

## Risso's Visitors



Good times



Photo Peter Schulze

The first time we were privileged to encounter Risso's Dolphins (*Grampus griseus*) was back in 1999 when we spotted a dozen of them 27 nautical miles (NM) offshore while conducting a continental shelf survey of birds and marine mammals. Then in 2006, they were spotted on 2 occasions – again, well offshore. This year, they were back with 2 sightings in June; Peter Schulze (whale-watch driver/guide for Ocean Outfitters) shot these 2 in September along with perhaps 30 others. It's interesting that at 2.3 to 9 NM offshore, this was considerably closer to shore than their normal squid-hunting grounds in the deep ocean beyond the continental shelf. They are the second largest of all the dolphins; at 4 meters, they are only about half the size of an adult male Killer Whale, who of course is also actually a dolphin.

Risso's dolphins are distinguished from others by their shades of grey coloration varying from almost black in juveniles to almost white in adults. The skin is also profusely patterned with random scratches believed to be from the hooked tentacles and beaks of the squid they prey on. Little is known about their population or grouping configuration.

As with other deep ocean cetaceans we've observed, these animals seldom encounter small boats, so may show a curiosity by coming over for a closer inspection and perhaps show off their considerable acrobatic skills.

Later...Rod [info@strawberryisle.org](mailto:info@strawberryisle.org)