

Agenda Item 16.1

Relations with other Bodies

Reports by the Secretariat, Parties and
Partners

Document Inf.16.1.a

**Reports from Relevant Meetings
Back to ASCOBANS**

Action Requested

- Take note

Submitted by

Secretariat



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

Reports from Relevant Meetings Back to ASCOBANS

2-3 October 2014

OSPAR Intersessional Correspondence Group on Biodiversity Monitoring and Assessment (ICG-COBAM)

Report: Jan Haelters (Belgium)

The relevant points discussed at this meeting have been summarised in [AC22/Doc.6](#).

For the full report, please refer to the [OSPAR website](#).

6-17 October 2014

12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP12)

Report: Penina Blankett (Finland)

Marine and coastal biodiversity: ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs)

The meeting welcomed the scientific and technical evaluation of data, describing ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), contained in the reports of the regional workshops that were held in seven regions.

1. Southern Indian Ocean (Flic en Flac, Mauritius, 31 July–3 August 2012)¹
2. Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific (Galapagos, Ecuador, 28–31 August 2012)²
3. North Pacific (Moscow, Russian Federation, 25 February–1 March 2013)³
4. South-Eastern Atlantic (Swakopmund, Namibia, 8–12 April 2013)⁴
5. Arctic (Helsinki, Finland, 3–7 March 2014)⁵
6. North-West Atlantic (Montreal, Canada, 24–28 March 2014)⁶
7. Mediterranean (Málaga, Spain, 3–7 April 2014)⁷

Many of these areas are important for cetaceans.

There is an ongoing scientific and technical process applying the EBSA criteria in the North-East Atlantic. There is also a request to continue to facilitate the description of areas meeting the criteria for EBSAs through the organisation of additional regional or subregional workshops where the Parties wish workshops to be held. Additionally, it's been requested to undertake national exercises, as appropriate, to describe areas meeting the EBSA criteria, or other relevant compatible and complementary nationally or intergovernmentally agreed scientific criteria in areas within national jurisdiction. The meeting encouraged the Parties and other Governments to make use, as appropriate, of the scientific data on the description of areas

¹ UNEP/CBD/RW/EBSA/SIO/1/4.

² UNEP/CBD/RW/EBSA/ETTP/1/4.

³ UNEP/CBD/EBSA/NP/1/4.

⁴ UNEP/CBD/RW/EBSA/SEA/1/4.

⁵ UNEP/CBD/EBSA/WS/2014/1/5.

⁶ UNEP/CBD/EBSA/WS/2014/2/4.

⁷ UNEP/CBD/EBSA/WS/2014/3/4.

meeting the EBSA criteria, including the data in the EBSA repository and the information-sharing mechanism. In addition, the data from indigenous and local communities, as well as the relevant sectors, including the fisheries sector, should be used when carrying out marine spatial planning, when developing representative networks of marine protected areas, taking into account Annex II to Decision IX/20, and when applying other area-based management measures in marine and coastal areas, with a view to contributing to national efforts to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Marine and coastal biodiversity: Impacts on marine and coastal biodiversity of anthropogenic underwater noise and ocean acidification, priority actions to achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 10 for coral reefs and closely associated ecosystems, and marine spatial planning and training initiatives

Impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine and coastal biodiversity

According to the report of the workshop (Expert Workshop on Underwater Noise and its Impacts on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity, IMO Headquarters, London, 25–27 February 2014), there has been a significant amount of research into the impacts of underwater noise on aquatic life over the past few decades, but important questions remain that require further study. The largest gaps in knowledge relate to fishes, invertebrates, turtles and birds, and additional knowledge gaps relate to the characteristics of major sound sources, trends in the prevalence and magnitude, as well as in the intensity and spatial distribution, of underwater noise, and the potential impacts of underwater noise on ecosystems and animal populations, including the implications of cumulative and synergistic impacts of multiple sources of noise and other stressors.

The Parties and Governments and others are encouraged to take appropriate measures, as appropriate and within their competencies, and in accordance with national and international laws, to avoid, minimise and mitigate the potential significant adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine and coastal biodiversity, such as:

- (a) Defining and differentiating types or intensities of underwater noise where there are adverse impacts, and characterizing noise by source.
- (b) Conducting further research on the remaining significant knowledge gaps noted in paragraph 2 above.
- (c) Developing and transferring quieter technologies, and applying the best available practice in all relevant activities.
- (d) Including areas that are affected by different levels of sound when mapping the spatial and temporal distribution of sound.
- (e) Combining acoustic mapping with habitat mapping of sound-sensitive species with regard to spatial risk assessments in order to identify areas where those species may be exposed to noise impacts.
- (f) Mitigating and managing anthropogenic underwater noise through the use of spatio-temporal management of activities, relying on sufficiently detailed temporal and spatial knowledge of species or population distribution patterns combined with the ability to avoid generating noise in the area at those times.
- (g) Conducting impact assessments, where appropriate, for activities that may have significant adverse impacts on noise-sensitive species, and carrying out monitoring, where appropriate.
- (h) Including noise considerations in the establishment and development of management plans for marine protected areas within national jurisdiction and other relevant plans, as appropriate.

- (i) Considering thresholds as a tool to protect sound-sensitive species, taking into account their locations during critical life cycle stages as well as relevant results of research and additional information.
- (j) Standardizing metrics and sound measurements so that there are similar measures and approaches for all sounds and in all places.
- (k) Building capacity in developing regions where the awareness and scientific capacity to address this issue has yet to be strengthened.
- (l) Engaging industry and other relevant sectors, including the naval and mining sectors, when developing guidelines in order to increase their ownership and participation in the implementation of the guidelines.
- (m) Encouraging collaboration and communication among relevant international bodies to enhance synergies in addressing this issue.
- (n) Linking relevant information on the adverse impacts of underwater noise on sound-sensitive species when harmonizing different processes related to marine spatial planning and area-based management.

The meeting invited competent intergovernmental organisations, including the International Maritime Organization, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, and the International Whaling Commission, to take measures within their mandates, if applicable, and to assist States in taking measures, limited to those that are within the mandates of the respective competent intergovernmental organisation, to avoid, minimise and mitigate the potential significant adverse impacts of anthropogenic underwater noise on marine and coastal biodiversity, including, where appropriate, giving consideration to the measures set out in points (a) to (n) above;

Impacts of ocean acidification on marine and coastal biodiversity

The systematic review document on the impacts of ocean acidification on biodiversity and ecosystem functions⁸ provides a targeted updated synthesis of the biodiversity implications of ocean acidification for marine and coastal systems, including information on the less-reported paleo-oceanographic research. There is concern that, in waters where pH is already naturally comparatively low (e.g. in high latitudes, coastal upwelling regions on the shelf slope and brackish water areas with low alkalinity, such as the Baltic Sea), widespread under-saturation of both aragonite and calcite is expected to develop during the twenty-first century, and that benthic and planktonic calcifiers are among the organisms likely to be affected, as are cold-water corals and the structural integrity of their habitats. To improve the monitoring of ocean acidification, which is closely linked to other global ocean-observation systems, there should be international collaboration with the relevant organisations. A well-integrated global monitoring network for ocean acidification is crucial to improve the understanding of current variability and to develop models that provide projections of future conditions. These findings will be forwarded to the relevant parties to be incorporated into national strategies and action plans for conservation and the sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity, and for developing relevant research and monitoring programmes at the global, regional and national levels.

Priority actions to achieve Aichi Biodiversity Target 10 for coral reefs and closely associated ecosystems

The meeting urged the Parties and other Governments and relevant organisations to implement the activities contained in the work plan on coral bleaching, where applicable and in accordance with national capacity and circumstances, for enhanced implementation towards achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target 10. The aim is to strengthen international and

⁸ UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/18/INF/6.

regional cooperation in support of national implementation of the priority actions, as contained in the annex, and to develop a global coral reef portal linked to the website of the Convention and to existing global (e.g. the International Coral Reef Initiative) and regional initiatives (e.g. the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs and Fisheries and Food Security) to facilitate technical collaboration and voluntary information-sharing on all aspects of the sustainable management of coral reefs and related ecosystems. The rise in sea temperature also increases the risks to coral reefs from pathogens, and, at the same time, there are additional interactions, often synergistic, between all these stressors. Therefore, current efforts should be strengthened at the local, national, regional and global levels to manage coral reefs as socio-ecological systems undergoing change due to the interactive effects of multiple stressors, including both global stressors (e.g. rising sea temperature, the effects of tropical storms and rising sea levels, and ocean acidification) and local stressors (e.g. overfishing, destructive fishing practices, land-based and sea-based pollution, coastal development, tourism and recreational use, etc.). The focus should be on actions that address, in particular:

- (a) Reducing the impacts of multiple stressors, in particular by addressing those stressors that are more tractable at the regional, national and local levels, noting that this would have multiple benefits.
- (b) Enhancing the resilience of coral reefs and closely associated ecosystems through ecosystem-based adaptation to enable the continued provisioning of goods and services.
- (c) Maintaining sustainable livelihoods and food security in reef-dependent coastal communities, including indigenous and local communities, and providing for viable alternative livelihoods, where appropriate.
- (d) Increasing the capability of local and national managers to forecast and plan proactively for climate risks and associated secondary effects, applying ecosystem-based adaptation measures.
- (e) Enhancing international and regional cooperation in support of national implementation of priority actions, building upon existing international and regional initiatives and creating synergies with various relevant areas of work within the Convention.

