



**AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION
OF SMALL CETACEANS OF THE
BALTIC, NORTH EAST ATLANTIC,
IRISH AND NORTH SEAS**

ASCOBANS/AC29/NR.5
6 June 2025

29th MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Online, 16-18 September 2025
Agenda Item 2

2024 NATIONAL REPORT: THE NETHERLANDS

2024 ASCOBANS National Report

ASCOBANS

Online Reporting System

Party: Netherlands

Submitted Date: 2025-06-05



2024 ASCOBANS National Report

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Introduction

Year 1 (2024) ASCOBANS National Report

1 January to 31 December 2024.

As outlined in ASCOBANS Resolution 10.1 *National Reporting 2025-2028*, this form will cover information from 2024 (Year 1), and the following topics included in the Annex to the Resolution:

- High-level Summary of Key Messages
- General Information (Section I)
- Noise (impulsive i.e. piling and continuous/ambient i.e. shipping) (Section II B3)
- Ocean Energy (Section II B4)
- Unexploded Ordnance (Section II C8)
- Marine Spatial Planning (Section II D15)
- Other Matters (e.g. burning issues) (Section IIV)

The National Reports submitted will inform discussions at the 29th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee, 16-18 September 2025 (held online).

- All questions apply to the **reporting period from 1 January to 31 December 2024**.
- Region in the tables refers to the sub-regions as defined by the HELCOM and OSPAR, and Areas refers to the sub-areas as defined by ICES. An overview and maps of these can be found in [Annex A](#). Species can be chosen from the drop-down list provided, based on ASCOBANS species list, see [Annex B](#).
- Throughout the form, please include relevant web links and add rows where applicable.
- The deadline for the submission of National Reports is **31 May 2025**.

Where possible, National Coordinators should consult with, or delegate to, experts for particular topics so as to ease the reporting burden.

For any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the [Secretariat](#).

High-level Summary of Key Messages

In your country, for 2024 (Year 1), what does this report reveal about the most successful aspects of implementation of the Agreement?

(list up to five items)

- Continuation of monitoring tasks on abundance (including SCANS), post mortem examinations and contaminants
- Coordination of the EU LIFE project (CIBBRiNA) with multiple stakeholders and parties to assess bycatch of cetaceans in the North Sea
- Exploration of a national project to improve monitoring of bycatch in Dutch gillnets, as part of MONS
- Start of multiple harbour porpoise/marine mammal related research projects, as part of MONS
- Coordination of a pilot to investigate the potential to tag porpoises for determining habitat use in the southern North Sea
- Ongoing development and improvement of the KEC, for mitigation and limitations regarding underwater noise in the construction of OWFs.

In your country, for 2024 (Year 1), what does this report reveal about the greatest challenges in implementing the Agreement?

(list up to five items)

- Too many technical outputs and too few communicable key messages for policy makers
- Motivating fishers to collaborate and share data
- Difficulties to ensure structural funding, e.g. for strandings database and survey work

In your country, for 2024 (Year 1), what does this report reveal about the main priorities for future implementation of the Agreement?

(list up to five items)

- Expanding national stranding database and harmonising international strandings databases based on work progressing in ICES
- Collaborating on bycatch work, among others within CIBBRiNA
- Determining habitat use of harbour porpoise (and other species) in the southern North Sea
- Researching alternative methods to mitigate UXO impact and alternative methods for building OWF

Section I: General Information

A. Country Information

1. Name of Party / Non-Party Range State:

Kingdom of The Netherlands

2. Details of the Report Compiler

Details of the report compiler

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Does the Report Compiler act as ASCOBANS National Coordinator (i.e. focal point)?

Please select only one option

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No

3. Details of contributor(s)

Please provide the following details per contributor: Name, Function, Organization, Postal Address, Telephone, Email, and Topic(s) contributed to.

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<p>Topic(s) contributed to: Underwater noise and Unexploded Ordnance</p> <p>Name: Niels Kinneging</p> <p>Function: senior consultant</p> <p>Organization: Rijkswaterstaat</p> <p>Postal Address: P.O. Box 2232 3500 GE UTRECHT</p> <p>Telephone: +31 6 5321 5242</p> <p>Email: Niels.kinneging@rws.nl</p> <p>Topic(s) contributed to: Underwater noise</p>
<p>Name: Irna Huisjes</p> <p>Function: Specialist Coast & Sea</p> <p>Organization: WaterProof Marine Consultancy & Services B.V.</p> <p>Postal Address: IJsselmeerdijk 2, 8221 RC, Lelystad, the Netherlands</p> <p>Telephone: +31 (0)6 11 50 11 41</p> <p>Email: irna.huisjes@WaterProofbv.nl</p> <p>Topic(s) contributed to: Unexploded Ordnance</p>

Section II: Habitat Conservation and Management (threats and pressures on cetaceans)

A. Fisheries-related Threats

1. Bycatch

AIM: to illustrate progress on understanding, monitoring and mitigating bycatch of small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.4](#), [9.2 \(Rev.MOP10\)](#), [8.5 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.4 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.3](#), [7.3](#), [7.1](#), [6.1](#), [5.8](#), [5.7](#), [5.5](#), [3.3](#)

Bycatch, the entanglement of an animal in fishing gear, is identified as a major cause of mortality in small cetaceans. Every effort should be made to reduce bycatch towards zero as quickly as possible. Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed on a number of resolutions that highlight the importance of mitigating bycatch of small cetaceans in the Agreement Area, as available data indicates that levels of bycatch pose a considerable threat to their conservation status. Parties have agreed that modifications of fishing gear and relevant practices shall be applied in order to reduce negative impacts where data indicates unacceptable interaction. The Agreement Area requires improved monitoring, collation of data, and consideration of appropriate mitigation measures, while also taking into account similar work in other areas.

To better understand the extent of the impact of bycatch on small cetaceans, monitoring and mitigation measures in place, and ongoing work in the Agreement Area, countries are requested to provide relevant information.

