

**Agenda Item 5.2: Post-mortem and stranding schemes**

**Information submitted by Parties in response  
to post-mortem research questionnaire**

**Submitted by: Secretariat**



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



**Questionnaire**  
**on post mortem research schemes**  
**within the ASCOBANS Agreement area**

**Belgium, 31 March 2006**

Name and address of reporting institution	Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS), department Management Unit of the North Sea Mathematical Models (MUMM)
Name of respondent	Jan Haelters
What data are recorded routinely?	All stranded animals are necropsied – to the extent allowed by the state of decomposition of the carcass – and sampling is performed according to standard protocols (Kuiken & Hartmann, 1991; Jauniaux <i>et al.</i> , 2002).  Tissue samples (liver, muscle, fat and kidney) are available for analyses, and different researchers at universities regularly use these for studies of heavy metal (Cu, Zn, Cd, Fe, Cr, Ni, Pb), Se, total mercury, methylmercury, PCBs and organochlorine pesticides content.
Description of methods and units of measurement used	See previous report.
List of tissue samples usually taken	See Kuiken & Hartmann (1991) and Jauniaux <i>et al.</i> (2002). Samples are taken for toxicology, histopathology, parasitology, virology, bacteriology, genetics and diet.  For toxicological investigations liver, kidney, blubber, adipose and muscle tissue is collected. From every animal the parasites and stomach contents are sampled or collected in its entirety. Samples taken for histopathology include auditory organ, eye, liver, renal gland, heart, lymphatic ganglions, stomach, brain, lung, .... Sometimes mother milk is collected. For determining ages, teeth are sampled.  From many fresh specimens of harbour porpoises, or from species rare at the Belgian coast, skeletons, or at least the cranium, are collected.
How are the samples preserved?	Different according to the sample: formaldehyde, alcohol, frozen at –18°C or –80°C, ...
How are carcasses disposed of?	Remains of necropsies (of large animals) performed at the spot are sent to a carcass disposal plant. Sample debris and wastes generated during the necropsy of smaller animals are discarded through the system at the university where the necropsy is performed.

<p>Are data recorded in a computer database? Please describe</p>	<p>Strandings data are recorded in an access database, of which basic parts can be accessed on-line (<a href="http://www.mumm.ac.be">http://www.mumm.ac.be</a>); necropsy data are recorded in word and excell files.</p> <p>Toxicological data are stored in databases, and afterwards entered into a general oceanographic database: BMDC (Belgian Marine Data Centre; see: <a href="http://www.mumm.ac.be/datacentre/index.php">http://www.mumm.ac.be/datacentre/index.php</a>) managed by MUMM.</p>
<p>How many data sets (by species) do you have?</p>	<p>Due to the relatively high numbers of stranded porpoises during the last years, the number of datasets for this species has risen to over 200 since the year 2000. Other species that were collected between 1990 and 2005 include <i>Stenella coeruleoalba</i>, <i>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</i>, <i>Lagenorhynchus acutus</i>, <i>Globicephala melaena</i>, <i>Mesoplodon bidens</i>, <i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>, <i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i> and <i>Physeter macrocephalus</i> (not all of these from the Belgian shore; some were investigated by Belgian scientists in a cooperation between French and Belgian researchers).</p>
<p>Which computer software is used?</p>	<p>Tentatively the latest versions of Microsoft Office.</p>
<p>Do you foresee any problems (e.g. regarding intellectual property rights etc.) related to a central database?</p>	<p>Published data are, of course, accessible and can be used with reference to the publication. Other data should not be used without authorisation, or prior to publication. Some general data, such as the number of strandings and preliminary observations are available via MUMM, and can be consulted online.</p>
<p>What advantages would you expect from a central database?</p>	
<p>Additional information</p>	

Jauniaux, T., Garcia Hartmann, M., Haelters, J., Tavernier J. & Coignoul, F., 2002. Echouage de mammifères marins: guide d'intervention et procédures d'autopsie. Annales de médecine vétérinaire 146: 261-276

Kuiken & Hartmann, G. (1991). Proceedings of the first ECS workshop on cetacean pathology: dissection techniques and tissue sampling. ECS newsletter 17.

**Questionnaire  
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within the ASCOBANS Agreement are**

**FRANCE**

Name and address of reporting institution	Marine Mammal Research Centre (CRMM) - La Rochelle
Name of respondent	O. Van Canneyt - V. Ridoux
What data are recorded routinely?	Species, location, date found, condition of carcass, probable cause of death, by catch sign or not, body measurements. All coasts of France : English Channel, Atlantic and Mediterranean
Description of methods and units of measurement used	Stranding Network - S.I units (metric units)
List of tissue samples usually taken	Teeth, blubber, muscle, kidney, liver, gonads, stomach, spleen, parasites.
How are the samples preserved?	Teeth (alcohol), blubber (frozen), kidney (frozen/alcohol), liver (frozen), gonads (formalin), stomach (frozen), spleen (frozen), parasites (alcohol).
How are carcasses disposed of?	Squaring, national disposal to take it in charge by the knacker's
Are data recorded in a computer database? Please describe	CRMM database on Personal Computer
How many data sets (by species) do you have?	12 865 records
Which computer software is used?	Microsoft Access (Windows) + GIS (ArcGis)
Do you foresee any problems (e.g. regarding intellectual property rights etc.) related to a central database?	--
What advantages would you expect from a central database?	Better description for the distribution, relation and comparison to show trends or accidents
Additional information	--

