

Agenda Item 13

Annual National Reports 2007

Document 15

**Annual National Reports
g) Germany**

Action Requested

- briefly present highlights from report (max. 5 minutes)
- take note of the information submitted
- comment

Submitted by

Parties



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

Secretariat's Note

Attached are, as separate documents in order to minimise the need for revisions, the Annual National Reports for 2007, as submitted by the ASCOBANS Parties.

ASCOBANS Annual National Report

A. General information

Germany <i>Name of party</i>	1 January 2006 - 31 December 2007 <i>Period covered</i>
Stefan Bräger <i>Name of report compiler</i>	28 March 2008 <i>Date of report</i>
No change (member of the AC Mr Oliver Schall) Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Bonn <i>Any changes in coordinating authority, appointed member of advisory committee</i>	

B. NEW measures/action towards meeting the resolutions of the Meeting of Parties

1. Direct interaction of small cetaceans with fisheries

<p>A pilot study was initiated by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation to study the applicability of ecologically sound fish traps as an alternative to gill nets. Eight fishery enterprises are taking part in this study and will compare fish traps with bottom set gillnets regarding selectivity on target and non-target species, catch efficiency and effects on habitats and species. Initial results are promising, indicating a reduction in by-catch of undersized target species, non-target species, and almost no impact on benthic habitats. [C. Pusch]</p> <p>No further investigations or project in preparation to test fish traps as an alternative to gill nets [K.-H. Kock].</p> <p><i>Investigations of methods to reduce by-catch</i></p> <p>Beyond the legal frame provided by EC Regulation No. 812/2004, no further implementation of methods to reduce by-catch is in place [K.-H. Kock].</p> <p><i>Implementation of methods to reduce by-catch</i></p> <p>Last estimate by Kock and Flores (2003): 30 harbour porpoise in German set net fisheries in the North Sea. No estimate for the Baltic Sea; last estimate in the German part-time fishery in the Baltic Sea by Rubsch (2003) [K.-H.Kock].</p> <p><i>Estimates of by-catch in set net and pelagic trawl fisheries</i></p>			
Species	Estimated number of by-caught animals	Area (ICES area or more detailed)	Notes (type of fishery, effort, seasonal variations, etc.)
Harbour porpoise	Unknown (3 reported)	Baltic Sea of Schleswig-Holstein (III b)	Gill nets
Harbour porpoise	Unknown (5 reported)	Baltic Sea of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (III d 24)	Gill nets
Harbour porpoise	Unknown (0 reported)	German North Sea	

2. Reduction of disturbance to small cetaceans

<p>Between March and July of 2007, a seismic survey was conducted in the northwestern-most area of the German EEZ in the North Sea ("Entenschnabel"). Prior investigations for species protection resulted in mitigation measures as well as observations and the collection of available proof beyond the standards of the "Guidelines for minimising acoustic disturbance to marine mammals from seismic surveys" of the British Joint Nature Conservation Committee. [M. Fricke]</p>

Auditory studies on the effect of noise were conducted on captive harbour porpoises at the Fjord & Baelte Centre in Denmark to test the animal's tolerance to impulsive sounds. These tests were carried out as part of the joint research project "MINOS+" which aimed at assessing the effect of offshore wind turbines on marine top predators. The resulting temporary hearing threshold in the harbour porpoise in response to airgun impulses was determined at an exposure level of 200 dB (peak-peak) re 1µPa and a SEL of 164 dB re 1µPa²s. [K. Lucke]

A mitigation measure was tested when an air bubble curtain was installed at the Fjord & Baelte Centre to protect the animals from ramming impulses from a nearby construction site. The acoustic attenuation reached 16 dB both in terms of sound pressure and energy. As soon as the air bubble curtain was in operation the animals' behaviour returned from strong aversive reactions to the ramming impulses to their normal behavioural pattern. [K. Lucke]

The project conducted by the Research and Technology Centre in Büsum on potential impacts of sound on ears of harbour porpoises using special histo-pathological methods was continued. [U. Siebert]