Note: This section includes bycatch in recreational fisheries.

2. Resource Depletion

AIM: to determine areas where, and to what extent, depletion of fish stocks have occurred during the reporting period. In addition, identify ongoing mitigation efforts regarding detrimental implications for small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.3](#), [9.4](#), [8.9](#), [8.3](#), [7.1](#), [6.1](#)

Depletion in fish stocks due to overfishing and other factors generates pressure on the favourable conservation status of small cetaceans (through possible food shortage). More integrated management and reductions in fishing effort (also prompted by concern about fish stock depletion or other ecosystem considerations) have been encouraged, especially in areas of known risk. Further research, effective fishery regulations and innovation within certain fishing methods are considered to be helpful steps towards mitigating this pressure.

Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed on a number of resolutions that (1) determine the impact of the depletion of fish stocks on small cetaceans, (2) encourage fishing effort reductions and (3) review new information on these depletions to make recommendations. Resource depletion in the Agreement Area requires improved monitoring, collation of data, and consideration of appropriate mitigation measures, while also taking into account similar work in other areas.

It is of particular interest to ASCOBANS to understand the extent of prey depletions, any related ongoing work, monitoring and mitigation measures in the Agreement Area. Countries are requested to provide relevant information.

B. Disturbance (incl. potential physical impacts)

3. Noise (impulsive i.e. piling and continuous/ambient i.e. shipping)

AIM: to illustrate progress on understanding, monitoring and mitigating negative effects on small cetaceans from underwater noise during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.3](#), [9.2 \(Rev.MOP10\)](#), [8.11 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.9](#), [8.6 \(Rev.MOP10\)](#), [8.4 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.3](#), [7.1](#), [6.2 \(Rev.MOP10\)](#), [6.1](#)

Small cetaceans are especially susceptible to underwater noise due to their high responsiveness to sound and wide hearing range. Good environmental status, as defined by the European Union, suggests that the introduction of energy, including underwater noise, is at levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment. Anthropogenic noise pollution has generally increased in recent times and generates a broad range of frequencies due to a wide variety of human activities. Impulsive and continuous noise present different impacts on small cetaceans, which include communicative masking, behavioural response and physiological injury. Noise in marine environments potentially impedes communication, affects distribution and hence feeding and reproduction of small cetaceans. Studies show that not only cetaceans but also fish and other marine life may be negatively impacted by anthropogenic noise.

Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed on implementation of measures through a number of resolutions that (1) highlight the potential impact that noise pollution may have on small cetaceans in the Agreement Area and (2) commit to reduce the pressure presented by underwater noise. The Agreement Area requires improved monitoring, collation of data, and consideration of appropriate mitigation measures.

To better understand the extent to which noise negatively impacts the health of small cetaceans, and to learn about new work relevant to the topic, countries are requested to provide related information.

3.1. To which noise registers/databases has your country contributed to date?

[ICES Impulsive Noise Register](#) (for HELCOM and OSPAR Parties)

Please select only one option

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not Applicable

National registry

Please select only one option


- ☒ Yes, please specify (e.g. JNCC noise registry) Data on Unexploded Ordnance are collected by the Dutch Navy and shared with the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI).
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not Applicable

3.2. Any instances/issues in the reporting period including information on planned or completed significant developments/activities, including the details of monitoring in place before, during and after the project:

If you selected 'Yes', please provide details in [this table](#) - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- ☐ No
- ☒ Yes

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3.3. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on underwater noise in your country.

(List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information)

Basan, F., Fischer, J. G., Putland, R., Brinkkemper, J., de Jong, C. A. F., Binnerts, B., ... & Kinneging, N. (2024). The underwater soundscape of the North Sea. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 198, 115891. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpolbul.2023.115891>.

Possenti, L., de Nooijer, L., de Jong, C., Lam, F. P., Beelen, S., Bosschers, J., ... & Reichart, G. J. (2024). The present and future contribution of ships to the underwater soundscape. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 11, 1252901. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2024.1252901

Sertlek, H. Ö., Peng, Y., Ainslie, M. A., von Benda-Beckmann, A. M., Halvorsen, M. B., Koessler, M. W., ... & Tsouvalas, A. (2024). Effects of sediment properties, distance from source, and frequency weighting on sound pressure and sound pressure kurtosis for marine airgun

signatures. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 156(6), 4242-4255.

von Benda-Beckmann, A. M., Kastelein, R. A., Lam, F. P. A., de Jong, C. A., Wensveen, P. J., & Ketten, D. R. (2024). Susceptibility of Harbor Porpoise Hearing to Intermittent Sound Exposures. In *The Effects of Noise on Aquatic Life: Principles and Practical Considerations* (pp. 1155-1178). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Ainslie, M., MacGillivray A., Yubero R., de Jong, C.A.F. & Wang, L.S. (2024). Ship source level measurement in shallow water using an enhanced seabed critical angle method. *Proceedings of the Institute of Acoustics* (2024).

Dinjens, C. (2024). Environmental effects of UXO-clearances. The exploration of the effects of unexploded ordnances for offshore windfarms. Arcadis report ZVHTVJH2TMNV626825331-601:1.

The DEMASK project, started in 2024, aims to bring together policy makers, NGOs, and the maritime industry in the management of the underwater soundscape of the North Sea. The project will enable stakeholders to take measures that contribute to a well-managed soundscape and strengthen the marine ecosystem. DEMASK will develop an approach for defining policy scenarios for underwater noise management and a method to quantify the effectiveness of those scenarios to mitigate noise pollution and its effects on marine life. (<https://www.interregnorthsea.eu/demask>).

The Netherlands (TNO on behalf of the NL Ministry of Defence) participated in the joint ASCOBANS/ACCOBAMS workshop on impact of sonar and UXO on marine life in Toulon. Recommendations from the workshop will be published in 2025.