Additionally, it was stated that deep-water corals and many other cold-water organisms are also vulnerable to the impacts of ocean acidification, but face impacts, as well, from additional stressors that are different from those affecting warm-water coral reefs, and *recognized* the need for further work to identify the location and condition of deep-water corals and to understand the impacts of human activities on these corals. A draft specific workplan on biodiversity and acidification in cold-water areas, building upon the elements of a workplan on physical degradation and destruction of coral reefs, including cold-water corals, should be prepared in collaboration with the relevant organisations. . This draft specific workplan on biodiversity and acidification in cold-water areas should be submitted to a future meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice for consideration prior to the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Marine spatial planning and training initiatives

The meeting welcomed the work of the United Nations Environment Programme, including the contributions from regional seas organisations and other competent regional initiatives, and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Facility, as well as from a range of contributing partners, towards strengthening the practical use of marine spatial planning, and *requests* the Executive Secretary to further expand collaboration with these organisations and other relevant initiatives, in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for its work on vulnerable marine ecosystems, the International Maritime Organization for its work on particularly sensitive sea areas (PSSA), and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for its work on tools for marine spatial planning.

It was also recognised that marine spatial planning is a useful tool for applying the ecosystem approach to marine and coastal management, and the meeting also invited relevant organisations to advance their work on enhancing methods and tools, including monitoring measures, for marine spatial planning.

For the full report, please refer to the [CBD website](#).

21-23 October 2014

Eighth Meeting of *ad hoc* HELCOM Seal Expert Group (HELCOM SEAL 8/2014)

Report: Penina Blankett (Finland)

Agenda Item 5: Assessment of seals

Harbour porpoise and indicator work

- Tero Härkönen (Task Manager in Lead of the indicator) presented the report on the core indicator '**Population growth rate, abundance and distribution of marine mammals**' (**Presentation 5**) and noted the proposal first presented at CORESET II 2-2014 to split the indicators for seals and develop a separate indicator for harbour porpoise as the concepts are different for these species groups as well as the monitoring strategies. The Meeting supported splitting the core indicator as suggested and proposed to STATE2 1-2014 to continue developing the indicators '**Population abundance and trends of seals**', '**Distribution of seals**' and a '**Harbour porpoise**'-population indicator. The Meeting noted that that the Project Manager will be in contact with the Finnish, Danish, German and Polish HELCOM GEAR contacts to set up a new team of Task Managers for the harbour porpoise indicator. The Meeting considered the opportunities available to develop the '**Harbour porpoise**'-population-indicator, and agreed that the exact scope and specific parameters the indicator should be built on will be elaborated on by the Task Managers, and that the Task Managers will ensure communications with the JASTARNIA group and the ASCOBANS Secretariat, so that all relevant knowledge can be made use of in developing the indicator. The Meeting furthermore noted that background data will become available from the SAMBAH project within the coming year, and that especially recommendations to monitoring strategies will be relevant and that there is current work on Bayesian-models for population size estimation being developed in Denmark and more than 10 years data-collection within monitoring programs for German and parts of Danish waters. The Meeting concluded that this indicator will most likely not be operational by the end of CORESET II.
- For the indicator '**Reproductive status of marine mammals**' the data for harbour porpoise has so far not been considered by the TM, but that data from all Contracting Parties will now be considered. In relation to GES-concepts and boundaries, the Meeting furthermore noted that there are still uncertainties about how the boundary should be developed for populations in relation to density dependence. The Meeting noted that data should be used from all areas around the Baltic Sea as much as possible, and agreed that the methodologies for selecting appropriate measurements from appropriate animals need to be further developed, possibly including a de-selection criteria based on cause of death, and that there is now a need to consider the quality of the available data in all Contracting Parties based on the methodology to be specified by the Task Managers. The Meeting noted that the indicator for seals is currently mainly developed around the reproductive status of females, however for harbour porpoise the state of males might need to be considered as a supporting parameter.
- The indicator '**Nutritional status of seals**' should also include harbour porpoise as it is of relevance for the overall assessment of GES in the Baltic Sea and agreed to re-name

the indicator '**Nutritional status of marine mammals**' noting that available data for harbour porpoise should be collated and some hundreds of data points from the southern areas will now be analyzed. The Meeting emphasized that the indicator is based on the parameter blubber thickness, and that this parameter is indicative of a nutritional status trend in a population, and that this is to be described in the general concept of the indicator.

- The Meeting discussed in which HELCOM Assessment Units the above mentioned indicators are applicable, and agreed that the applicability should be considered for **harbour porpoise** as follows: GES-boundaries need to be set separately for the **Western** (Kattegat, Great Belt, The Sound, Kiel Bay, Bay of Mecklenburg, Arkona Basin) and **the Baltic Proper** (Arkona Basin, Bornholm Basin, Gdansk Basin, Eastern Gotland Basin, Western Gotland Basin, Northern Baltic Proper, Åland Sea, Gulf of Finland, Gulf of Riga).

Agenda Item 7: Work on Baltic Sea harbour porpoise

Harbour porpoise database

- Meeting recalled that HELCOM SEAL 4-2010 agreed to review the status of the HELCOM-ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database in each future meeting of HELCOM SEAL and agreed to include static acoustic monitoring data and other observations of harbour porpoises as that data is made available to the Secretariat. SEAL 4-2010 also agreed that any updates to the harbour porpoise database should be reported to the Secretariat. The Meeting further recalled the suggestion by SEAL 7-2013 not to include incidental sighting from the high density areas for harbour porpoise when reporting to the database. New acoustic data can be expected to be included to the database from the SAMBAH project. Last updates to the HELCOM-ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database have been received by the secretariat in November 2013 from Sweden and encouraged the OUTCOME OF SEAL 8-2014 Contracting Parties to update information to the database by filling in the reporting form and sending it to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi). The Secretariat will compile information on possible gaps in reporting and years when data has last been received to the database by country and will provide that information to SEAL group members. Ms. Ursula Siebert, Germany and Ms. Iwona Pawliczka, Poland, will prepare a suggestion for the format for acoustic data to be included in the reporting format for the database.

Activities under ASCOBANS work

The Meeting took note of the report on activities related to Baltic Sea harbour porpoises under ASCOBANS and the Jastarnia Plan, as presented by Ms. Penina Blankett, Finland. The 21st ASCOBANS advisory committee meeting discussed the by-catch issue and especially the revision of EU Legislation on Cetacean Bycatch. The report from the 10th Meeting of the Jastarnia Group is available on the ASCOBANS website.

National activities concerning harbour porpoise

- Poland: a video produced by the Hel Marine Station on harbour porpoise has now been translated in English and German
- Germany: The German Baltic Sea harbour porpoise management plan is under preparation, the work is financed by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and it is expected to be ready by the end of 2015
- Finland: has started the revision of the national action plan for harbour porpoise taking into account the coming SAMBAH results and the changes in legislation and the intention is to finalise the plan in 2015
- Denmark: a project is ongoing to investigate reactions of individual porpoises to pile driving, by exposing tagged animals to scaled-down pile driving noise

- Sweden has started the revision of the national action plan with the intention to have it ready by 2015

AOB

The final conference of the SAMBAH project will be organized on 8-9 December in Kolmården, Sweden.

The Meeting took note of the harbour porpoise leaflet submitted by CCB (document 7-1).

For the full report, please refer to the [HELCOM website](#).

29-30 October 2014

ACCOBAMS Workshop on Cetacean Live Strandings

Report: ACCOBAMS

The report of the workshop has been made available as [AC22/Inf.5.3.a](#).