As a reaction to the projected detonation of up to 130 sea mines and torpedo heads (WWII) at the entrance of Kiel harbour (ammunition dumping site "Kolberger Heide") in September 2006, three German NGOs, the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU), the Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (GSM) and the Society for Dolphin Conservation (GRD), asked the authorities to stop these activities and make sure that harbour porpoises in the dumping site and neighbouring SACs are not affected by such detonating of underwater unexploded ordnance (UWUXO). The Ministry of the Interior of Schleswig-Holstein placed a moratorium to examine alternative clearing methods. On 19 October 2007, the NGOs held a symposium in Kiel, Schleswig-Holstein on alternatives to the blasting of UWUXO (results presented on www.NABU-meeresschutz.de) which was the first of its kind in Europe. Results: The shock wave and intense sound pressure of explosions of up to 350 kg gun cotton in each of the 130 warheads can kill marine mammals at a radius of up to 4 km. Hearing impairment can occur at a radius of 13 to 33 km. The protection of harbour porpoises under the EC habitats directive requires the implementation of sufficient protection or mitigation measures such as bubble curtains, suitable deterrent strategies and the establishment of a safety zone to be visually and acoustically monitored before detonations. Top priority, however, should be given to the recovery of ordnance. Technical options for salvage operations are e.g. the freezing of explosives using supercooling equipment, the use of robotics for safe handling, dilution of explosive substances with hot water followed by photolytic treatment, underwater jet abrasive cutting and subsequent incineration in a mobile detonation chamber. As a result, authorities are planning test detonations with bubble curtains in March 2008 in Schleswig-Holstein and of jet-cutting in April 2008 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. [S. Koschinski]

Information on levels of disturbance

(e.g. seismic surveys, new high-speed ferry routes, studies about acoustic impacts on cetaceans, etc.)

The German parliament – „Deutscher Bundestag“ - passed 19.1.2006 the law for the Enlargement of ASCOBANS in a large consensus covering all parties represented in the Bundestag.

Several German activities took place in 2006 and 2007 to promote for a Russian accession to CMS and its respective Agreements like ASCOBANS: One of the last activities was the invitation of a Russian delegation from the Ministry of Natural Resources in Moscow to Bonn in late summer 2007 and respective talks of a German delegation in Moscow in autumn 2007, where the Russian intention was announced to start - if possible - the legislative process for accession within the new legislative period after the election in March 2008. [O. Schall]

2006: Marine mammal risk mitigation procedures and sighting report forms were developed for the German Navy based on NATO URC diver and marine mammal risk mitigation rules. By means of a newly established marine mammal data base, a risk mitigation tool was implemented in "Mocassin", a sonar performance program used by the German Navy. Besides the plotted extensions of the sound pressure level thresholds of 160 and 180 dB rel 1µPa, information is provided on the characteristics of the different species abundant in the area and on the required time for the slowest cetacean to leave the danger zone. [U. Velte]

2007: Instructions for the German Navy on protection of marine mammals and maritime habitats were enacted in September 2007. They are based on the NATO URC diver and marine mammal risk mitigation rules and adapted to feasibilities of the German fleet. They regulate sonar activities and blasting operations. [U. Velte]

Implementation of guidelines, new legislation, etc. to reduce disturbance

3. Protected areas for small cetaceans

In 2007 the EU-Commission listed the following SCIs (Site of Community Importance) in the German EEZ on the Atlantic and Continental Biogeographic Lists, respectively:
 Atlantic Region: Doggerbank, Borkum Riffgrund, Sylter Außenriff;
 Continental Region: Fehmarnbelt, Kadetrinne, Westliche Rönnebank, Adlergrund, Pommersche Bucht mit Oderbank. All SCIs include the harbour porpoise as interest feature. [D. Boedeker]

Inside the Wadden Sea National Park of Hamburg (German Bight), all fishing activities are prohibited with the exception of shrimp fishery in three gullies by a small number of boats resulting in zero bycatch. Furthermore, no information on disturbances is known. [P. Körber]