KEC5 (see next section on cumulative impacts)

3.4. Report on noise management for cumulative impacts, including relevant regulations and guidelines, seismic shot point densities and level of impact deemed acceptable.

An update of the Kader Ecology and Cumulatie (KEC) was developed in 2024 (KEC5). This looks at the impact of underwater noise from all activities related to the development of offshore windfarms (impact/vibratory piling, geotechnical surveys, and UXO clearances). Reports can be downloaded from <https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/functies-gebruik/windenergie/ecologie/wind-zee-ecologisch-programma-wozep/kader-ecologie-cumulatie/>

3.5. Is the perceived level of pressure from underwater noise in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Status relative to previous years. To be done per species basis (Annex B) where applicable.

Species	Increasing/Decreasing/Staying the same/Unknown	Nature of the evidence
Harbour porpoise	Increasing	Increased construction of wind farms, causing piling activities and increased UXO clearances
Harbour porpoise	Staying the same/unknown	Continuous noise due to shipping

4. Ocean Energy

AIM: to understand the extent and development of current and planned ocean energy projects, and progress in monitoring and mitigation of their negative effects on small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: 8.11 (Rev.MOP9), 8.9, 8.6 (Rev.MOP10), 8.3, 6.2 (Rev.MOP10)

Renewable energy is a necessary component of the efforts to supply the energy needs of human populations while combatting climate change. Efforts to harness renewable energy sources, however, should be conducted in a way that does not have a harmful impact on biological diversity and the marine environment. There are potential adverse effects of ocean energy on small cetaceans from such energy projects. In regard to

small cetaceans, this can include potential lethal interactions or injury, negative behavioural impacts from displacement and changes in fecundity, calf survival and juvenile and adult mortality. There remains uncertainty regarding quantifying the (magnitude of the) pressure from ocean energy production on small cetaceans.

Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed to introduce precautionary measures and procedures for activities surrounding the development of renewable energy in marine environments in order to minimise and mitigate possible effects on small cetaceans, by following best practices. Parties have committed to investigating such pressures and robustly monitoring and mitigating them through environmental impact assessments. Addressing all aspects relevant to the conservation of protected species in regard to ocean energy and collaboration with other organizations working on or potentially interested in the issue is to the benefit of small cetaceans in the Agreement Area.

It is of particular interest to ASCOBANS to understand current and ongoing renewable energy projects in the Agreement Area, mitigation measures and procedures in use and other work relevant to the topic. Countries are requested to provide information relevant to their activities.

4.1. Were there any new wind energy farms in development/construction during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in [this table](#) - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- ☒ No
- ☐ Yes. Please provide details in the table.
- ☐ Not Applicable.
- Comments: _____

4.2. Were there any new wave power installations in development/construction during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in [this table](#) - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- ☒ No
- ☐ Yes. Please provide details in the table.
- ☐ Not Applicable.
- Comments: _____

4.3. Were there any new tidal energy installations in development/construction during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in [this table](#) - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- ☒ No
- ☐ Yes. Please provide details in the table.
- ☐ Not Applicable.
- Comments: _____

4.4. Were there any new tidal lagoon/barrage installations in development/construction during the reporting period?

If you select 'Yes', please provide details in [this table](#) - download and then attach it using the blue 'clip' button.

Please select only one option

- ☒ No
- ☐ Yes. Please provide details in the table.
- ☐ Not Applicable.
- Comments: _____

4.5. Has there been any other instances/issues related to ocean energy during the reporting period in your country?

Please select only one option

- ☒ No
- ☐ Yes

4.6. How is the pressure managed, incl. relevant regulations / guidelines and the year of implementation (current and planned)?

Windpark development is regulated by Dutch law (<https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0036752/2017-01-01> in Dutch). General information at: <https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/functions-and-use/offshore-wind-energy/>

To manage the pressure, specific sound level criteria need to be met during construction. These are regularly reviewed. For the construction of Hollandse Kust Noord Kavel V and Hollandse Kust Zuid, measures to limit or monitor the introduction of impulsive sound included a maximum sound level during piling of SEL @ 750m: 163-172 dB re $\mu\text{Pa}^2\text{s}$ were obligated. Noise was to be monitored continuously and mitigated if the criteria were exceeded.

The Netherlands has developed the 'Framework for Assessing Ecological and Cumulative effects' (KEC). Sound Exposure Level (SEL) threshold value at 750 metres from the source for piling has been set for the construction of all offshore wind farms on the Dutch Continental Shelf. This threshold will remain subject to review as new information becomes available. In addition to the noise threshold, mitigation measures (Acoustic Deterrent Device (ADD), soft start) have to be used to encourage harbour porpoises to move away to reduce the risk of hearing damage (Permanent Threshold Shift (PTS)). More information can be found in the Updated Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* in the Netherlands, available at: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/rapporten/2020/11/16/updated-conservation-plan-for-the-harbour-porpoise-phocoena-phocoenain-the-netherlands/bijlage-updated-conservation-plan-for-the-harbour-porpoise-phocoena-phocoenain-the-netherlands.pdf>

4.7. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on ocean energy in your country.

(List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information)

Ransijn, J. M., Noort, B. C. A., Verdaat, H. J. P., & Geelhoed, S. C. V. (2024). *Comparison of the performance of CPODs and FPODs to describe harbour porpoise occurrence*. (Wageningen Marine Research report; No. C087/24). Wageningen Marine Research. <https://doi.org/10.18174/680641>

The Wind at Sea Ecological Research Program (Wozepp), focuses on gaining more knowledge about the direct effects of the construction and ultimately the operation of wind farms and the translation of this to population level. In addition to the use of models (for both underwater noise and its effects at population level), many field measurements are also made in and near wind farms (under construction) and scientific research is conducted into the behaviour of harbour porpoises.

