MARK CARWARDINE

On the wild thoughts that won't let him sleep. This month:

Failing our cetaceans

When it comes to wildlife, you can't rely on our politicians to do the right thing.

Take the Scottish parliament, which is about to make a mess of marine conservation. It is legally obliged to set up a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by the end of this year – yet, shamefully, it doesn't appear to be including whales, dolphins and porpoises in its plans.

A significant number of minke whales, Risso's, bottlenose and white-beaked dolphins, and harbour porpoises live in Scottish waters. And the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society has provided ample scientific evidence to prove that protecting their feeding and calving areas is both feasible and urgent.

Yet the politicians are playing for time by claiming that there are still gaps in our knowledge. Utter rubbish.

This is a wonderful opportunity to designate an ecologically coherent and world-class network of MPAs, but our politicians aren't able to see beyond business and profit. Never mind the fact that wildlife tourism is vital for Scotland's economy, generating some £65m a year (£4m of which comes from the bottlenose dolphins of the Moray Firth alone) – conservation just isn't on the agenda.

Then look at our pathetic nod towards marine conservation in the UK as a whole. Barely 0.01 per cent of UK waters are properly protected from pulverisation by trawlers and dredgers (and other threats), while our so-called 'Protected Areas' are barely worth the paper they're written on.

For years, conservation groups have been fighting for 30 per cent of our waters to be given complete protection. Britain is home to everything

It's time we gave proper protection to species such as Risso's dolphins.

> " *Despite their claims, these are the least green governments that we've had for a long time.* "

from coldwater corals and basking sharks to incredible seabird colonies, yet these calls fell on deaf ears.

Despite their claims to the contrary, these are the least green governments that we've had for a long time – and that's saying something.

Mark Carwardine is a zoologist, photographer, writer, conservationist and BBC TV presenter.