

# Swedish actions for the conservation of harbour porpoises in the North Sea

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# Action 6

## **Finalize a management procedure approach for determining maximum allowable bycatch limits in the region (Action 6)**

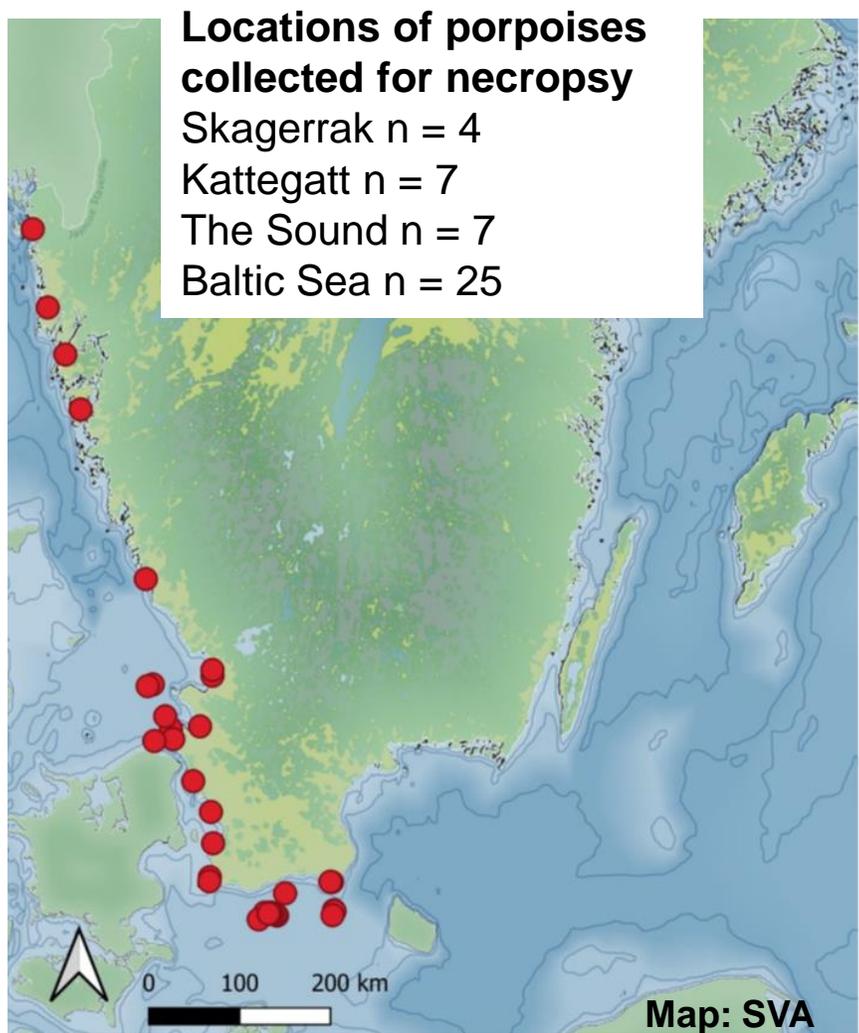
Sweden (NRM, on behalf of SwAM) involved in the update and redefinition of the ASCOBANS conservation objective, including recommendations for methods to calculate mortality limits



## Monitoring trends in distribution and abundance of harbour porpoises in the region

- Sweden involved in the SCANS IV as a co-financer (SwAM) and expert support (NRM).
- Currently only one joint monitoring station for harbour porpoises and underwater noise west of Gothenburg (NRM, FOI, on behalf of SwAM).
- National monitoring programme currently being evaluated (NRM on behalf of SwAM), incl. recommendations for future changes, which may incorporate extended PAM in the Skagerrak Sea (NS population).