On the Afsluitdijk, tests are being done on extracting energy from the difference in salt concentration between salt and fresh water. A pilot plant is running in Breezanddijk, with which REDstack has gained knowledge about this new way of generating energy (<https://deafsluitdijk.nl/projecten/blue-energy/?tab=hoe>).

4.8. Mark the perceived level of pressure from ocean energy in your country to the table below.

For example, active construction of new developments could increase the pressure, while decommissioning or addition of mitigation measures to pre-existing projects could decrease the pressure.

	Status in year relative to previous years [Increasing, Decreasing, Staying the same, Unknown, Not Applicable]	Nature of the evidence
Wind energy	Increasing	A lot more wind farms to be built delivering 38 to 72 GW in 2050. https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/windenergie-op-zee/nieuwe-windparken-op-zee
Wave power	Not applicable	
Tidal energy	Not applicable	

Tidal lagoon/barrage	Decreasing	Tidal turbines in Oosterscheldeke ring dismantled.
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4.9. Has there been any other instances/issues related to ocean energy during the reporting period in your country?

Please select only one option

- ☒ No
- ☐ Yes

4.10. How is the pressure managed, incl. relevant regulations / guidelines and the year of implementation (current and planned)?

Questions 4.9-4.12 are doubled from 4.5-4.8

4.11. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on ocean energy in your country.

(List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information)

Questions 4.9-4.12 are doubled from 4.5-4.8

Comments:

Questions 4.9-4.12 are doubled from 4.5-4.8

5. Cetacean Watching Industry

AIM: to determine if the developing cetacean watching industry poses a threat to small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.3](#), [8.9](#), [6.1](#), [5.4](#)

Whale and dolphin watching is a global industry that can provide socio-economic benefits to local communities by attracting tourism, as well as strengthening public awareness of conservation needs. However, it also has the potential of being harmful when it interferes with the behaviour of animals in their natural environment and may even lead to injury or death. As the cetacean watching industry is still scarcely developed in some countries, collecting this data now allows tracking the development of the industry.

It is of particular importance to ASCOBANS to obtain an overview of the current scale of the activities and to monitor the development of the industry in the future. This is done by quantifying the number and locations of operators, reporting negative interactions and providing information on the development and implementation of any guidelines regarding cetacean watching.

Filling out this section accurately and completely will help to detect any indications of potential threats, allow timely mitigation action and enable Parties and Non-Party Range States to work towards a coordinated approach regarding the development of cetacean watching guidelines in the Agreement Area.

Note: We are here only addressing commercial cetacean watching activities which take place from vessels and include viewing of small cetacean species. Operators are defined as those offering trips with a primary focus: they advertise specifically with the aim to see small cetaceans, or a secondary focus: they advertise either for other taxa, such as birds or seals, or large cetaceans, or more general for wildlife, but mention the opportunity to see small cetaceans.

6. Recreational Sea Use

AIM: to determine whether recreational sea use is detrimental to small cetaceans and, if so, to identify types of activity and areas of concern.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.6](#), [10.3](#), [8.9](#), [8.3](#), [7.1](#), [6.1](#), [5.4](#)

Recreational use of the sea by humans includes a wide variety of activities, some of which are known to have a potential negative impact on small cetaceans. This includes the use of RIBs (rigid-hulled inflatable boats), hard-hulled boats exceeding 10 knots in speed, yachts and personal watercrafts such as jet skis, kayaks and surfboards; and excludes recreational fishing and sea-angling.

Interactions can cause animals to change behaviour and move away, but can also have more serious impacts, such as injury or even death due to collision. ASCOBANS has agreed on a number of resolutions that highlight the importance to review all available information on recreational use

of the sea. Obtaining an overview of best practices and guidelines will enable comparisons to be made across the Agreement Area, and ultimately may lead to the provision of overall, consistent guidelines that might be developed at a regional or national level. In this section we strive to obtain an overview of potential risk areas and national sources that have data on incidents with small cetaceans related to recreational sea use.

7. Other Sources of Disturbance

AIM: to identify new sources of disturbance that could be a threat to small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.7](#), [10.3](#), [8.9](#), [8.3](#), [7.1](#), [6.1](#)

Overlap of small cetacean and human habitat use is not covered by the questions above, while human activities in the seas are increasing, particularly in the coastal zone. Human activities can, for example, cause a small cetacean to change behaviour, or it can cause physical harm or death. This section aims to identify new sources of disturbance that could be a threat to small cetaceans. The issue of noise is covered under section B3.

C. Habitat Change and Degradation (incl. potential physical impacts)

8. Unexploded Ordnance

AIM: to provide information on the mitigation, management and potential negative impacts of unexploded ordnance on small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: [8.11 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.9](#), [8.8](#), [8.3](#)

Unexploded chemical and conventional munitions present a threat to small cetaceans. Hazards exist from unexploded munitions, which release chronic contaminants, and upon detonation, which is physically hazardous from extreme underwater noise and a sudden release of toxic substances. Unexploded ordnance is a notable threat in many areas, such as the Baltic Sea, where the quantity is unknown, though estimates are high. Information on disposal, state of corrosion and quantities of dumped munition is limited, as are meaningful data on the measured environmental impacts. The significance of this pressure's impact on small cetaceans requires further quantification. However, it is clear that mitigation measures are necessary to support alternatives to detonations, and when no alternative is feasible, to reduce negative impacts on small cetaceans.

In the ASCOBANS Area, millions of tons of unexploded ordnance are present in the marine environment and thousands of sea users, such as fishermen, encounter such munitions every year. Parties have agreed on resolutions to support (1) research investigating the pressure on marine animals and habitat and (2) mitigation measures regarding effects of disintegrating submerged munitions on the marine environment. Parties are to strive towards providing relevant information to required bodies and supporting efforts to address the negative implications from this pressure in other regional and international organizations and waters.