**Questionnaire**  
**on post mortem research schemes**  
**within the ASCOBANS Agreement area 2005**

Name and address of reporting institution	Contaminant Research Group Swedish Museum of Natural History Box 50007, SE-104 05 Stockholm, <b>Sweden</b>
Name of respondent	Anna Roos
What data are recorded routinely?	Date, location, finder, length, weight and sex of specimen, cause of death, type of gear if bycaught, what samples are taken. We perform complete necropsy if we receive the specimen whole, to study general health status.
Description of methods and units of measurement used	Skagerrak - Kategat area: most often a piece of the fin and some teeth are sent to the Swedish Museum of Natural History (SMNH), usually via the Museum of Natural History in Gothenburg. The Baltic: the whole carcass is sent to the SMNH and a complete necropsy is performed.
List of tissue samples usually taken	Specimen from the Baltic: blubber, skin, muscle, liver, kidney, lung, blood, brain and skeleton. Skagerrak-Kategat: fin and some teeth. However, if the whole carcass is sent to SMNH, necropsy is performed and full sample sets are taken.
How are the samples preserved?	Samples are packed in aluminium foil and plastic and kept in the Environmental specimen bank, in a freezer (-28°C), at the SMNH. Skull and skeleton are cleaned and kept dry. Sometimes samples are taken to formalin.
How are carcasses disposed of?	Carcasses are sent to a disposal plant specialized in biological waste.
Are data recorded in a computer database? Please describe	Yes, data are incorporated in the Environmental specimen bank database. Here, all data about the animal are recorded and can be retrieved at will, most of it via internet from our web page.
How many data sets (by species) do you have?	Approximately 20, with additional subsets.
Which computer software is used?	Microsoft Excel, but we are switching to MySQL.
Do you foresee any problems (e.g. regarding intellectual property rights etc.) related to a central database?	No
What advantages would you expect from a central database?	Easier for international co-operation.
Additional information	Porpoises from the Skagerrak- Kategat are sampled and sent to SMNH on a voluntary basis, most often only fin + teeth. Only a few specimen from this area are received whole, and then full sample sets are taken. From now on, we plan to receive some 20 bycaught specimen/year from that area, to perform complete necropsy of them.

**Questionnaire**  
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**within the ASCOBANS Agreement area**

Name and address of reporting institution	The Natural History Museum (NHM), Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London, SW7 5BD, <b>United Kingdom</b>
Name of respondent	Richard C. Sabin, UK Cetacean Strandings Project Coordinator, Department of Zoology, The Natural History Museum, London.
What data are recorded routinely?	Standardised morphometric data, species, sex, date carcass found, location (including Ordnance Survey grid reference), carcass condition. Routine data collection began in 1913.
Description of methods and units of measurement used	See attached strandings record sheet (sheet routinely used by H.M. Coastguard, RSPCA, The Wildlife Trusts and other national bodies)
List of tissue samples usually taken	The NHM recovers skeletal material from around the UK for incorporation into its research collections. The NHM has been collecting cetacean skeletal material for more than 100 years. Soft tissue samples also recovered.
How are the samples preserved?	Climate-controlled Natural History Museum storage facility in London (skeletal material). Dedicated $-80^{\circ}\text{C}$ freezers for soft tissue samples.
How are carcasses disposed of?	Biological waste is disposed of using an approved commercial waste-disposal company.
Are data recorded in a computer database? Please describe	All records received since 1913 - 2006 have been entered onto computer database (ongoing).
How many data sets (by species) do you have?	14,599 records comprising 25 cetacean species.
Which computer software is used?	Smart
Do you foresee any problems (e.g. regarding intellectual property rights etc.) related to a central database?	A central database has the potential to be successful. Undoubtedly, issues of intellectual property rights will arise, but these can be dealt with by standard data access agreement(s) between contributing organisations/individuals to protect contributors interests. For example, in the UK data held in the NHM Cetacean Strandings database is protected by an agreement that precludes the access, analysis, or distribution to third parties of any data without permission from the NHM.
What advantages would you expect from a central database?	Closer European integration. Promote/facilitate international research collaboration.
Additional information	Please see attached NHM strandings record form. Please also see the NHM's Cetacean Strandings website at the following address: <a href="http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/projects/strandings/">http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/projects/strandings/</a>

This form should be filled in and posted, immediately after telephoning or sending a fax, to:

Department of Zoology,  
The Natural History Museum,  
Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD  
Tel: 0207 942 5155 Fax: 020 7942 5054



# Stranded Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises

Note: Rubber gloves should be worn when handling cetaceans, alive or dead.