20 females, 23 males were examined by necropsy 2023,

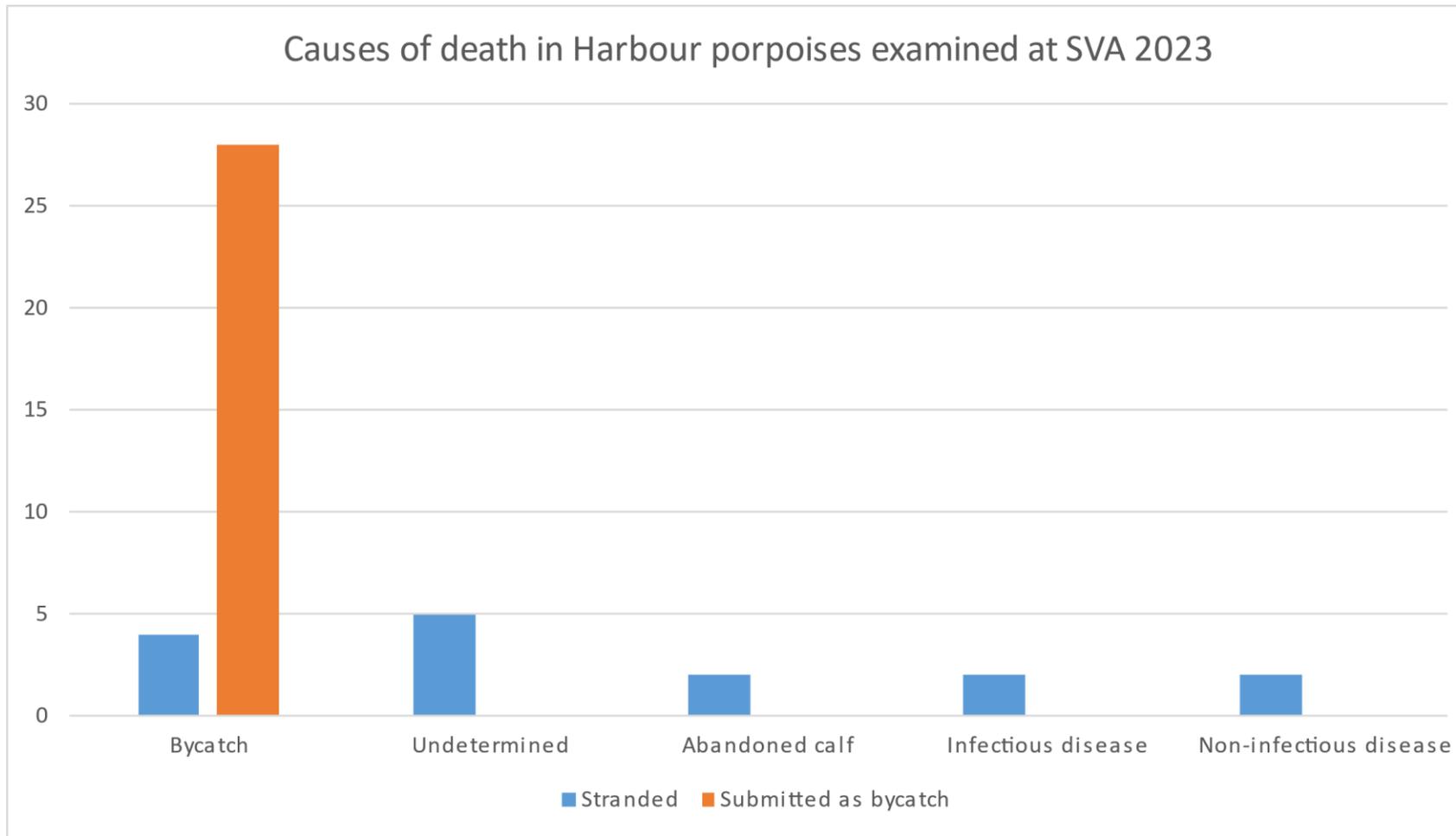
- 28 bycaught and 15 stranded porpoises:
  - 10 adults, 14 juveniles and 19 calves
  - 3 of the 6 adult females were either pregnant, lactating or both.
- SVA together with NRM determine cause of death and health status, nutritional condition, reproductive status, genetics, age and other life history parameters, and collaborate with researchers at Lund University and Gothenburg University to investigate diet