2 November 2014

42nd Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee

Report: Melanie Virtue (Secretariat)

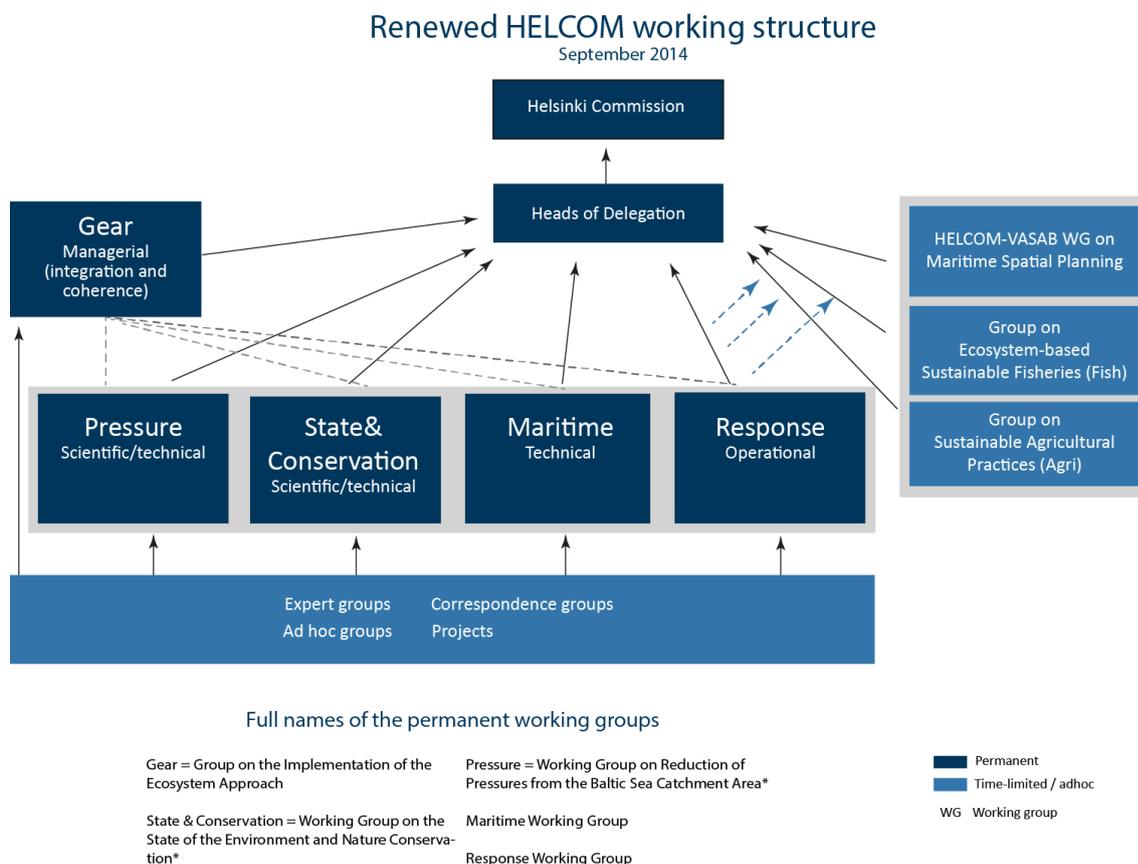
No points directly relevant to ASCOBANS were on the Agenda. The StC42 Meeting took place just before CMS COP11, which is reported on below.

For the full report, please refer to the [CMS website](#).

3-7 November 2014

First Meeting of the new HELCOM Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (HELCOM STATE)

Report: Penina Blankett (Finland)



The revision of the HELCOM main groups was completed in September 2014. In practice it means that HELCOM MONAS (Monitoring and Assessment) and HELCOM HABITAT (Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Protection) were merged into HELCOM STATE & CONSERVATION. The 1st meeting in Pärnu consisted of three sessions — starting with former HELCOM MONAS issues (M-session), continuing with joint items (J-session) and ending with nature conservation and biodiversity (former HELCOM HABITAT issues) items (N-session).

Joint (J)- session

Agenda Item 4J Thematic session 2: Development of core set of HELCOM indicators under HELCOM CORESET II, biodiversity

Harbour porpoise related items

- The Meeting considered and discussed the proposed indicators, noting especially the recent developments in the marine mammal indicators, in particular in the outcome of the SEAL 8-2014 expert group meeting the agreement to split the marine mammal indicator into three indicators namely 'Population abundance and trends of seals', 'Distribution of seals' and a '**Harbour porpoise**'-population indicator. The Meeting also noted the initial work to indicate in which HELCOM Level 2 assessment units the indicators would be applicable for the various species.

Agenda Item 6J Work Plan and future work of the Working Group

The Meeting considered the draft Work Plan for the Working Group as contained in document 6J-1 and amended the Plan as contained in **Annex 4**.

Annex 4 Revised Work Plan for STATE

Time frame: Years in brackets [] denote proposals. Years without brackets are already agreed e.g. in BSAP, Ministerial Declarations, Roadmap of HELCOM activities.

Harbour porpoise related issues in the Work Plan

Nr	Action	Lead /Responsible	Interlinked Activities	Time frame
Task 8: Cooperate with, and seek synergies with relevant work carried out in other international organizations and institutions and processes relevant for the group such as ICES, EEA, JRC, OSPAR, Convention on Biological Diversity, MSFD Common Implementation Strategy, etc.				
8.1	Continued co-operation with ASCOBANS and updating of the coordinated reporting system and database on Baltic harbour porpoise sightings, by-catches, strandings and acoustic observations	STATE SEAL EG		Reporting of harbour porpoise observations annually at SEAL EG meeting
Task 9: Develop and maintain the regional data and information systems needed to carry out its tasks				
9.3	Communicate to relevant authorities and institutions the needs for adequate knowledge on by-caught birds and mammals including monitoring and reporting systems	STATE SEAL EG	Activities under FISH Group ICES and ASCOBANS by-catch groups	Continuous

For the full report, please refer to the [HELCOM website](#).

3-7 November 2014

21st Meeting of the NAMMCO Scientific Committee

Report: Geneviève Desportes

The 21st meeting of the NAMMCO Scientific Committee (SC) was held in Bergen, Norway, 3 – 6 November 2014.

A number of Working Group (WG) reports were available, and items pertaining both to cetaceans and pinnipeds were discussed. A variety of issues were relevant to ASCOBANS.

An analysis of bycatch data in the Icelandic fisheries were provided and the SC noted that a future assessment of harbour porpoises requires information on by-catch from all areas. With this new information from Iceland, and the information from the reference fleet in Norway, the SC recommends convening a By-catch Working Group. The SC recommended that the NAMMCO Secretariat request harbour porpoise by-catch numbers for the North Sea from ASCOBANS, as they would be needed for performing an assessment of harbour porpoises in Norwegian waters.

In contrast to previous taggings, the fifteen porpoises tagged off West Greenland in 2014 stayed on the continental shelf throughout September. Greenland also sampled about 150 porpoises from the hunt from June-October to complement previous sampling efforts from

September 1995 and 2009 and to look at possible seasonal changes. The porpoises seem to react positively to climate change in terms of increased body mass. Stomach contents showed increased diversity of prey between 1995–2009, with large amounts of cod in 2009. A future harbour porpoise WG will be scheduled after a report from the By-catch WG, new data from NASS2015, and progress on research requests from the 2013 Harbour Porpoise WG.

A 3-year research project on feeding behaviour, movements and acoustics of killer whales in Icelandic waters conducted by the MRI will be finalized in 2015. Photo-identification has revealed several instances of movement of killer whales between the Shetland Islands and Iceland.

Planning for a Disturbance Symposium that will deal with the impacts of human disturbance on narwhal, beluga and walrus was underway, tentatively scheduled in early October 2015 in Copenhagen. The primary objectives of the Symposium will be to 1) present an overview of the information currently available, and 2) make recommendations for both restrictions of anthropogenic disturbances and future studies. The conclusions will be available to stakeholders shortly after the meeting in the form of a report with specific recommendations. The SC recommended broadening the scope of the Symposium to include presentations from other species/research. A number of external experts would be invited.

The planning for the next North Atlantic Sightings Survey, NASS 2015 to occur in summer 2015 was well on this way. The objectives of the survey were to obtain fully corrected abundance estimates for predefined target species and developed for all areas of importance for management. The specific objectives for the planned TNASS2015 were to obtain unbiased abundance estimates of i) pilot whales around Faroe Islands ii) minke whales in West Greenland, around Iceland, Jan Mayen and Svalbard and the central Norwegian sea and iii) fin whales southwest of Iceland. Greenland would contribute with aerial surveys in West and East Greenland, Iceland with aerial and shipbased surveys, the Faroese with a shipboard survey and Norway with a shipboard survey. All platforms would use double platform methodologies.

Besides the planning of the Disturbance Symposium, planning for the meeting of 6 WG were made, Walrus WG, Joint JCNB/NAMMCO, ByCatch WG, Coastal Seal WG, Large whale assessment WG and Survey Planning WG.

The 9th volume of the NAMMCO Scientific Publication, *Walrus of the North Atlantic*, was [completed](#) as well as published online. The 10th volume, *Age estimation of Marine Mammals with a focus on monodontids*, was well on its way with papers already published [online](#).

For the full report of the meeting, please refer to the [NAMMCO website](#).

The SC will meet again in Tórshavn, Faroe islands, 9-12 November 2015.

4-9 November 2014

11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (COP11)

Report: Heidrun Frisch (Secretariat)

CMS COP11 was held in Quito from 4-9 November 2014. Thirty-one proposals to add species to the Convention's two appendices to improve the conservation status of endangered species were approved. These included the addition of the Mediterranean population of Cuvier's beaked whale on Appendix I of the Convention, as well as a record number of twenty-one shark, ray and sawfish species.

