

REPORT OF THE
11th MEETING OF THE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TO ASCOBANS

Jastrzębia Góra, Poland

27 - 29 April 2004



ASCOBANS
Agreement on the Conservation
of Small Cetaceans of the
Baltic and North Seas

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Executive Summary - Points for Action

Iwona Kuklik and Peter Blanner, in cooperation with the Secretariat, will coordinate a meeting of the Jastarnia Group, which is to take place no later than September 2004.

Iwona Kuklik, Peter Blanner, the Executive Secretary, the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Committee will cooperate in preparing a framework for the meeting.

A steering group and a scientific group for the recovery plan for harbour porpoises in the North Sea will be established and chaired by Peter Reijnders and Karl-Hermann Kock respectively.

The Secretariat and Parties should encourage France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, the Isle of Man and the remaining Channels Islands to accede to the Agreement. The Secretariat should write to Latvia and Russia, inviting them to accede to the Agreement.

Parties should continue to report annually on high-speed ferries. Peter Evans will interpret the information received by the Secretariat and, if necessary, approach individual countries on behalf of ASCOBANS for further information.

A prize for the best ASCOBANS-related PR/educational initiative should be awarded biennially and for the first time in 2005. The Advisory Committee Chair (or his/her nominee), the Executive Secretary, an NGO with educational experience and Party delegates wishing to take part shall form a working group tasked with judging which initiative has made the most valuable contribution to the aims of the Agreement.

The Secretariat should inform Coordinating Authorities of the Advisory Committee's suggestions in respect of allocations of the budget reserve accrued in the previous triennium.

A steering group for the proposed workshop on *Tursiops truncatus* will be established, consisting of the Advisory Committee Chairman, Peter Evans, Sami Hassani, Mark Simmonds and others.

Report of the 11th Meeting of the Advisory Committee to ASCOBANS

1. Introduction

Mark Tasker, Chairman of the Advisory Committee, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants to the 11th Advisory Committee. Professor Andrzej Ceynowa, the Rector of the University of Gdańsk, welcomed delegates and expressed his pleasure that ASCOBANS had accepted the invitation of the Polish Government and Hel Marine Station to hold the meeting in Poland. In his view this acceptance by ASCOBANS indicated its acknowledgement that what was being done at the University and Hel Marine Station was in accordance with the objectives of the Agreement. He noted that a meeting of the European Union was to be held soon on the preservation of biological diversity in the Baltic and surrounding waters, which would be attended by several notable scientists. In Poland, there had been an increasing recognition of the need for the preservation of biological diversity, and he noted that fishermen should recognise the need to conserve marine mammals such as porpoises and seals in the Baltic. Professor Ceynowa expressed the wish that the meeting would be a successful one, which would result in the expansion of work programmes.

The Polish Head of Delegation, Mr. Andrzej Langowski from the Polish Ministry of the Environment, welcomed participants to the 11th Advisory Committee on behalf of the Minister of Environment and the Chief of Nature Conservation. He noted that several important resolutions had been adopted at the 4th Meeting of the Parties in August 2003. One of these resolutions focused on the activities of the Advisory Committee and had requested the Committee to review the implementation plan for the harbour porpoise in the Baltic (Jastarnia Plan). He noted that the proposed Cetacean Bycatch Regulation of the European Union should help implement the Jastarnia Plan, and congratulated Parties of ASCOBANS for their co-operation in the preparation of the plan. He noted that Poland was hosting the Advisory Committee for the second time. On 1 May 2004, Poland would join the European Union, and had sent plans to the European Commission on conservation measures which were important for the harbour porpoise. This meeting of the Advisory Committee would be important for the well-being of harbour porpoises and he looked forward to a satisfactory conclusion as the Agreement moved towards the implementation of the Jastarnia Plan in collaboration with other international organisations.

The Chairman expressed his pleasure at being back in Poland and noted that this was the first time that a country had hosted the Advisory Committee for a second time. He noted that there were no opening statements by Parties, but drew attention to written opening statements by WDCS, IFAW, WWF and SFTS International (Document 11).*

2. Adoption of Rules of Procedure

The Rules of Procedure (Document 5) were adopted. These were unchanged since the last Advisory Committee meeting.

3. Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Advisory Committee for the Triennium 2004 – 2006

Mark Tasker was elected as Chairperson of the Advisory Committee for the Triennium 2004-2006 and Peter Reijnders was elected as Vice-Chairperson.

* All documents presented at the meeting are available from the ASCOBANS website: www.ascobans.org

4. Adoption of the Agenda

The Draft Agenda (Document 2) was adopted.

5. Implementation of the ASCOBANS Triennial Workplan (2004 – 2006)

5.1 ASCOBANS Baltic Recovery Plan (“Jastarnia Plan”) - Implementation

The Chairman noted that the Jastarnia Plan had been discussed at the 10th Advisory Committee and at the 4th Meeting of the Parties. The Jastarnia Group had not yet become active and some members had yet to be determined. In order to prevent further delay, there was a need to make the Jastarnia Group operational and decide when it would meet. WWF noted that the harbour porpoise in the Baltic was one of the most endangered populations in the world and Parties had made a commitment for the implementation of the Plan. WWF was deeply disappointed by the lack of progress and urged that progress be made before the end of the meeting. An ad hoc group was established, which decided that the Jastarnia Group should meet no later than September 2004. This meeting would be co-ordinated by Iwona Kuklik and Peter Blanner, in co-operation with the ASCOBANS Secretariat.

It was decided that a face-to-face meeting of the Jastarnia Group, which would usually work as an e-mail group, would be needed and that this meeting would be held in Hel or possibly Bornholm in September 2004. Peter Blanner offered to help with this and to contact fishermen to encourage their participation. The group could also be extended to include other participants as necessary. At the suggestion of the Vice-Chairman and the Executive Secretary, it was agreed that, in order to avoid losing momentum before the meeting in September, Iwona Kuklik, Peter Blanner, the Executive Secretary, and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Committee would co-operate in preparing a framework for the basis of the meeting.

Germany introduced Document 7 on opportunistic sightings of harbour porpoises in the Baltic. Starting in 2002, a public appeal was made to yachtspeople in the western Baltic to report sightings of harbour porpoises. By 2003 the programme was well known in yachting circles and over 600 sightings were reported, totalling about 1,500 animals. The data indicated where harbour porpoises occurred, and were analysed to provide indices of relative abundance. This information was important for the designation of protected areas for the harbour porpoise and other conservation measures, including the designation of Natura 2000 sites. Germany regretted that a similar project in Denmark had been stopped and hoped that Denmark would resume the project.

Germany also introduced Document 13 on seasonal and geographical variation of harbour porpoise habitat use in the German Baltic Sea monitored by passive acoustic methods (PODs). Harbour porpoises were not common in the Baltic Sea following several decades of decrease in abundance and distribution. Plans for offshore windfarm construction and proposals for marine protection areas to implement Natura 2000 had led to increased research effort on the harbour porpoise in the German part of the North and Baltic Seas. In this context, the harbour porpoise habitat in the German Baltic Sea was investigated using passive acoustic methods, by registering harbour porpoise echolocation click trains. Comparison of the POD data from different measuring stations located throughout the Baltic Sea had revealed a decrease of porpoise density from the west of the island of Fehmarn to the east of the island of Rügen. Seasonal variations in habitat use and relative porpoise density were seen around the island of Fehmarn and the Kadet Channel, with fewer registrations in the winter than in the summer. The results indicated the importance of the area around Fehmarn and of the Kadet Channel for harbour porpoises in German waters and the high risk that the subpopulation of harbour porpoises in the Baltic would be endangered. Aerial surveys had also been conducted in the area and Germany noted the need to use several methods in order to ascertain how many individual animals there were in a particular area.

The Chairman noted that, in assessing populations, Germany had taken some steps to implement the Jastarnia Plan.

Iwona Kuklik introduced Document 27, which contained the conclusions of the Marine Mammal Workshop held in Kolmården, Sweden on 1 April 2004. The workshop had been attended by scientists and the Executive Secretary of ASCOBANS, who had presented the Jastarnia Plan and other activities of ASCOBANS. The meeting had developed several recommendations, the most important of which had been to establish an international online database, which could be of value in the collection of data on distribution and population. It was suggested that this could exist under the ASCOBANS umbrella. It was noted that further research was needed on genetic issues, looking at historical data and papers. The meeting also considered the plans for the SCANS II survey and urged that as much as possible of the Baltic should be included in the survey. The draft EU regulations for the reduction of cetacean bycatch had also been discussed. The draft regulation contained provisions for the total phase-out of driftnets in the Baltic. Ms Kuklik expressed the view that the regulation should not concern the whole Baltic because the Jastarnia plan had decided to focus on changing fishing gear only in porpoise hotspot areas.

It was decided that these recommendations were useful but that some of them went beyond the scope of the Jastarnia Plan. It would be up to the Parties to decide whether these recommendations would be implemented in the future.

Document 23, also relevant to this item, was considered under agenda items 5.6 and 7.

5.2 Elaboration of a recovery plan for harbour porpoises in the North Sea

The Chairman recalled that the Bergen Declaration adopted at the 5th International Conference on the Protection of the North Sea (Bergen, Norway, 20-21 March 2002) had called for the development and adoption of a recovery plan for harbour porpoises in the North Sea. At the 4th Meeting of the Parties, Germany had agreed to undertake preliminary work on a recovery plan for harbour porpoises in the North Sea.

Germany introduced a draft working paper (Document 9). It stressed that this was only a first draft and that further issues needed to be considered over the coming six months. Feedback from Parties, Range States and the scientific community would be needed and appreciated.

The representative of WDCS commended Germany for its draft paper and recommended that, in order to take this forward, a review of the issues be undertaken by scientists, using the review undertaken by ACCOBAMS as a model. WWF and IFAW also welcomed the draft plan. IFAW commended Germany for the establishment of the first sanctuary in the North Sea. He called on other Parties to establish similar sanctuaries.