Photo SVA

Bycaught harbour porpoise from 2023 with skin lesions

- In addition to the 28 animals submitted by fishermen, stranding data contributed information on incidental bycatch (SVA)
  - In 2023, 4 of the 15 stranded animals were diagnosed as bycaught
  - Spatiotemporal analysis of stranding reports 2014-2023 revealed an association between porpoise abundance, prey abundance, gillnet fisheries effort and strandings (Ulfsson et al., 2024, in press)
  - **Bycaught animals**, including those submitted by fishermen, continue to show other **significant health findings** including **skin lesions** and **pneumonia**. These animals help us follow general health trends in the population



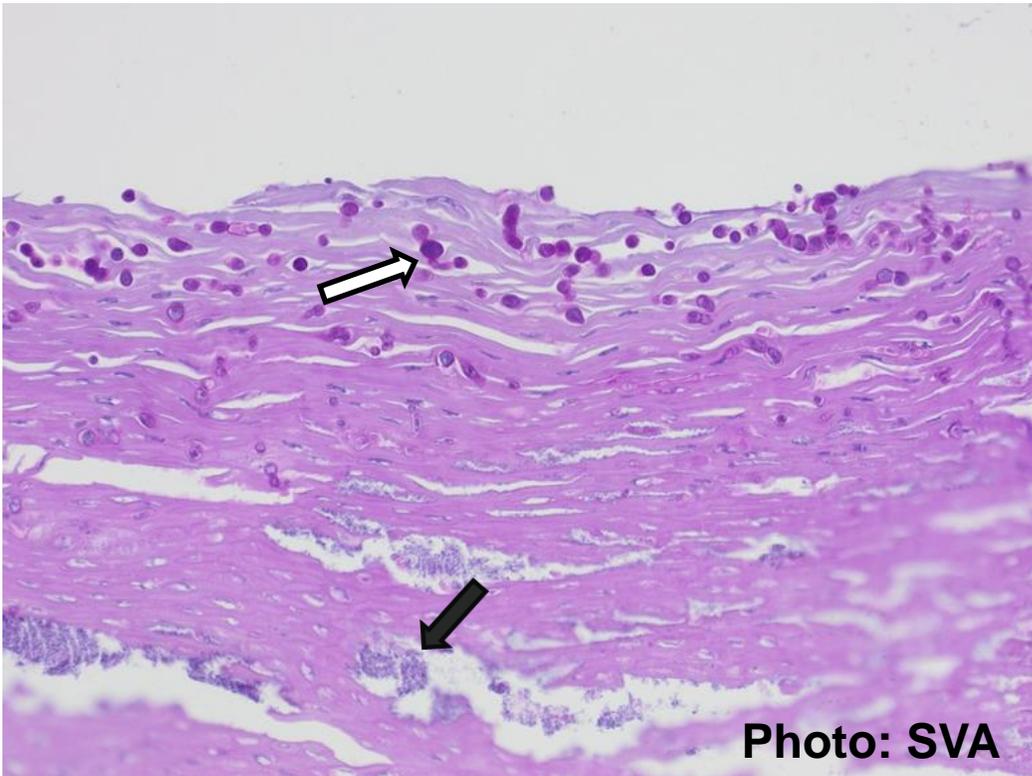


Photo: SVA

Skin infection with fungi (white arrow) and bacteria (black arrow)

- Skin infections are frequently seen and may serve as indicators of overall health status. Further characterization is on-going.
- Two of the four stranded adult female porpoises died from calving complications. Such cases have also been seen previously and further investigation is on-going

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