A large number of resolutions were passed (for a full list, please refer to the [CMS COP11 website](#)), a selection of which is presented here:

- **Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023** ([Resolution 11.02](#) / [AC22/Inf.16.2.a](#))

The Plan presents goals and targets for migratory species, based on the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, adapted for migratory species purposes. This approach will allow the migratory species Strategic Plan to benefit from the existing political visibility and support for biodiversity in general, at national and global levels. As a Strategic Plan for Migratory Species this is not a CMS Strategic Plan, but it will serve as a guiding framework for all work supporting the conservation of migratory species and support the entire CMS Family of instruments.

- **Enhancing Synergies and Common Services among CMS Family Instruments** ([Resolution 11.03](#) / [AC22/Inf.16.2.b](#))

The Resolution requests the Executive Secretary in consultation with the relevant Secretariats of CMS family instruments, to submit an independent analysis and report on the legal, financial, operational, and administrative implications of actions to enhance synergies. This report will be made available as soon as possible as AC22/Inf.16.2.c. The relevant governing bodies of CMS instruments are invited to consider the report and to take a decision on strengthening synergies, such as through sharing services in common service areas. The CMS Standing Committee is requested to consider the outcomes of the Meetings of decision-making bodies of other CMS Family Instruments and to take the appropriate decisions in accordance with these outcomes with a view to realising enhanced synergies such as through sharing services in common service areas and report to COP12.

- **Live Captures of Cetaceans from the Wild for Commercial Purposes** ([Resolution 11.22](#) / [AC22/Inf.4.7.a](#))

Capture of small cetaceans for public display in commercial aquaria and travelling shows continues in a number of countries. Stemming from discussions in the CMS Aquatic Mammals Working Group, this resolution calls on countries to develop and implement national legislation prohibiting the live capture of cetaceans from the wild for commercial purposes, and to review their regulations regarding import and international transit of live cetaceans, bearing in mind the aim to actively discourage new live captures from the wild for commercial purposes globally.

- **Conservation Implications of Cetacean Culture** ([Resolution 11.23](#) / [AC22/Inf.4.7.b](#))

This ground-breaking resolution is the first time an intergovernmental body recognized that a number of socially complex mammalian species, such as several species of cetaceans, great apes and elephants, show evidence of having non-human culture and that this has implications for the efforts to conserve them. It encourages governments to take into account culturally transmitted behaviours in conservation and management measures and threat assessments, applying a precautionary approach if there is evidence that influence of culture and social complexity may be a conservation issue for a population.

As requested in the resolution, the CMS Scientific Council has established an intersessional expert working group dealing with the conservation implications of culture and social complexity, with a focus on, but not limited to cetaceans. The expert group is working to develop a list of priority species listed on CMS for a comprehensive investigation of culture and social structure, including for example developing a list of key factors that should be taken into consideration for effective conservation. They will also make proposals for future work on the subject under the Convention.

- **Programme of Work on Climate Change and Migratory Species** ([Resolution 11.26](#) / [AC22/Inf.4.7.c](#))

The programme of work has been developed through the CMS Climate Change Working Group. It outlines steps to be taken by a variety of stakeholders with respect to measures

to facilitate species adaptation in response to climate change; vulnerability assessment; monitoring and research; climate change mitigation, human adaptation, and land use planning; knowledge exchange and capacity-building; and cooperation and implementation.

- **Renewable Energy and Migratory Species** ([Resolution 11.27](#) / [AC22/Inf.4.4](#))

The Resolution urges Parties to apply appropriate Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) and EIA procedures, when planning the use of renewable energy technologies, avoiding existing protected areas in the broadest sense and other sites of importance to migratory species. A multi-stakeholder Task Force on Reconciling Selected Energy Sector Developments with Migratory Species Conservation (the Energy Task Force) is established in order to promote the benefits of existing decisions; encourage Parties to implement current guidance and decisions; develop any necessary new guidelines and action plans as appropriate; and make recommendations on suitable responses to specific problems and gaps in knowledge.

- **Sustainable Boat-based Marine Wildlife Watching** ([Resolution 11.29](#) / [AC22/Inf.4.3.a](#))

A number of migratory marine species are the subject of boat-based wildlife watching activities. In order to realize the potential benefits of wildlife watching tourism and to minimize risks, it is important that it is conducted sustainably and is well-managed through comprehensive regulations and guidelines. While such guidelines exist for some species groups (especially cetaceans) and in some countries, there are significant gaps. The resolution encourages national measures to regulate these activities and outlines principles that should be followed.

- **Management of Marine Debris** ([Resolution 11.30](#) / [AC22/Inf.4.5.a](#))

UNEP/CMS/Resolution 10.4 on Marine Debris instructed the CMS Scientific Council to undertake three reviews, which are accessible as [UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.27](#): Migratory Species, Marine Debris and its Management, focusing largely on knowledge gaps, [UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.28](#): Marine Debris and Commercial Marine Vessel Best Practice, and [UNEP/CMS/COP11/Inf.29](#): Marine Debris Public Awareness and Education Campaigns. The resolution is based on the recommendations in these reports.

For the full report, please refer to the [CMS website](#).

9 November 2014

43rd Meeting of the CMS Standing Committee

Report: Melanie Virtue (Secretariat)

No points directly relevant to ASCOBANS were on the Agenda. The StC42 Meeting took place immediately after CMS COP11, which is reported on above.

For the full report, please refer to the [CMS website](#).

9-11 November 2014

Third International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA-3)

Report: Simone Panigada (ACCOBAMS SC Chair)

The theme of the 3rd International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA 3), "Important Marine Mammal Areas – A Sense of Place, A Question of Size" gave attention to developing and refining criteria for the identification of important marine mammal areas and to addressing the challenges and strategies of managing very large and very small marine mammal protected areas. New developments in science and management were highlighted, training and capacity-building sessions were offered, providing a forum for sharing information on approaches to marine mammal management and conservation including knowledge products developed by the newly formed IUCN MMPA Task Force.

During the participation to the Conference, the Chair had the occasion to refer to the ACCOBAMS work-plan in several occasions, stressing the need to move further on the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative and other priority actions. In particular the following presentations were made:

- Panel 3: How Are Marine Mammals Being Managed in the Large MPAs. A presentation was made during this panel in plenary meeting on: Looking beyond Pelagos to conserve marine mammals of the Mediterranean. During the talk, data on the recent aerial surveys in the Central Mediterranean Sea and on the satellite telemetry project were presented, stressing the need to focus conservation efforts on a wide area, including the Gulf of Lions and the sea around the Balearic Islands.
- Workshop 1: Marine Spatial Planning. A presentation was given during this workshop on the need to apply Marine Spatial Planning and an Ecosystem Based Management approach in the ACCOBAMS area, focusing on the Pelagos Sanctuary and on the North Western Mediterranean Pelagic Ecosystem EBSA.
- Workshop 9: Examining the Unique Threats in MMPAs in Heavily Developed Coastlines. During this workshop a presentation was given on: Ship strikes in the Mediterranean Sea: assessment and mitigation measures. The ship strike case of the Mediterranean was presented, stressing the need to joint effort for the assessment of mitigation measures and for the collection of ship strike records from the whole ACCOBAMS area. The fruitful relationship with the IWC was presented, referring to the joint workshops and recommendations prepared.

For the full report, please refer to this [website](#).

11-12 November 2014

OSPAR 12th Meeting of the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Marine Litter (ICG-ML)

No report received

For the full report, please refer to the [OSPAR website](#).

12-19 November 2014

IUCN World Parks Congress: Parks, People, Planet – Inspiring Solutions

Report: Simone Panigada (ACCOBAMS SC Chair)

During the World Park Congress in Sydney, the Chair was invited to participate to the event on Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas: roadmap to achieve the Aichi targets organized by MedPAN. Goal of this event was to briefly present the actions needed to establish an ecological network of Marine Protected Areas which is effectively and sustainably managed identified by the 2012 Mediterranean MPA Forum and illustrate the Roadmap aimed at achieving, by 2020, the objectives set by international commitments.

During the session, the Mediterranean community did showcase how different stakeholder groups are implementing the recommendations of the Mediterranean MPA Roadmap.

The presentation has been organized around different level of support provided at:

- local level (MPA managers)
- national level (national authorities and MPA agencies)
- Mediterranean level (Barcelona Convention and other institutions, MPA regional network, NGOs...).

The Chair intervention focused on Areas of special importance for cetacean conservation identified by ACCOBAMS. The action on MPA in the 2014-2016 work-plan, mentioning the 2015 workshop on 'Effectiveness of MPA with Critical Habitat for Cetaceans' and illustrating the Terms of Reference for the workshop, was presented.