**Place and date where carcase first seen**

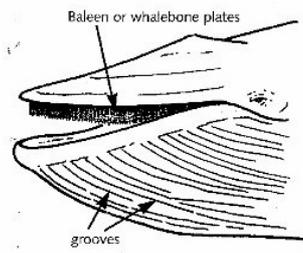
The position of a locality not likely to be given on an OS map should be indicated by its relation to some better known place, bay or headland.

<b>Place</b>									
<b>County</b>			<b>Grid ref.</b>						
<b>Name of Finder</b>									

<b>Is the tail horizontal?</b> If the answer to this question is 'No', it is <u>not</u> necessary to fill up the rest of this form as the animal is therefore not a whale, dolphin or porpoise.	<b>Yes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<b>Is there a hole ('blowhole') on the top of the head?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Is it a single hole or a pair of holes?</b>	<b>Single</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Pair</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Does the mouth contain teeth/tooth sockets or baleen/whalebone plates?</b>	<b>Teeth</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Baleen</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If neither teeth nor baleen can be found, state whether the two halves of the lower jaw are:</b>				
<b>(a) Arched outwards and widely separated half way back</b> (In which case the specimen is a Whalebone Whale, and the baleen has been washed out);	<b>(a)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>(b) Close together in front, where the jaw is accordingly narrow</b> (A Toothed Whale in which the teeth are concealed beneath the gum).	<b>(b)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

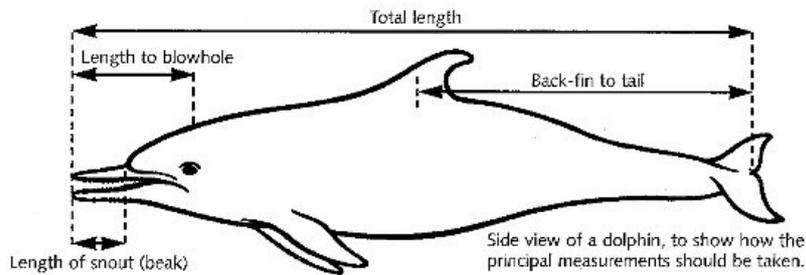
**Whalebone Whales** if baleen present, state:



<b>(a) The colour of the baleen plates.</b> If not everywhere alike indicate the arrangement; e.g. 'white for ...cm at front end of right side, the rest as stated				
<b>(b) The colour of the hairy fringes of the plates</b>				
<b>Grooves</b> Is the throat marked by numerous deep grooves?	<b>Yes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Grooves</b> Is the throat marked by a pair of grooves?	<b>Yes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Toothed Whales** if teeth are present, state:

	(a) Whether they occur in both jaws or in the lower jaw only.	<b>Both</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Lower</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	(b) The number of teeth and empty sockets of one side of the upper jaw.	<b>Teeth</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Empty sockets</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	(c) The number of teeth and empty sockets of one side of the lower jaw.	<b>Teeth</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Empty sockets</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	(d) If only few teeth & sockets present, their position in the jaw.	<b>Middle</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Back</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	(e) The diameter of one of the largest teeth.	<b>Diameter</b>			
	(f) Whether teeth spade-shaped or conical/needle-shaped.	<b>Spade-shaped</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Needle-shaped</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Total length of the animal measured in a straight line. (preferably in metric units)

Length from the tip of the snout to the blowhole.

Length from the middle of the base of the back-fin to the middle of the tail

Length of one of the two flippers.

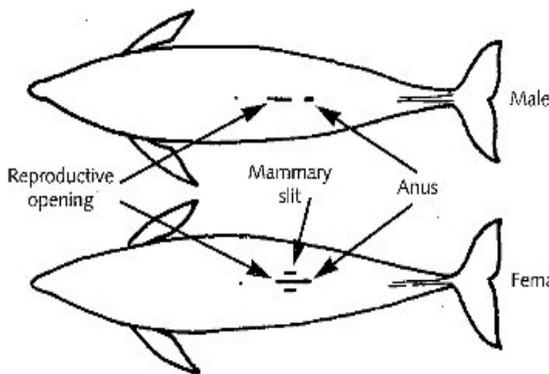
Length, in the middle line, of the snout or beak if present

Vertical height of the back-fin if present.

Is the animal male or female? (In male, penis may be extruded. In female, mammary slits usually visible).

Male

Female



Shape of the head (for instance, 'beak absent' or 'beak six inches long, forehead much swollen').

Length of gap between Reproductive opening and The anus.

 cm

Colour of the skin, calling attention to the position of any white parts or stripes observed.

Please fill in diagram at top of page.

Condition of the animal when first seen:

Live

Dead

Fresh

Uncertain

Decomposed

Comments on condition (e.g. smelly, leaking body fluids, bones visible, penis extruded, small cuts, big wounds).

Is it lying in such a position that it could be secured for the Museum if wanted, either entire, or its head, flippers or complete skeleton?

Additional Comments (if tangled in netting, please keep a sample).

Name and address (please print).

Tel. nos

Fax. nos

E-mail

Date of completion of form: