

Police appeal for help to trace missing whale skull

Police are appealing for help from the public to trace a missing whale skull, belonging to a northern bottle nose whale and measuring 100 x 60 x 60cms, which was left on Cocklawburn Beach near Berwick-upon-Tweed in October.

Prior to this the 45kg skull had travelled the length of Scotland after being removed from a beach near Cape Wrath.



Washed onto the beach in 2018, the whale carcass was being monitored by the John Muir Trust with plans to remove the skull to National Museums Scotland to be studied.

It is illegal to possess any part of a whale, dolphin or porpoise without being licensed. Any remains belonging to these species should not be removed from coastal areas.

Northern bottle nose whales are a protected species, and rare visitors to Scottish waters.

Detective Sergeant Billy Telford, Police Scotland's wildlife crime unit, said: "Whales, dolphin and porpoise are protected species in Scottish/UK coastal areas, and this includes their remains. People may not be aware that it is illegal to remove their remains from beaches and other coastal areas.

"This particular item had been earmarked for study. It is a rare example of this species in Scotland and therefore is of

significant scientific interest to improve both our understanding of the species and its protection.

“It is a very big and unusual item and someone must know of its whereabouts. If you do then please contact Police Scotland so we can arrange for its return to the museum.”

Dr Andrew Kitchener, Principal Curator of Vertebrates at National Museums Scotland said: “It is important that this skull of a bottle nosed whale is returned so it can be added to the internationally significant collection of marine mammals which we hold at National Museums Scotland.

“Strandings of this mammal are rare and examples such as this can contribute greatly to the knowledge we hold about these incredible animals and provide a valuable resource to enable further future scientific study of the species and its ecosystem.”

Don O’Driscoll of the John Muir Trust said: “The Trust is not happy with the way the whale skull was taken from its land at Sandwood Bay and subsequently lost. We hope the police will be successful in finding it and that it may then be displayed at the National Museum for the benefit of the public. Exhibits like this are rare and provide an interesting insight into the anatomy of these specialised deep diving marine mammals.”