8.1. To which registers/databases covering conventional and chemical munitions has your country contributed to date?

Please select only one option

- ☐ OSPAR
- ☐ HELCOM
- ☐ None
- ☐ Unknown

☒ Other, please state: OSPAR, ICES

8.2. How many UXOs were detonated / released at sea?

Provide link to database if available.

Please select only one option

- ☐ 1-9 _____
- ☐ 10-49 _____
- ☒ 50-99 <https://www.ices.dk/data/data-portals/Pages/impulsive-noise.aspx> (2024 data not uploaded yet).
- ☐ 100+ _____

8.3. Have there been any other instances/issues related to the issue of unexploded ordnance during the reporting period in your country?

Please select only one option

- ☒ No
- ☐ Yes

8.4. How is the issue of unexploded ordnances being managed?

(incl. mitigation measures, relevant regulations/guidelines, year of implementation; may include planned management – please distinguish between a) management of single UXOs and b) management of big amounts of ammunitions in one place e.g. munition dumpsites)

Individual UXO items encountered outside of dump sites are removed by means of detonation. Prior to detonation, visual monitoring by Defense personnel will occur and an acoustic deterrent device (ADDs) is used 30 minutes prior to detonation to scare marine mammal away from the detonation site.

8.5. Is your country monitoring the chemical contaminants released from discarded munition material and unexploded ordnance? (including at munition dumpsites, war wrecks carrying ammunition, UXO detonation zones)

Please select only one option

- ☒ No
- ☐ Yes

8.6. Relevant new research/work/collaboration on the issue of unexploded ordnance in your country.

(List initiatives/ projects (incl. PhD, MSc); publications (reports, theses, papers in journals, books) from any study; web links to other relevant information)

A study was carried out by Arcadis to investigate the expected effects of UXO clearance for future offshore windfarms: Environmental effects of UXO clearances - The exploration of the effects of unexploded ordnances for offshore windfarms. Arcadis report for Rijkswaterstaat, 23 August 2024, 1-63.

According to this report on UXOs, the 'worst worst-case scenario' without mitigation measures has been outlined. However, it is worth questioning the realism of this scenario, as well as the underlying modelling assumptions, which may involve questionable methods and potential double counting. These issues warrant further discussion and a thorough rebuttal of the key points raised. One of which is the difference in harbour porpoise sensitivity between pile-driving and UXO detonation. UXOs involve single impacts instead of repeated impacts in pile driving. Nb the harbor porpoise disturbances should not be confused with the harbor porpoise disturbance days used in the KEC. The author recommends doing a recalculation to the number of clearances and the number of animals affected when more robust data is available.

A new research program SALIENT, funded by the NL MoD, has started in 2025 to investigate alternative clearance methods. The research will be carried out by TNO.

8.7. Is the perceived level of pressure from unexploded ordnance in your country:

Please select only one option

- ☒ Increasing
- ☐ Decreasing
- ☐ Staying the same
- ☐ Unknown
- ☐ Not applicable.
- Comments:

Please provide the nature of the evidence where applicable:

Probably increased clearance because of offshore wind installation. On the other hand, less munition is reported by fishers.

9. Marine Debris (ingestion and entanglement)

AIM: to illustrate progress, during the reporting period, on understanding, monitoring and mitigating impacts of marine debris on small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.3](#), [10.4](#), [9.3](#), [8.8](#), [8.3](#), [7.1](#), [6.1](#)

Marine debris, such as macroplastics and discarded fishing gear, poses a threat to small cetaceans due to the potential for these materials to be ingested or to cause entanglement. Commercial fishing operations, recreational fishing and cargo shipping are notable sources of this material, of which the majority is plastic and ghost nets. However, it is assumed that most of the marine litter worldwide comes from land, although this differs per region. Even small amounts of macroplastics that have been ingested may present serious effects on small cetaceans, such as detrimental influence on the gastrointestinal tract or leaching pollutants into the body, potentially leading to mortality or reduced body condition.

Entanglement is well-established as a threat to small cetaceans as plastic debris continues to accumulate in aquatic environments, and may cause physical injuries, reduced survival or drowning.

To better understand the impact of marine debris on small cetaceans and measures in place to mitigate these effects, countries are requested to provide relevant information.

Note: Includes macroplastics and discarded fishing gear. Microplastics are covered under Section C10 Pollution and Hazardous Substances.

10. Pollution and hazardous substances (incl. microplastics)

AIM: to illustrate progress on understanding, monitoring and mitigating impacts of important current and emerging pollution-related hazards on small cetaceans. during the reporting period

Relevant Resolutions: [10.3](#), [10.4](#), [8.9](#), [8.8](#), [8.7](#), [8.4 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.3](#), [7.4](#), [7.1](#), [6.1](#), [5.7](#)

Marine environments have been subject to a wide range of different types of pollution over the last decades. Top predators, such as small cetaceans that feed on higher trophic prey, tend to accumulate many of these potentially hazardous substances. There are a number of contaminants and pathogens that are known, or suspected, to have impacts on small cetacean health, immune status or reproduction. These include, for example: polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other persistent organic pollutants (POPs), oil pollution (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons), toxins from harmful algal blooms (HABs), sewage, radionuclides, toxic elements, tri-butyl tin (TBT), morbillivirus, and Brucella. In addition, micro- and nano-plastics are also present in marine environment and their impacts are presently poorly understood.

Monitoring can be done using body tissue from small cetaceans obtained from live animals through biopsies, or from dead animals that are generally found on the shore. Necropsies allow the sampling of different types of tissue such as blubber, muscle, kidney or liver and these can be analysed subsequently.

To better understand the impact of contaminants on small cetacean health, to detect new emerging hazards and to work towards a common protocol for analysing samples, countries are asked to provide information on their programs.

Note: Includes microplastics. Macroplastics and discarded fishing gear are covered under Section C 9 Marine Debris.

11. Ship Strikes

AIM: understanding the potential risk of ship strike as a cause of injury/death in small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.6](#), [8.9](#), [6.1](#), [5.4](#)

Ship strikes are collisions between vessels and cetaceans. In the last decades, evidence has emerged that ship strikes might occur more often than previously thought and can have a significant impact on small resident cetacean populations. Most research so far has focused on large cetaceans as those animals are often carried visibly into port at the bow of a vessel. For small cetaceans, ship strike events are not well documented.

Ship strike occurrence is directly linked to the frequency of shipping activity, including such directed at cetaceans, i.e. cetacean watching. To quantify this pressure, it is important to know what kind of vessels are involved in the strike, as well as the type, size and speed of the vessel. But it is also important to have information on the small cetaceans involved, in particular if the animals were engaged in certain behaviour such as feeding.

Ship strike can cause direct death or injury in cetaceans. Even collisions that are non-fatal might leave individuals with a reduction in their chance of survival. To determine the occurrence of ship-strikes, different sources are used. For small cetaceans, direct observations are the rarest. Necropsies of stranded animals can find evidence of characteristic trauma and photographs of animals that survived ship strikes can show typical injuries, such as marks left by propellers. One way to quantify how many animals in a population are impacted by ship strike is to assess the percentage of animals in a photo-identification catalogue that bear ship strike marks.

As this is still a not well documented threat, this section aims to obtain an overview of what kind of data and research is available and ongoing in the countries.

12. Climate change (incl. ocean acidification)

AIM: to illustrate progress on understanding, monitoring and mitigating negative effects of important and emerging climate change related impacts on small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.3](#), [8.9](#), [8.4 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.3](#), [7.4](#), [7.1](#), [6.1](#), [5.7](#)

It is certain that climate change is altering the habitat of cetaceans. However, our understanding of how the predicted changes will impact different species and populations can be further developed by identifying issues and trends through reporting. CMS3 highlights the importance of addressing potential issues through the engagement of (1) researchers to better understand the underlying processes, as well as (2) conservation managers and policy makers to monitor changes and to mitigate negative impacts. Focus should be given to understanding tangible climate change effects relevant to cetaceans, such as changing ocean temperatures, prey depletion / prey range shifts, ocean acidification, increased frequency and intensity of ocean storms, changes in sea ice and weakening of the North Atlantic Drift. Such occurrences require that

we gather evidence on the existence and nature of climate change effects on small cetaceans and evaluate current monitoring programmes and mitigation measures.

This section aims to provide an overview of what kind of activities are already ongoing in the member states to address climate change. The focus is on those actions specifically regarding cetaceans as well as the most likely impacts on their habitat and prey. Climate change possibly represents one of the most important future threats to the status of cetaceans in the ASCOBANS region. Direct effects may arise due to ocean warming, resulting in distribution shifts (generally northward) so that the animals continue to occupy waters with temperature regimes compatible with their thermal niches. Key indirect effects will result from changes in prey distribution and abundance due to ocean warming, ocean acidification and changes in ocean current systems.

13. Physical Habitat Change (e.g. from construction)

AIM: human activities in the Agreement Area have the potential to impact upon small cetaceans. Tracking those activities that cause physical habitat change and improving our understanding of their relative impacts will help shape any necessary mitigation action required.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.3](#), [8.11](#) (Rev.MOP9), [8.9](#), [8.6](#) (MOP10), [8.4](#) (Rev.MOP9), [8.3](#), [7.1](#), [6.2](#), [6.1](#), [5.7](#)

This section aims to review new information on physical habitat change, e.g. from construction, and its impacts on small cetaceans, their prey and their habitat, and make recommendations to Parties and other relevant authorities for further action.

The collation of this information will contribute to the development of risk maps showing the spatial and temporal (by season) distribution of activities that have an impact on small cetaceans, including information provided in National Reports, taking into account the work done by other organizations.

Note: In the term “physical habitat change”, we include a) coastal/marine construction – artificial islands, harbours, bridges, oil/gas platforms, wind turbines, tidal turbines; and b) seabed damage – dredging, bottom trawling.

14. Other issues

D. Management of Cumulative Impacts

15. Marine Spatial Planning

AIM: to provide information on existing and proposed marine spatial plans and processes during the reporting period that may impact small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions [10.5](#), [10.3](#), [8.9](#), [8.6](#) (Rev.MOP10), [8.4](#) (Rev.MOP9), [8.3](#)

A growing demand for use of maritime space increases pressure on ecosystems and marine resources. Marine ecosystems with good environmental status provide notable benefits to a number of economic outputs. Implementation of an integrated spatial planning and management approach can better mitigate negative impacts from maritime activities on marine environments. Spatial planning can support sustainable marine development through coordinated, coherent and transparent decision-making and the encouragement and identification of multi-purpose uses in relevant projects. Marine spatial planning is essential when selecting the most appropriate siting for marine-based projects. Particular attention should be given to critical habitat and relevant species, such as small cetaceans, in order to achieve good environmental status.

ASCOBANS Parties have agreed on a number of resolutions that support the integration of marine spatial planning into development processes. Small cetaceans benefit from good marine spatial planning, and this is highlighted in the resolutions. Countries are requested to provide information relevant to their country in this regard.

15.1.1. Please provide information in regard to current and foreseen marine spatial planning.

National plan(s) and processes in force:

National plans(s) and processes in force: North Sea Programme 2022-2027

<https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/policy/north-sea-programme-2022-2027/>

15.1.2. Please provide information in regard to current and foreseen marine spatial planning.

National plan(s) and processes in preparation:

15.1.3. Please provide information in regard to current and foreseen marine spatial planning.

Further information, including links to online resources and maps where available:

https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/policy/north-sea-programme-2022-2027/

15.2. Does your national MSP include a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)?

Please select only one option

- ☐ No
- ☒ Yes

15.2.1. In the box below, list the species covered by ASCOBANS which are explicitly assessed.

If those species present in your national waters are not explicitly assessed in your SEA, explain why.