2-4 December 2014

CBD Expert Workshop to Prepare Practical Guidance on Preventing and Mitigating the Significant Adverse Impacts of Marine Debris on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity and Habitats

Report: Monika Thiele (Secretariat)

1. At its eleventh meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in its decision XI/18 A, requested the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with Parties, other Governments, relevant organizations and indigenous and local communities, to organize an expert workshop to prepare practical guidance on preventing and mitigating the significant adverse impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and habitats. Pursuant to this request, the Executive Secretary convened, with financial support from the European Commission, an Expert Workshop to prepare practical guidance on preventing and mitigating the significant adverse impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and habitats in Baltimore, the United States of America, from 2-4 December 2014.

The workshop was attended by experts from Australia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, European Union, Kenya, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Saint Lucia, United States of America, American Chemistry Council, Brazilian Marine Litter Association, Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, GEF Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (GPA), Secretariat of the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles (IAC), Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums, and Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP).

2. The discussions at the workshop focused on identifying major issues and knowledge gaps and preparing recommendations for CBD SBSTTA. Some of the main topic included:

- Identifying major types and sources of marine debris, including land-based and sea-based sources;
- Impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and habitats;
- Monitoring, modelling and mapping to address the impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and habitats;
- Major knowledge gaps on sources and impacts of marine debris;
- Experiences and approaches with regard to managing land-based sources, including measures related to waste prevention including potential redesign of products, reduction, reuse and recycling as well as other waste management measures;
- Experiences and approaches with regard to sea-based sources, including measures related to fisheries and maritime transport;
- Identifying main overarching approaches of regulatory and voluntary measures, adequate infrastructure and education and awareness;
- Private sector engagement and producer responsibility;
- Improving awareness, collaboration and stewardship among international, regional, national and local stakeholders, and across sectors; and
- Addressing capacity gaps and resource needs to implement measures for prevention and mitigation;
- Enhancing synergies and promoting collaboration on the prevention and mitigation of the impacts marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and habitats between biodiversity-related conventions and other relevant international and regional agreements and organizations.

3. Overarching recommendations from CMS to CBD included:

- Drawing from the language in CMS Resolution 11.30, overarching recommendations to CBD for engagement on the marine debris issue included: 1) Promote synergies between international bodies (e.g. Regional Seas Conventions, CMS, CBD, IWC, IMO, FAO, ISO) to help harmonize existing international policy instruments, which will help build a stronger global platform for cooperation,, capacity building, implementation and outreach. Specifically, consider the creation of an inter-convention working group to help build a comprehensive global framework for action. 2) Create innovative partnerships and stakeholder engagement opportunities to address marine debris across the fishing, shipping and tourism industries. 3) Conduct research to better understand which populations of migratory species are most affected by marine debris and serve as a scientific information platform for sharing knowledge. 4) Develop targeted public awareness and outreach campaigns that affect behavioral change and conduct monitoring evaluations of those campaigns. 5) Identify upstream preventative measures to keep waste from entering the marine environment in the first place.

4. The meeting participants identified the following elements for practical guidance on preventing and mitigating significant adverse impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and habitats, drawing upon existing work in various relevant global and regional processes:

To address the impacts of land-based sources of marine debris:

- Empower communities and relevant stakeholders/civil society groups at the local level
- Engage private sector

- Mainstream marine debris issues into national regulatory and policy frameworks
- Enhance International and Regional Cooperation
- Influencing consumer choice and behavior

To address the impacts of sea-based sources of marine debris:

- Mitigate Abandoned, Lost and Discarded Fishing Gear
- Use area-based management as a potential tool to minimize loss of fishing gear from gear conflicts and boating interactions
- Reduce vessel-associated inputs
- Mitigate debris impacts from aquaculture

In addition, a range of pending knowledge gaps were identified, including:

- Understanding the population level effects of marine debris;
- Further research is needed on the trophic transfer of marine micro-debris in food webs and determine whether there is a bioaccumulation effect for plastics and harmful chemicals as well they contain or which are attached to them as on the impacts of marine debris on terrestrial and freshwater species in rivers, watersheds or along coastlines;
- The meeting also noted information gaps in the following as potential sources of marine debris that may have impacts on marine biodiversity: offshore development activities, including extractive industries and sacrificial fishing gear, including fish-aggregating devices.

OUTCOMES/RECOMMENDATIONS:

CMS S/M recommends that CMS remain closely engaged with CBD activities on marine debris in order to 1) foster synergies across the international conventions that are working on this issue, 2) to harmonize legal/institutional and financial capacities between UN bodies including FAO, IMO, UNEP/GPA and Regional Seas Conventions. It was strongly encouraged that CBD convene an inter-agency working group on Marine Litter, perhaps under the auspices of the UN-Oceans body or via the UNEP Global Partnership on Marine Litter, coordinated by GPA. There are valuable opportunities to advance the CMS Marine Debris Resolutions and recommendations from the Marine Debris Technical Reports prepared for the ScC (2014). CBD hopes to highlight marine debris topic at its 2016 CBD COP in Mexico, CMS should definitely be present to carry forward recommendations made thus far.

For the full report, please refer to the [CBD website](#).

8-9 December 2014

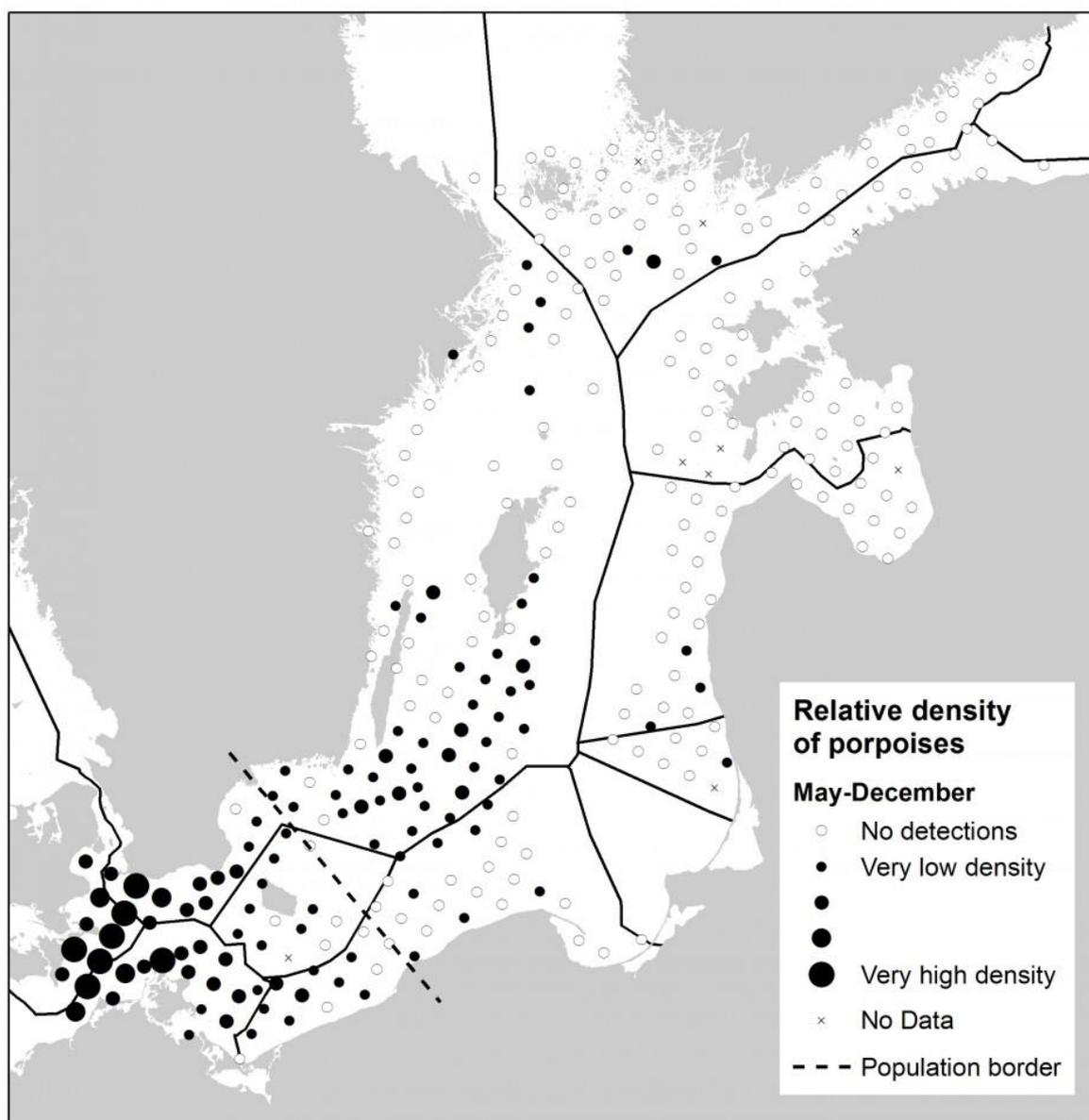
SAMBAH conference on the abundance and distribution of porpoises in the Baltic Sea

Report: Heidrun Frisch (Secretariat)

The event was the official end-of-project conference of the EU LIFE+ funded SAMBAH (Static Acoustic Monitoring of the Baltic Sea Harbour Porpoise) project. The project set out to address some of the key knowledge gaps that so far prevented targeted, effective mitigation of threats to the critically endangered sub-population of harbour porpoises in the Baltic proper.

The 2-year monitoring data has shown that during the reproductively important summer months, there is a division between groups, a south-west (roughly area 24) and a North East one (the remaining Baltic), with an unknown area of overlap. According to preliminary

estimates, the summer population of harbour porpoises in the North East Baltic consisted of 447 individuals (95% confidence interval 90-997), and in the South West Baltic 21,512 individuals (95% confidence interval 13,724-38,612). The map below shows the approximate location of the border between the summer distributions of the two populations.



© SAMBAH 2014

Interestingly, it seems that there is not a lot of gillnet fishing effort in the key area for Baltic porpoises, but other pressures could play a significant role. It is clear that with this new information on distribution, the threats and options for effective protection need to be analysed in some detail and consideration be given to corresponding updates and adjustments of the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Plan and adjoining “Gap Area” Plan.

Regarding recruitment of new Parties, SAMBAH has shown that Latvia has porpoises (the data coverage for Estonia was too low for a definite conclusion, unfortunately) and this is a good opportunity to encourage them to accede to the Agreement.

2-4 December 2014

OSPAR Intersessional Correspondence Group on Biodiversity Monitoring and Assessment (ICG-COBAM)

Report: Jan Haelters (Belgium)

The relevant points discussed at this meeting have been summarised in [AC22/Doc.6](#).

For the full report, please refer to the [OSPAR website](#).

12-17 January 2015

Third Session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES 3)

Representation was not possible. For the full report, please refer to the [IPBES website](#).

20-23 January 2015

3rd Meeting of the BBNJ Working Group (Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction)

Representation was not possible. For the full report, please refer to the [UN website](#).

2-6 February 2015

ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC)

Report: Geneviève Desportes

The report of this meeting has been made available as [AC22/Inf.4.1.d](#).

16-19 February 2015

Working Group on Marine Mammal Ecology (WGMME)

Report: Kelly Macleod (United Kingdom)

The report of this meeting has been made available as [AC22/Inf.5.1.a](#).

2-6 March 2015

OSPAR Biodiversity Committee (BDC)

No report received

For the full report, please refer to the [OSPAR website](#).

10-12 March 2015

Conference on Wind Energy and Wildlife Impacts (CWW 2015)

No report received

21-25 March 2015

29th Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society (incl. workshops on 21-22 March)

Report: Heidrun Frisch (Secretariat)

The Coordinator was invited to speak at the students workshop on 21 April, which this year had the theme “Careers beyond Academia”.

In the afternoon, a workshop on marine mammal rescue was held, which considered disentanglement of large whales, responses to single vs. mass strandings, euthanasia methods, effects of disturbance by recreational and wildlife watching vessels and the development of improved rescue collaboration across Europe.

These topics relate to an item on the ASCOBANS work plan dealing with responses to cetaceans in hazardous circumstances. Especially interesting for our work was a presentation by Sandro Mazzariol on a workshop organized by ACCOBAMS and the Pelagos Sanctuary in October 2014 on emergency responses, which had developed fact sheets to help with decision making. The report of the workshop has been made available as [AC22/Inf.5.3.a](#). Parties to ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS may wish to consider whether joint work on this subject is an option.

On 22 April, the ASCOBANS-supported workshop on an updated necropsy protocol took place. The workshop went very well with many experts presenting their improved diagnostic methods. The co-organizer Thierry Jauniaux was hoping to be able to gather a core drafting group over the summer months to start concrete work on an updated protocol.

The Coordinator also spent time in a workshop on developing professional ethics guidelines for ECS members. The resulting draft is now under consideration by the ECS Science Committee and the Council and guidelines will be presented to the ECS membership at the next AGM.

From 23-25 April, the Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society took place. The theme for this year was “**Marine Mammal Conservation - from Local to Global**”. Presentations covered research on a wide range of subjects, with sessions on:

- Underwater noise, a threat to marine life (incl. keynote talk by Gianni Pavan)
- Ecology and eco-toxicology – here Paul Jepson highlighted the worrying findings of the UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme relating to the plateauing of PCB concentrations and the resulting effects on the health and fitness of marine mammals
- Acoustics and strandings
- Survival needs and pathology – here again pollutant loads were highlighted as the likely cause for reproductive failure in harbour porpoises in UK waters (Sinéad Murphy)
- Conservation genetics: distinguishing populations and individuals (incl. keynote talk by Barbara Taylor)
- Foraging and fisheries

- Conservation, migrations and marine protected areas (incl. keynote talk on CMS by Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara, title: ***The Convention on Migratory Species and the European Cetacean Society: Working Together to Bridge Policy with Science in Support of Cetacean Conservation***)
- Monitoring marine mammals
- The Marine Strategy Framework Directive: implications for cetacean research in Europe (incl. keynote talk by Philip Hammond)
- Monitoring cetaceans and human impacts: developing mitigation guidelines

The ECS each year awards students for best talk, short talk and poster. They are usually presented with a small gift. As decided last year, CMS and ASCOBANS offered to the ECS Council to make available our [Odontocetes books](#) for this purpose. This offer was gratefully accepted and the Coordinator handed vouchers for the books to the winners. The hardcopies were then mailed to them. The offer will be repeated for the next ECS conference.

Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara (among other things CMS COP-Appointed Councillor for Aquatic Mammals), received this year's ECS conservation award. This news was also shared in real time on the CMS and ASCOBANS Facebook pages.

As every year, the conference was also used to advance collaboration with a range of scientist and partner organizations.

13-17 April 2015

OSPAR Environmental Impact of Human Activities Committee (EIHA)

Report: Emma Rundall (United Kingdom)

Summary of notable items from the OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic - Meeting of the Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee (EIHA). Santander, ES: 13 – 17 April 2015

Offshore Renewables - Information on other marine renewables will now be included in the OSPAR Database on wind farms and associated maps (4.3) in order to help better assess effects.

Maritime transportation - France presented a pilot project looking at the potential impact of shipping on High Seas MPAs and possible management measures (4.19).

Impact of human activities on threatened and declining species and habitats - ICG-POSH had its inaugural meeting in January 2015 and is focusing on implementing agreed measures for the protection and conservation of species and habitats. Netherlands is leading on reviewing existing monitoring of human activities and pressures relevant to listed species and habitats.

Marine litter - It was agreed that there was no need to update the OSPAR guidelines for the monitoring of marine litter (5.2). It was agreed that the ICES litter database would be used as the data depository for the seabed litter indicator and that Contracting Parties would submit data from 2010 onwards, where it was available (5.20a). The UK will then undertake a draft assessment of the seabed litter indicator for EIHA 2016 (5.20c).

Belgium is undertaking a background study into sources and pathways of primary microplastics Norway highlighted two new studies on microplastic sources and effects (<http://www.miljodirektoratet.no/no/Publikasjoner/2015/Januar1/Sources-of-microplastic-pollution-to-the-marine-environment/> and <http://www.miljodirektoratet.no/no/Publikasjoner/2015/Januar1/Microplastics-in-marine->

[environments-Occurrence-distribution-and-effects/](#) (5.24)). EIHA agreed to jointly host a Conference on microplastics with the Netherlands by the end of 2015, with a focus on measures that can be taken to reduce land based sources (5.22, 5.23).

France noted that it would be hosting a workshop in September to look at common actions and deliverables on marine litter between OSPAR, HELCOM and the Barcelona Convention (it was requested that the Black Sea Convention also be invited).

Norway will provide a report to ICG-ML in autumn 2015 on ghost gear hotspot areas (5.22).

The OSPAR Secretariat agreed to act as the data manager for the common indicator on plastic particles in fulmars' stomachs, previously managed by IMARES in the Netherlands (5.11, 5.14). France presented a potential candidate indicator on ingestion of debris by sea turtles in OSPAR Region IV (5.15), but it was agreed not to adopt this as a candidate indicator at this time but it should be further developed by the ICG-ML (5.17).

Underwater noise - UK developing a chapter on seismic noise mitigation for the inventory of underwater noise mitigation measures (5.31) and will draft the regional assessment of the impulsive noise indicator in conjunction with the ICG-Noise.

EIHA agreed the value in developing a Regional Action Plan on underwater noise and asked the ICG-noise to consider potential scope, purpose, added value and timing (as a low priority) (5.33). A costed proposal from ICES to develop a regional impulsive noise registry (including a visualisation element) for OSPAR was also provided (5.38).

The Netherlands introduced an ambient noise monitoring strategy and a joint ambient noise monitoring programme for the North Sea (5.40) which EIHA agreed to adopt subject to some minor amendments

Future meeting arrangements - Germany will host the five day 2016 meeting of EIHA in mid-April (7.5, 7.6).

For the full report, please refer to the [OSPAR website](#).

