

**Agenda Item 6.8:** Educational programmes "Blue School" and "Alliance with Nature" in Poland

**Agenda Item 8.4:** Polish version of ASCOBANS exhibition "Harbour Porpoise in Distress"

**Report for the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee on Poland's Activities in the Field of Popularising the Problems of the Status and the Protection of Small Cetaceans in the Baltic**

**Submitted by:** Poland



**ASCOBANS**

**NOTE:**

**IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY, DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED TO BRING THEIR OWN COPIES OF THESE DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING**



## Report for the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee on Poland's Activities in the Field of Popularising the Problems of the Status and the Protection of Small Cetaceans in the Baltic

Krzysztof E. Skóra and Iwona Kuklik

The last time harbour porpoises were to be found on a massive scale in the Polish Baltic was 75 years ago. At present only few Poles know what is meant by the term 'harbour porpoise'. A sociological study conducted at the end of the 1980s demonstrated that only some 13 percent of secondary-school students knew that harbour porpoises were living in the Baltic (Skóra 1990<sup>1</sup>). For society as a whole this ratio would have been even lower at that time, and considerably so. This in turn did not guarantee an effective collection of reports on the sightings of these mammals in the Polish Baltic. Nor were there any institutions in Poland which would have been known to wide social circles as ones collecting data on the subject. Hence it was difficult to fulfil some of the obligations resulting from the ASCOBANS agreement, which Poland ratified in 1995.

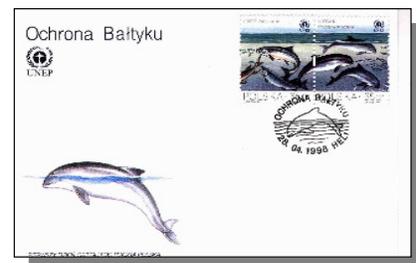
In order to ensure the most effective capabilities for obtaining reports on sightings, bycatches or finds of dead cetaceans, a wide-scale campaign had to be undertaken, both informational and educational in character. This mission was entrusted to the Hel Marine Station, University of Gdansk.

The information was targeted at wide social circles, as well as at those groups which, by virtue of their activities, could prove to be helpful in conducting such a campaign, namely fishermen, sailors, teenagers, and the navy.

A number of microprojects have been undertaken, aimed at disseminating knowledge about harbour porpoises and the status of their population. The NGO Friends of Hel<sup>2</sup> has launched a campaign for the protection of the natural values of the sea, with emphasis placed on the problems of marine mammals.



The Polish Post Office in cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry, as well as with the Hel Marine Station has issued a series of stamps featuring protected marine species. One of the stamps offers Polish philatelists for the first time ever the image of a harbour porpoise. A commemorative envelope has appeared too.



<sup>1</sup> Skóra K.E. 1990. Notes on cetacea in the Polish Baltic Sea: 1979-1990. Aquatic Mammals 1991. 17.2, 67-70.

<sup>2</sup> A non-governmental organisation realising Poland's largest project involving the protection of the natural environment of the Baltic. For the realisation of these projects it has received awards from the Ford, Bayer, Hewlett Packard and Sasakawa foundations.

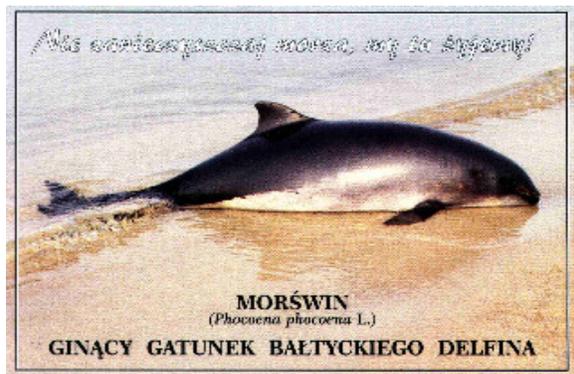
The official envelopes of the Hel Marine Station also bear such a picture, and an image of harbour porpoises is to be found on the Station's letterhead.