Harbour porpoise is assessed. White-beaked Dolphin is not assessed, since it is still considered to be present in low numbers.

15.3. Does your MSP include specific provisions such as reservation or priority layers for the management of one or more ASCOBANS listed species (e.g. such as the reservation areas for harbour porpoises in the German MSP)?

Please select only one option

- ☐ No
- ☒ Yes

15.3.1. In the box below, explain how these will be applied, including specific management actions, and whether or not these provisions are restricted in time (e.g. selected period of months).

Four Natura 2000 sites in the Dutch part of the North Sea—Dogger Bank, Cleaver Bank, North Sea Coastal Zone, and Raan Flats—have been designated as Special Areas of Conservation for, a.o., the harbour porpoise. The harbour porpoise has also been added to the Standard Data Forms (SDF) of four existing Natura 2000 sites—Wadden Sea, Voordelta, Eastern Scheldt, and Western Scheldt & Saeftinghe.

See attached table on MPA's + measures (also reported on in 2024).

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15.4. Does your MSP include buffer zones between areas designated for particular economic use (e.g. offshore wind, shipping) and marine protected areas (including Natura 2000 sites) or areas of particular importance for ASCOBANS-listed species?

Please select only one option

- ☒ No
- ☐ Yes

15.5. Does your MSP include provisions for the mitigation of underwater noise with regards to ASCOBANS species (e.g. for shipping, during offshore wind park construction)?

Please select only one option

- ☐ No
- ☒ Yes

15.5.1. In the box below, explain how and where these are being applied, including specific management actions.

- Reduce underwater noise by introducing a noise budget for seismic survey and focusing more on the implementation of the IMO guidelines for the reduction of underwater noise caused by commercial shipping.
- UXO protocol, ADD's
- OWF threshold level for noise exposure during construction, ADD's. Direct copy from NS program: "On the basis of current knowledge, the development of 10.7 GW is only viable if, during the construction of wind farms, a noise standard of SELSS (750 m) = 160 dB re 1 µPa2s is

applied in the IJmuiden Ver areas and the designated and reconfirmed wind farm zones.139 At present, the noise standard of SELSS (750 m) = 168 dB re 1 µPa2s applies.”

15.6.1. How many MSPs does your country have?

Please select only one option

- ☒ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5

E. Area-based Conservation / Marine Protected Areas

16. Protected areas, e.g. Natura 2000 sites

AIM: to provide information on existing and proposed marine protected areas with small cetaceans as part of the selection criteria.

Relevant Resolutions: [5.7](#)

Marine protected areas (MPAs) are considered under numerous agreements (including the Convention on Biological Diversity, Habitats Directive, Bern Convention, Ramsar Convention, OSPAR Convention, HELCOM, ACCOBAMS, MSFD) as a tool to achieve conservation goals. Part of ASCOBANS remit is to provide expert advice on the conservation and management of small cetaceans. This includes inviting Parties and Range States to continue or initiate research aimed at locating areas of special importance to the survival (in particular breeding and feeding) of small cetaceans as suitable sites for the establishment of protected areas. This also includes advising on appropriate management measures in these areas, on their own or in the context of other intergovernmental bodies to ensure the protection of small cetaceans.

To monitor the progress of such work to fulfil the obligations of Resolution 5.7 and actions in the workplan, ASCOBANS requires information (e.g. location, species, status, spatial data, management plans and monitoring) on existing and proposed marine protected areas with small cetaceans as part of the selection criteria.

It is of particular interest to ASCOBANS to obtain an overview of the current scale of marine protected areas and to review best practice approaches to management of marine protected areas, in order to make recommendations to Parties.

Section III: Surveys and Research

A. Biological Information (per species)

1. Abundance estimates

AIM: to provide new information on abundance and life history parameters of small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.3](#), [8.5 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.4 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.3](#), [7.1](#), [6.1](#), [5.7](#), [5.5](#), [4.7](#), [3.5](#), [3.3](#)

Abundance estimates and information on life history are of critical importance for the determination of broader species attributes such as populations levels, health and overall status. These parameters can contribute towards determination of GES and provide a reference for mortality events. Abundance and life history parameters are typically assessed from monitoring programmes. Fluctuations in these parameters can provide insight into trends in populations. Information on abundance and life history parameters can inform the need for mitigation measures, and regional assessment of these parameters allows for a more spatially targeted and concentrated response to support national assessments.

In the ASCOBANS Area, small cetacean abundance and life history should be monitored in response to a number of ASCOBANS resolutions. Continued monitoring of these parameters is essential to understanding current status and trends.

2. New information on life history parameters

B. Monitoring and Survey Schemes

3. Overview of current monitoring and survey schemes

AIM: to provide information on the progress of monitoring programmes, relevant methodologies and aims thereof, and status of small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.3](#), [8.11 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.9](#), [8.8](#), [8.5 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.4 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.3](#), [7.3](#), [7.1](#), [6.1](#), [5.7](#)

Monitoring programmes provide important data on biological and environmental attributes, such as population status, abundance and spatial-temporal distribution. They create opportunities for new research and development, including potential improvements to methodology for monitoring in terms of accuracy, practicality and cost efficiency.

In the ASCOBANS Area, application of coherent monitoring programmes focused on small cetaceans, which collect and provide objective, robust and comparable data, is a key component in understanding and improving the conservation status of small cetaceans through appropriate management. Parties have agreed to design, implement and support relevant monitoring programmes through a number of resolutions. Such efforts are also supported by legislation from a number of bodies which identify monitoring as a requirement in management systems. Additionally, Parties have been encouraged to coordinate their monitoring programmes, which promotes international cooperation and synergies. Parties have also been encouraged to review such monitoring programmes and propose improvements for the betterment of conservation efforts.

It is the interest of ASCOBANS to understand the current monitoring programmes utilised, their outputs, and future activities in the Agreement Area. Countries are requested to provide information relevant to their activities as well as potential improvements to such programmes and efforts.