11-15 May 2015

HELCOM Second Meeting of the Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (2-2015)

Report: Penina Blankett (Finland)

Joint (J) - Session

Agenda Item 4J Core indicators and Baltic Sea Environment Fact Sheets

Harbour porpoise and indicator work

The Meeting took note of the work in progress regarding the following candidate core indicators and provided the following guidance:

- **3. Harbour porpoise distribution and abundance**

The Meeting recommended that the further development of the indicator should consider harmonization with assessments done under the EU Habitats Directive.

Agenda Item 5J Follow-up of HELCOM agreements and activities

The Meeting welcomed the new follow-up system for HELCOM agreements (document 5J-1, **Presentation 11**), as presented by the Secretariat and noted that the next follow-up of HELCOM agreements is planned to be carried out in autumn 2015. The Meeting further noted

that once the system is agreed on, a reporting template with relevant guidance will be developed by the Secretariat.

Harbour porpoise related issues in HELCOM agreements and activities

- The Meeting scrutinized Annex 1 of the proposal as contained in document 5J-1, and proposed that:
 - the action *Evaluation of the effectiveness of existing technical measures to minimise of by-catch of harbour porpoises* **could be taken forward in cooperation with ASCOBANS/Jastarnia group,**
 - for the action *Take decisive action to work towards a favourable conservation status of the harbour porpoise based on implementation of the CMS ASCOBANS Jastarnia Plan for the harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea, in particular by addressing the pressing problem of **by-catch status and bycatch for harbour porpoise should be assessed separately.***
- The Meeting noted the proposal from Poland, the Lead Country on Recommendation 17/2 *Protection of Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area*, to report to the next meeting of State and Conservation on the Recommendation as previously done, i.e. to ask ASCOBANS to provide information on countries' activities on harbor porpoise conservation. Those countries that are not part of ASCOBANS will be contacted separately.

By-catch issues

- The Meeting took note of the request for input on measures for **regional coordination** by Gear Group (document 5J-2, **Presentation 12**), as presented by the Secretariat, scrutinized the proposed topics for regional coordination by the Gear Group and provided draft proposals as included in **Annex 4**.

Annex 4 Topics for regional coordination measures – input for planned HELCOM workshop drafted at State and Conservation 2-2015

Selective extraction and incidental **by-catch of species**

The topic was found relevant but no concrete proposal was formulated. As a relevant example, the meeting noted that ASCOBANS had discussed input to the revision of 812/2004 (by-catch regulation). The meeting noted that:

- More information is needed on by-catch of birds and **harbour porpoises** – and that this is expected to come through the revision of the DCF
- Testing of alternative fishing gear is still a relevant topic e.g. through joint projects. Germany informed that testing is ongoing regarding long-line fishing cod.
- Sweden is developing guidelines for fishing in MPAs, including e.g. education for fishermen
- The meeting proposed to consider under marine litter how to address entanglement in ghost nets (coordinated action e.g. fishing for litter)

Agenda Item 7J Any other business

- The Meeting took note of the updated information leaflet by CCB on harbour porpoise (document 7J-3).

Nature Conservation (N)- session

Agenda Item 4N Recommendations on conservation plans for habitats and biotopes which are at risk of extinction

The Meeting recalled that Denmark has raised a study reservation on the HELCOM 'Recommendation on Conservation of Baltic Sea species categorized as threatened according to the HELCOM Red List', regretted that Denmark was not able to clarify her study reservation by 31 March as agreed at HELCOM 36 and urged Denmark to clarify her position at HOD 48-2015 at the very latest. The Meeting concluded that the reservation has halted the planned work for the State and Conservation Working Group and the further development of the Recommendation on Conservation of biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes by 2015 as agreed at the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2013.

Harbour porpoise related issues on conservation plans

- The Meeting took note of the information by Germany that work is ongoing on a national conservation plan on harbour porpoises, with the aim of adoption in 2015.
- The Meeting agreed that those Contracting Parties that have not yet submitted information on the existing national conservation plans for species/biotopes will submit the information as soon as possible to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi), for the Working Group to use this information as a basis for identifying species and biotopes suitable for joint conservation plans or the development of common guidelines for conservation plans, and agreed to come back to the issue at the next meeting of the Working Group. The Meeting noted that in Poland the current focus is on finishing management plans for Natura 2000 sites as well as for grey seal and harbour porpoise and therefore the capacity for developing new plans is limited.

By- catch issue

- The Meeting took note that the **HELCOM Fish Group will discuss the by-catch issue** in detail at the next meeting of the Group, **26-27 November 2015**, and that the State and Conservation group members are welcome to take part in the preparations for and participate in the meeting.
- The Meeting welcomed the offer from Poland to take the **Lead on the by-catch topic in the planning for the workshop on regional coordination of measures (paragraph 5J.9) and noted that this work will also contribute the next meeting of the Fish Group**

For the full report, please refer to the [HELCOM website](#).

22 May - 3 June 2015

IWC Scientific Committee Meeting

Report: Mark Simmonds (IWC)

The IWC Scientific Committee (SC) met in May-June this year in San Diego.

1. Work on Small Cetaceans

The **Small Cetacean Sub-Committee** continued its work on the bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops* spp.) with a review on taxonomy and population structure in the wider Indo-Pacific region. It was noted that relationships among members of the entire family Delphinidae are taxonomically complex and the taxonomy of these species and genera is still unclear. More than 20 different *Tursiops* species have been described historically, but only two (*T. truncatus* Montagu 1821 and *T. aduncus* Ehrenberg 1832) are widely recognized. *T. truncatus* has

a worldwide distribution from temperate to tropical waters in both hemispheres, whereas *T. aduncus* is confined to the Indo-Pacific region and is principally found in nearshore waters with a few notable exceptions. *T. truncatus* does not appear to occupy inshore areas in the range of *T. aduncus*, although there are areas where they can be considered to be generally sympatric.

Among the *T. truncatus* forms in the Atlantic and Pacific, two morphotypes have been described – ‘coastal’/‘inshore’ and ‘oceanic’/‘offshore’ - that differ morphologically and genetically. However, the morphotype distinction is not consistent across regions, e.g., in the eastern North Pacific the coastal form is larger than the offshore form, whereas in the Atlantic the coastal form animals are smaller than oceanic animals. Strong population structure among coastal *T. truncatus* has been observed in areas where intensive analyses have been conducted (e.g. Florida, Gulf of Mexico, western North Atlantic, Mediterranean). The case for and against a new species of *Tursiops* in southern Australia was reviewed.

1.1 Voluntary Fund for Small Cetacean Conservation Research

A report was made on the Voluntary Fund for Small Cetacean Conservation Research, including a presentation of the new and improved IWC website page for the Voluntary Fund for Small Cetacean Conservation Research (https://iwc.int/sm_fund).

There will be a new call for proposals in January 2016, with proposals to be evaluated at SC66b in June 2016 and approved by the Commission in September 2016.

1.3 Progress on previous recommendations for Small Cetaceans

1.3.1 Baltic Harbour Porpoise

An update was provided on the Baltic harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*). The porpoise population in the Baltic Sea proper has been estimated at 447 animals (95% CI = 90-997) based on two years of passive acoustic monitoring, as part of the SAMBAH project (Static Acoustic Monitoring of the Baltic Sea Harbour Porpoise, <http://www.sambah.org/>). The estimate tends to confirm that this population is critically endangered. Spatial modelling revealed a previously unknown breeding area. In 2013, Hel Marine Station and WWF Poland combined efforts to deliver a conservation programme on the Baltic harbour porpoise to the Ministry of Environment in Poland. To date, the Ministry has not yet adopted the conservation programme. A reliable bycatch monitoring system is needed as fishery bycatch is considered the most serious threat to the population.

The Scientific Committee (SC) commended the work of SAMBAH and stressed the importance of applying the results to stimulate both conservation action and further research and monitoring. The SC encouraged the project’s representatives to present their results in more detail at next year’s meeting.

The Committee also recommended that Poland adopt the aforementioned conservation programme and that the Baltic countries maintain efforts to monitor abundance and bycatch levels.

1.3.2. Vaquita

Great concern over the status of this species has been expressed for 25 years by the Scientific Committee. This year, it received alarming new information on the status of this critically endangered species), in which an estimated 67% decline in vaquita acoustic activity in the passive acoustic study area from 2011 to 2014 was found

The Committee strongly reiterated that the only measure that will save the vaquita from extinction is to make the current two-year ban on gillnets permanent throughout the species’ range. The Committee stressed that a major driver of the vaquita decline is the illegal fishery for totoaba and the illegal trade of totoaba swim bladders. In light of the apparent high demand from international markets (primarily in China), the Committee re-iterates its recommendation

that the Governments of Mexico and the United States consult on the continuing illegal international trade in CITES Appendix I totoaba

1.3.3 Yangtze finless porpoise

The Yangtze River finless porpoise, *Neophocaena phocaenoides*, numbers only around 1,000 animals and the SC welcomed the establishment of two new reserves in the last year and made a series of recommendations including reiteration that every possible effort be made to protect Yangtze River finless porpoise in their main river habitat.