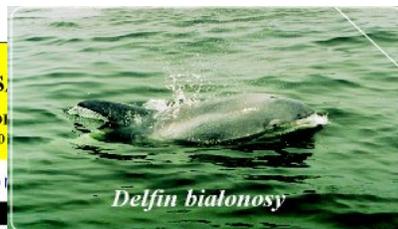
Leaflets have been printed to encourage the collecting of information on harbour porpoises, and so have report cards with facts about their biology. These materials have been distributed mainly in the offices of the marine board and fisheries inspectorates.

Over a dozen TV information spots have been realised on the subject of harbour porpoise bycatches and the appearance of dolphins off the Polish coast. These facts have been presented above all as a part of information programmes broadcast by state television. The same can be said for radio, both state and commercial, and the press. The situation of small cetaceans living in the Baltic and in the North Sea has also been the subject of educational programmes realised by state television.

Moreover two series of postcards have appeared featuring marine mammals. Among them two depicted a harbour porpoise and one a white-beaked dolphin.



In the previous year, thanks to the cooperation with Telekomunikacja



the NGO Friends of Hel and Polska S.A., a series of four phone-cards was launched with pictures of Baltic mammals including a harbour porpoise and a white-beaked dolphin.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from the depiction of the animals, these cards give

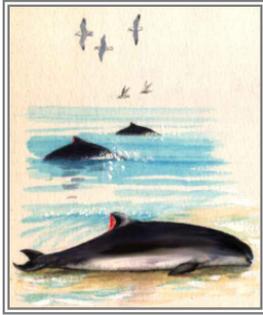
information about the telephone number of the Hel Marine Station as a centre of collecting reports on them.

Moreover two large-scale educational campaigns have been embarked upon, focussing on the subject of marine mammals, namely grey seals and harbour porpoises. These are the "Blue School" project, realised by the Hel Marine Station, and the block of courses called "Alliance with Nature" for petty officers and seamen of coastal units and vessels, this latter project realised jointly with the NGO Friends of Hel and the Naval Command. Subjects include ways of recognising these animals and reporting their sightings.

*Alliance with Nature" – HRH the Duke of York at the Hel Marine Station, participating in a class for seamen of the local garrison >*



<sup>3</sup> The project was financed by Global Environment Facility / Small Grants Programme



A new series of stamps is also currently being prepared featuring Poland's endangered species. One of the stamps will be depicting a harbour porpoise that has been washed ashore.

< *Design of the new stamp*

In the year 2000 five hundred copies of the Polish version of the poster featuring the harbour porpoise were procured, printed by the ASCOBANS secretariat in Bonn. The poster has been displayed at various places along the

Polish coast. Special copies covered with anti-UV foil, framed and affixed to plastic plates, will be distributed around harbours and fishing centres.



< *The ASCOBANS secretariat staff and research staff of the Hel Marine Station; in the background, a display devoted to harbour porpoises in Hel*

In the summer of 2000 the Hel Marine Station thanks to the ASCOBANS Secretariat hosted the exhibition "Harbour Porpoise In Distress ! Save Our Native Cetaceans", made by the Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (GSM), Hamburg and the German Oceanographic Museum, Stralsund. Recently a copy of the exhibition has been made, enriched with information from the Polish coast. Since March the exhibition has

been displayed in the Regional Museum in Puck, which is where Poland's largest bycatch of harbour porpoises is observed.

It is also worth mentioning that fishermen who deliver porpoise bycatches, as well as people who inform us about the porpoises found, are presented with T-shirts with the image of a harbour porpoise, postcards, posters, articles on these animals, as well as key pendants with photographs of them and the contact telephone number of the Hel Marine Station.

At present, work is being done on a new folder providing information on harbour porpoises, which will be distributed among tourists visiting the Hel Marine Station and hotels along the coast, as well as among the fishing community.

For the near future a joint production with Polish state television is envisaged, involving the preparation of a special film examining the situation of small cetaceans in the Polish Baltic.

Fast, reliable and professional information is crucial for the active protection of endangered species. The more basic knowledge permeates from specialised circles of scientists to society as a whole, the greater the certainty of rational attitudes of people towards nature – both the species and their habitats. The ecological impact reflects the quality of education provided