C. Other Research

Section IV: Use of Strandings Records

A. Stranding Networks and Strandings

AIM: to provide information on stranding events and demonstrate progress of stranding networks in understanding, monitoring and mitigating strandings of small cetaceans.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.4](#), [10.3](#), [8.10 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.7](#), [8.4 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.3](#), [7.4](#), [7.3](#), [7.1](#), [6.1](#), [5.7](#)

Stranding of cetaceans is an ever-present occurrence and analysis through necropsy and sampling can provide indications of reason for injury and death. Stranding numbers also provide information on population status, abundance and distribution. Effective response to strandings contributes to the maintenance of favourable conservation status of small cetaceans and also has implications for animal welfare. Comprehensive stranding networks are a critical asset in managing small cetacean strandings and have resulted in large numbers of animals rescued and returned to sea. These networks also have the capacity to guide the public on animal welfare, human health and safety considerations during stranding events.

In the effort to mitigate the anthropogenic causes of these occurrences, Parties have agreed to measures through a number of resolutions. Continued monitoring of stranding causation and further developing guidance for best practices in stranding response and necropsies was identified by Parties as important tasks to pursue, as was setting up stranding response networks. This information is to align with appropriate sampling practices and countries should ensure that the data is available for researchers. Additionally, development and support of international strandings databases and regular reporting is conducted through relevant research institutes and stranding schemes. ASCOBANS Secretariat encourages the ongoing funding and support of engagement with organizations for further development of guidelines, best practices and maintaining dataflow for capacity building across stranding networks.

To better understand the extent to which stranding events occur and how these events are managed, it is the interest of ASCOBANS for countries to provide the relevant information on these occurrences within the Agreement Area, procedures undertaken in response to stranding events, necropsies and information on stranding networks.

Section V: Legislation

A. Overview of Legislative Framework

AIM: to provide information on national, regional and international legislation and guidelines relevant to small cetaceans during the reporting period.

Relevant Resolutions: [10.5](#), [10.3](#), [9.2 \(Rev.MOP10\)](#), [8.10 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.9](#), [8.8](#), [8.6 \(Rev.MOP10\)](#), [8.5 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.4 \(Rev.MOP9\)](#), [8.3](#), [7.1](#), [6.2 \(Rev.MOP10\)](#), [6.1](#), [5.7](#), [5.4](#)

Legislation and guidelines are a key component of efforts to support favourable conservation status of small cetaceans in the ASCOBANS Area. A number of existing legislation and guidelines bear relevance to conservation efforts for small cetaceans on national, regional and international scales. Regular updating and adaptation of guidelines and legislation (where applicable) can ensure ongoing prevention, minimization and reduction of negative impacts of marine activities on small cetaceans. In addition, these actions support transparent and reliable management.

Parties to ASCOBANS have agreed to support the requisition, development and the implementation of legislation and guidelines to assess, minimize and mitigate pressures on favourable conservation status of small cetaceans in the Agreement Area. Parties have committed to these

actions through a number of resolutions regarding pressures known to be detrimental to small cetaceans. It is in the interest of ASCOBANS for countries to provide information on current and foreseen national, regional and international legislation and guidelines relevant to small cetaceans in the Agreement Area.

1.1. Please provide the applicable information regarding legislation and guidelines relevant to small cetaceans for the following questions.

Section VI: Information and Education

A. Education and outreach

AIM: to determine if there are gaps in the outreach and education activities and if additional material should be produced in your country or by the Secretariat (e.g. on certain themes, species, regions, languages, for certain target audiences).

Relevant Resolutions: [10.2](#), [5.8](#)

The revised ASCOBANS Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Plan (see [ASCOBANS/MOP9/Doc.5.3](#) Annex 1) was endorsed by the 9th Meeting of the Parties (2020). The purpose of the CEPA Plan is to identify realistic activities relevant to ASCOBANS and mandated by Parties, to be undertaken by the Secretariat, Parties, and relevant partners. It seeks a clearer focus amongst Secretariat, Parties, Partners, and stakeholders regarding objectives. The purpose of this section is to highlight successes and to identify potential gaps in outreach and education activities and related materials.

Section VII: Other Matters

B. Difficulties in implementing the Agreement:

- Too many technical outputs and too few communicable key messages for policy makers
- Motivating fishers to collaborate and share data
- Difficulties to ensure structural funding, e.g. for strandings database and survey work

(this question is also included in the high-key messages.)

Annex A: Overview of the sub-regions as defined by OSPAR and HELCOM, and areas as defined by ICES

Please find Annex A [here](#).

Annex B: Species covered by ASCOBANS

Species covered by ASCOBANS

Code	Common name	Scientific name
AWSD	Atlantic white-sided dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus acutus</i>
BBW	Blainville's beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon densirostris</i>
BD	Bottlenose dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>
CBW	Cuvier's beaked whale	<i>Ziphius cavirostris</i>
CD	Short-beaked Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>
FKW	False killer whale	<i>Pseudorca crassidens</i>
GBW	Gervais' beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon europaeus</i>
HP	Harbour Porpoise	<i>Phocoena</i>
KW	Killer Whale	<i>Orcinus orca</i>
LFPW	Long-finned pilot whale	<i>Globicephala melas</i>

NBW	Northern bottlenose whale	<i>Hyperoodon ampullatus</i>
PKW	Pygmy killer whale	<i>Feresa attenuata</i>
PSW	Pygmy sperm whale	<i>Kogia breviceps</i>
RD	Risso's dolphin	<i>Grampus griseus</i>
RTD	Rough-toothed dolphin	<i>Steno bredanensis</i>
SBW	Sowerby's beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon bidens</i>
SD	Striped dolphin	<i>Stenella coeruleoalba</i>
SFPW	Short-finned pilot whale	<i>Globicephala macrorhynchus</i>
TBW	True's beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon mirus</i>
WBD	White-beaked dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</i>