the meantime!) but it's true, you can't please all of the people all of the time...

Tue 18 Dec | Delightful dolphins divert into Drumbuie (Droma na Bhuidhe) Hjalmar Bjorge has just completed a long weekend at sea - our usual "pre Christmas" dive trip for friends with good food onboard and the last night in a restaurant, some relaxed diving, pub visits and Lindsay playing the fiddle.

Best day of the trip had to be Sunday when half a dozen bottle-nosed dolphins found us in Loch Sunart and then followed us into Loch Drumbuie (Droma na Bhuidhe). We think this is most likely the same pod of dolphins that entertained everyone in early October in the Sound of Mull (scroll to the bottom of the page for more photos). They were curious about the divers and were happy to leap about and show off in front of us. Altogether they spent about three hours with the boat, feeding, jumping out of the water to perform aerobatics and bow-riding. Photos: Craig Hunter and Hannah Thompson





The weekend's weather was variable although there was no rain! Very cold though with Monday evening at Corpach dropping to -7 and likely around -10 overnight. Travelling up Loch Linnhe to Corpach on Monday was beautiful though; very cold but also sunny and a flat calm surface. The photos below show Ben Nevis seen as we approach the Caledonian Canal. Photos: Hannah Thompson



Fri 21 Dec | Japan abandons humpback whale slaughter Latest reports indicate that Japan has succumbed to international pressure to abandon its proposed hunt of 50 humpback whales in the Antarctic. Some reports suggest the Japanese do not acknowledge that outrage from around the world has caused this change of heart, simply that they do not have the requisite number of crew or storage facilities to keep the remains of 50 huge carcasses on board the fleet. After all, being for "research" purposes, Japan maintains it utilises every part of the dead whales. Whilst this is good news - whatever the reason for the decision - let's not forget the 935 minke whales and 50 fin whales they still intend to kill.

Tue 25 Dec | A Merry Christmas to customers, old and new We'd like to wish all our customers a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year. Thank you to everyone who has been onboard that sent us Christmas cards; they are all appreciated. We particularly liked this one sent by Hugh (who guides for us sometimes and knows

everything there is to know about St Kilda) of the Millennium Stone on Oronsay. Okay, so it's not especially "Christmassy" but it is a cracking shot. For those of you who haven't yet been onboard we very much hope to see you next year. Photo: Hugh Barton

We went for a long drive and good dog walk today starting at Kinlochhourn. 22 miles down a single-track tarmac road (and back again) and we didn't see a single other car! Loch Hourn runs along the north edge of the Knoydart peninsula and the end of the loch marks the start of a 15 miles walk over to Inverie - we didn't go that far! Our mince pie picnic got slightly rained on but it wasn't a bad way to spend Christmas Day.