1.3.4. Hector's and Maui's dolphin

The Subcommittee reviewed progress on surveys of Hector's dolphins, *Cephalorhynchus hectori*, and set up work to assist in assessments. The situation of the endangered subspecies (Maui's dolphins) was thoroughly reviewed and debated and, in conclusion, the Committee again urged the New Zealand Government to commit to specific population increase targets and timelines, and again, respectfully requested that reports be provided annually on progress towards conservation goals.

1.3.5. Amazon river dolphin and tucuxi

The actions of the Brazilian Government to combat the use of the Amazon River dolphins, *Inia geoffrensis* and *Sotalia fluviatilis*, as bait for fishing the piracatinga, *Calophysus macropterus*, in the Amazon Basin were considered. The Committee respectfully requested that Brazil continue to provide it with progress reports on this issue. Brazil and the other range states, including those where there is a strong market demand for piracatinga (e.g. Colombia), are encouraged not only to ensure that the regulations are tightly enforced but also to monitor the dolphin populations and assess effectiveness of the control measures.

1.3.6. White whales

The SC considered the status of white whale (beluga), *Delphinapterus leucas*, populations, last reviewed by the Committee in 1999, noting that many populations face threats from multiple types of human activity including shipping, subsistence hunting, offshore oil and natural gas development, fishery interactions, coastal industrialisation, pollution and, in one case, live capture for the international aquarium trade. Global climate change is already having a significant impact on the Arctic marine environment with changes in sea ice extent and phenology. Planning is finally underway for a global review of monodontids in 2016, to be led by NAMMCO.

1.3.7. Others

Information was also received about the Franciscana, *Pontoporia blainvillei* (see also Task Team below) and *Sousa* spp., *Lagenorhynchus* spp and orcas, *Orcinus orca*.

2. Takes of small cetaceans

Further to a review of takes in Japan, the SC reiterated its long standing recommendation that no small cetacean removals (live capture or directed harvest) should be authorised until a full and complete assessment has been made of their sustainability.

Plans for the Workshop on 'poorly documented hunts of small cetaceans for food, bait or cash' (sometimes called 'marine bushmeat') were discussed and it was noted that the Society of Conservation Biology annual meeting in Singapore, mid-2016, would be an ideal venue to hold the workshop.

3. Task team and Conservation Management Plans for small cetaceans

Last year, the SC had agreed to trial a new intersessional approach for situations that are considered high priority from a conservation perspective at the species or population level, especially where the indications are that time is short and no effective mitigation actions are in place. For these situations, the Committee would establish an intersessional 'Small

Cetacean Task Team' (SCTT) of appropriate experts from its membership: after discussion a SCTT for the franciscana was established.

4. Future Small Cetaceans Work

The SC will continue its work on *Tursiops* and new proposals will be developed for the Voluntary Fund for Small Cetaceans.

5. Other Matters

5.1 Ship Strikes

The SC considered ship strike mitigation and produced a table of mitigation measures reproduced below.

Table 5

Summary table of ship strike mitigation measures that have been implemented worldwide. Further details of the measures given as examples can be found in SC/65b/HIM05, with a bibliography of studies relating to these examples, including evaluations of effectiveness in SC/66a/HIM04.

Measure	Situation to which it might be applied	Implementation process (and observations)	Examples
Keeping vessels away from whales			
Permanent routing measures through TSS, ATBA or port approach routes	Long-term patterns of whale distribution are sufficiently predictable and well understood to enable a robust analysis of the risk reduction that might be achieved.	Implemented through IMO or national regulation if within territorial seas. Proposals should follow IMO process incl. data on the problem, the risk reduction achieved and implications for shipping. (Generally well respected by industry.)	Bay of Fundy, Canada Boston, USA California, USA Panama Cabo de Gata, Spain
Seasonal routing measures	Similar requirements to permanent routing but applicable where there are strong seasonal patterns in whale distribution	As above	Roseway Basin, Canada Great South Channel, USA
Recommended (voluntary) routes	Similar requirements to permanent routing through TSS or ABTA but not mandatory	Implemented by IMO or coastal state as a non-mandatory measure	Peninsula Valdez, Argentina Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand Glacier Bay, USA Ports on US east coast
Short-term (days – weeks) and Dynamic routing measures	Implemented in response to short-term observations of whale aggregations or known high risk areas. Need almost real-time reporting systems that can identify such aggregations	Voluntary measures that need to be communicated to mariners. (Can be difficult to encourage compliance.)	Dynamic management areas off the US east coast, Gibraltar Strait, Spain
Slowing vessels down			
Permanent speed restriction zones	Long-term patterns of whale distribution are predictable and well understood but routing measures are not practicable.	Can be voluntary or mandatory if implemented in national waters.	East coast of USA (mandatory) Glacier Bay, USA Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand
Seasonal speed restriction zones	As above but applicable where there are strong seasonal patterns in distribution	As above	Panama California, US Peninsula Valdez, Argentina
Dynamic Management Areas for speed restrictions	Implemented in response to short-term observations of whale aggregations or known high risk areas. Need reporting systems that can identify such aggregations	Voluntary measures that need to be communicated to mariners. (Can be difficult to encourage compliance.)	US east coast
Avoidance manoeuvres			
Real-time alerting tools to warn vessels of the presence of whales or aggregations that allow vessels to alter course or slow down	A rapid reporting network of whale sightings or acoustic detections alerts all vessels transiting an area to the locations of whales so that they can alter course or slow down	Individually designed and implemented reporting systems	REPCET, ACCOBAMS, Mediterranean Sea WhaleAlert, Boston USA
Observations from vessel allowing avoiding action	Only effective for vessels capable of rapid manoeuvres to avoid whale sightings (e.g. vessels of a few thousand GT or less)	Additional dedicated observers, education and outreach to mariners	Many initiatives

5.3 Environmental Threats

Three studies were presented on common bottlenose dolphins following the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) oil spill in 2010 and the SC expressed concern about the impacts that the spill had and may still be having on cetaceans in the Gulf of Mexico. The SC has initiated planning for a related workshop.

New research was presented by Jepson on PCBs in European cetaceans, including a European meta-analysis of new and existing blubber PCB concentration data for four cetacean species, which included samples from over one thousand individuals.

The SC expresses concerns about the continued persistence of PCBs, especially in the Northern Hemisphere, despite the overall decline in their use and manufacture. It recommended that research efforts continue to better understand this persistence in the

environment and the continuation of the effort to collect and collate additional contaminant data for cetaceans and the development of a cetacean POPs mapping tool. An intersessional group under Jepson will be looking to take work forward on this threat, including considering the issue of ongoing PCB sources.

There was also considerable discussion about marine noise, climate change, disease and marine debris – all of which are continuing work areas for the SC. The workplan on environmental threats is copied below:

 Work plan on matters related to environmental concerns.

Item	Intersessional period/groups	SC66b
SOCER	Collate report with focus on Polar regions	Receive report
Pollution 2020 and related matters	(1) Continue to refine consequence model – focus on PAHs; (2) <i>In utero</i> transfer analyses and modelling; (3) Intersessional group on risk and mitigation for PCBs.	Review progress
Oil spill impacts	(1) Plan for workshop; (2) Co-ordinate with development of Global Oiled Wildlife System.	Finalise workshop proposal; Discuss other related matters
Data integration and mapping of POPs and trends	Intersessional group to determine format and develop maps.	Receive report and consider future actions
CDoC	(1) Increase focus on website finalisation and maintenance; (2) Improve outreach and capacity building including listserves etc.; (3) Expand expert list and maintain quarterly updates.	Review progress
Strandings and mortality events	(1) Plan and host workshop (in conjunction with SMM conference); (2) Consider stranding reporting including evaluating 2011 stranding network list and encouraging their support and development.	Receive report of workshop and intersessional group and determine future actions
Effects of anthropogenic sound	(1) Develop plans for focal topic on 'masking' at 2016 meeting; (2) Develop plans for workshop on stress; (3) Support ACCOBAMS work on noise; (4) Encourage papers on MMO effectiveness.	(1) Focal session on 'masking'; (2) Finalise proposal for stress workshop; (3) Receive report of ACCOBAMS work; (4) Focal session on MMO effectiveness.
Climate change	(1) Steering Group to focus on several factors listed under Item 12.5; (2) Plan for special issue on climate change and cetaceans.	Receive recommendations from Steering Group and develop work plan
Arctic issues	Intersessional group to review and prioritise scientific work	Receive report and develop work plan
Marine debris	Intersessional group to assist with focusing efforts on this topic including assisting Secretariat	Receive report and develop work plan
Other matters	Secretariat to: (1) send copy of recommendation on marine development in Golfo Dulce, Costa Rica; (2) Transmit recommendations to wider scientific community	Review progress.

For the full report, please refer to the [IWC website](#).

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