Measures taken to identify, implement and manage protected areas

4. Further research on small cetaceans

In Lower Saxony, the system of incidental strandings and opportunistic sightings is continued (see http://www.nationalpark-wattenmeer.niedersachsen.de/master/C43559691_N28553490_L20_D0_I5912119.html) It appears noteworthy, that a number of harbour porpoises has been reported from the rivers Weser and Elbe as well. The results regarding the river Weser are available at http://cdl.niedersachsen.de/blob/images/C43557725_L20.pdf. [R. Czeck]

Implementation of schemes to use and gain information from stranded cetaceans

Last estimate (2005) by SCANS II; aerial surveys in the German EEZ 2003 – 2006 (please see Herr et al. 2008: ASCOBANS AC15 Working Document) [K.-H. Kock]

Since 2002, the German Oceanographic Museum (inc. research & development projects “EMSON”, “MINOS+”, “Implementation of the Jastarnia Plan”, “AMPOD”; mostly funded by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation) is studying the utilization of porpoises click detectors (so-called T-PODs) for monitoring. It presents the results of a five year monitoring of harbour porpoises with three measuring positions deployed in each of two proposed “Natura 2000” sites (Fehmarnbelt and Kadetrinne) plus additional five measuring positions in nearby coastal waters. The unit ‘porpoise positive hours per month’ proved to be valuable for accurately describing seasonal fluctuations. A variety of anchorage and surveillance systems was tested to safeguard the measuring devices. [M. Dähne]

In 2007, a monitoring scheme to evaluate the presence of harbour porpoises in the waters of Lower Saxony (German Bight) by line-transect surveys was initiated. First surveys will be performed in spring of 2008. [R. Czeck]

In the mouth of the river Elbe (German Bight), sightings of harbour porpoise are collected regularly by the crew of the ferry between Cuxhaven and Neuwerk. [P. Körber]

2006: A study on the possibility to detect cetaceans with military sonar systems used in a passive mode was completed. The results were presented in a final report and on various international conferences. A marine mammal data base was set up including sightings and strandings mainly from the Baltic and North Sea as well as characteristics of 126 species like vocalization, behaviour and appearance. The data base also contains worldwide maps of occurrence of each species on a 1°x1° grid based on literature data. The data base was compared with others and presented on various international meetings. To obtain seasonal predictions of marine mammal occurrence, the relative environmental suitability (RES) model was adjusted to seasonal input parameters and tested by means of two cetacean species, the harbour porpoise and the northern bottlenose whale. The results, presented in a FWG report, indicated that there is sufficient information to increase the temporal resolution of existing RES predictions. [U. Velte]

2007: For possible military sonar test areas, e.g. the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Basin, studies concerning the abundance, distribution and migration of cetaceans were carried out. The German marine mammal data base of the German Navy, containing sightings, strandings, worldwide maps of occurrence and characteristics of 126 species like vocalization, behaviour and appearance, was extended. The relative environmental suitability (RES) model yielded seasonal predictions of habitat suitability, densities and uncertainties of the following six beaked whale species: Cuvier's beaked whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*), northern bottlenose whale (*Hyperoodon ampullatus*), Sowerby's beaked whale (*Mesoplodon bidens*), Blaineville's beaked whale (*Mesoplodon densirostris*), Gervais' beaked whale (*Mesoplodon europaeus*) and True's beaked whale (*Mesoplodon mirus*). The predictions allow the mapping of species occurrence in the form of relative occurrence (based on RES values ranging from 0.00 (unsuitable habitat/absence) to 1.00 (highly suitable habitat/presence) as well as absolute densities corresponding to the estimated number of animals per km². The model results are inserted into the marine mammal data base. [U. Velte]

As a tribute to the International Year of the Dolphin, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety in collaboration with the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and the German Oceanographic Museum organized an international four-day conference on "Conservation of small cetaceans and marine protected areas" in Stralsund, 29th October to 1st November 2007. Over 100 participants from 14 European countries came together to hear and discuss conservation problems such as bycatch in fishing gear, fast ferries, increasing underwater noise pollution from anthropogenic sources such as SONAR as well as industrial construction and pile-driving etc. The plight of the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise and implementation of the Jastarnia Plan were other important issues discussed. These discussions led to the formulation of five "Stralsund Recommendations" on how to improve EC Regulation No. 812 /2004 to prevent bycatch in fishing gear (<http://www.habitatmarenatura2000.de/de/aktuelles-year-of-the-dolphin-conclusions.php>). [S. Bräger]

Research on abundance, population structure etc.

A possible connection between the stranding of a northern bottlenose whale in a Swedish fjord and the test of a low frequency towed array sonar system (LFTAS) in the Skagerrak in August 2004 was studied in detail and published in a FWG report. A connection was suspected due to the spatial and temporal coincidence of both events and strandings of this species are very rare in that area. The sound pressure levels the whale might have received were probably low and no vital organs were immediately damaged. The sonar test was carried out using the best known mitigation procedures but the whale might have tried to escape and got lost in a region where it could not survive. [U. Velte]

Research on the effects of pollutants on cetacean health

5. Public awareness and education

To promote public awareness for small cetaceans and their marine habitats i. a. the following activities took place:

- In November 2006 a disc "Habitat Mare Natura 2000 – Research and Protection for the North Sea and the Baltic sea" was published by the federal Nature Protection Agency to inform about the proposed marine protected sites in Germany. Parts of this disc deal with the harbour porpoise and the need of its protection.
- On the occasion of the year of the dolphin BMU published a poster showing the small cetacean species of the ASCOBANS agreement area.
- The activities in the frame of ASCOBANS were published in German language in the magazine of the BMU called "Umwelt", so :
 - More protection for dolphins and small cetaceans in the North East Atlantic – legislation for the Enlargement of ASCOBANS passed the parliament" (Umwelt 3/2006 / p.152 – 154)
 - Small cetacean agreement ASCOBANS has a new team – the Meeting of parties in autumn 2006 and its implementation (Umwelt 6/2006 / p. 361 – 363). [O. Schall]

The project 'Meereslauschen', initiated by the National Park information centre Norderney, was started in the Wadden Sea National Park of Lower Saxony in 2007. Within this project, sounds recorded by a submarine microphone will be transmitted to the information centre and offered to the visitors. The project focuses mainly on educational purposes but will also be able to detect and evaluate the presence of harbour porpoises near Norderney over the year. The system will be operational by mid- 2008. [R. Czeck]

To promote the „International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise“ (3rd Sunday in May), a press release was distributed by the Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (GSM) in order to announce a painting competition for children up to the age of 12 years: “Children paint harbour porpoises”. The ‘model’ on the mini poster to attract the attention of young ‘artists’ -and the media, of course- has been created by the German artist Kim Schmidt. The best 25 drawings were selected and awarded by three judges (Kim Schmidt, Rüdiger Stempel and Prof. Wulf Schomer of the University of Osnabrück). The winner receives a one-week sail course in the Baltic harbour of Heiligenhafen. All winners will be announced during the upcoming „International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise” 2008 during a press conference in the Zoological Museum of the University of Hamburg. [P. Deimer]

Following the annual tradition since 2002, the GSM has again approached 280 sailing clubs and marinas as well as several yachting magazines to raise awareness for its project “Sailors on the lookout for harbour porpoises” (The project received the ASCOBANS Award in 2007). As usual, the results of the project were excellent and will appear as German contribution probably to AC-16 in 2009. The media feedback is still very good, and the dissemination of the request for sightings is widespread. Since 2007 the sighting map also includes stranded animals (<http://www.habitatmare.de/de/schweinswalsichtungen1m.php>). [P. Deimer]

Measures taken in the fields of public awareness and education to implement or promote the Agreement