The Netherlands agreed that this was a good overview and addressed the major risks cetaceans faced in the North Sea. They noted that bycatch was an important issue, but not the only relevant issue in the recovery of the species. They recommended that the recovery plan should be based more on a conceptual approach, departing from an inventory of status and threats to final proposals for remedial management measures.

The UK welcomed the draft plan, and suggested that the steering committee and preparatory scientific committee provided for in MOP 4 Resolution 10 be established in order to take the plan forward.

The meeting agreed that it was essential that Norway and France be involved in elaborating the plan. WDCS suggested that, given the scientific expertise there, one way to include Norway in the process might be to invite them to join in drafting and/or reviewing the action plan. The meeting agreed that the scientific committee would review and aid in the analysis. The Chairman noted that any plan would need to be 'owned' by the community to be influenced, including fishermen.

The representative of the European Commission commented on the competence of Member States and noted that under EC law, fisheries issues were an area of exclusive Community competence.

The Chairman recommended that a recovery plan for the North Sea should include a target defined scientifically or, if scientific targets were not available, in a precautionary way.

WWF noted that the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) for fisheries in the North Sea would soon come into existence. It was agreed that the RAC could be involved in the plan in due course.

The meeting agreed that efforts would be made to establish the scientific group and Germany would Chair this group. To this end, a meeting was held comprising the heads of delegation to discuss the composition of the scientific group and the steering group. It was decided that the scientific group should be open to anyone who wanted to contribute, and it would be useful to establish a direct link between scientists and Ms. Sonja Eisfeld, who was directly responsible in Germany for writing the plan. Dr. Karl-Hermann Kock was to act as chairman to facilitate the link. The heads of delegation meeting noted that the scientific group should obtain as much information as possible, including historical information, and particularly from the French, Belgian, UK and Dutch coasts.

As regards the steering group, the heads of delegation decided upon a narrow group with limited participation, which would be chaired by Peter Reijnders. The main task of the group would be to determine the general direction of the plan, and to be in close contact with the preparation of the plan any meetings of stakeholders. The participation of Parties, and also Norway and France, was essential. The group would be composed of up to two representatives from each relevant country. In addition the Commission and as yet undetermined numbers of NGOs would be invited to participate. The Steering Group's first task was to develop their terms of reference, including guiding the scientific group, the stakeholder workshop and taking care that all Parties' interests were being considered.

The scientific group and the steering group would work by e-mail.

The Secretariat introduced the summary record of the CONSSO meeting held in Stockholm in October 2003 (Document 22), to which the Secretariat had submitted MOP4, Resolution 10 on the Recovery Plan for Harbour Porpoises in the North Sea, as requested by the 4th Meeting of Parties. CONSSO had taken note of this and referred the issue to its Sustainable Fisheries Issue Group.

5.3 Preparation and implementation of the new abundance survey ("SCANS II")

The UK introduced a report on the preparation of the SCANS II proposal (Document 26). A project planning meeting had been held to discuss objectives, personnel, logistics, etc. At a second meeting, working groups had been established to focus on five broad project phases: development of methods; testing of methods and equipment; at-sea surveying; analysis of data; and interpretation/recommendations. A workshop had been held in July 2003 to discuss the development of monitoring methods for small cetaceans and the anticipated work needed. The 4th Meeting of the Parties to ASCOBANS had advised Dr Philip Hammond that the most likely source of European funding for the SCANS II project was through the LIFE Nature programme. LIFE Nature funding was to be awarded to nature conservation projects with strong management implications for habitats and species listed under Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive. This focus and the short period of time before the submission deadline necessitated some modification to the objectives of the original proposal. The objectives to estimate abundance of cetaceans in offshore waters and of bottlenose dolphins in coastal waters using photo-identification methods were dropped, as was the objective to investigate relationships between cetaceans and the marine environment. The objective of developing a scientific framework for the conservation and management of small cetacean species subject to bycatch was expanded and given greater prominence. Although there had not been any formal decision, the Commission's support through the LIFE Nature programme was expected.

5.4 Bycatch issues

Simon Northridge gave a presentation on work conducted in the UK, funded by the UK government, JNCC and the EU, relating to marine mammal bycatch. Two main areas were addressed: bycatch assessment and experimental work to investigate mitigation measures. UK gillnet and pelagic trawl fisheries had been monitored since 1996 and 2000 respectively. Estimates of porpoise bycatch in gillnets in the North Sea and to the West of Scotland amounted to 400 animals per year in the former and 50 per year in the latter area. Among the pelagic trawl fisheries monitored, cetacean bycatch had been observed only in the bass fishery. The bass fishery was conducted by three or four pairs of boats in the Channel in the winter time. Nets had a spread of around 90 to 150m. On average, bycatches occurred about once every 14 hauls, with a mean group size of 4.5 animals. Total dolphin mortality 2000-2002 was around 90 animals annually. Observations of zero bycatch in other fisheries could be used to deduce the maximum proportion of hauls that might be expected to have any bycatches in each fishery. When combined with expected effort, an index could be derived that showed maximum potential bycatch rates for each fishery in which no bycatch had been observed, and hence indicate those upon which it would be most sensible to focus further monitoring attempts. Further statistical work had also shown that it was possible to optimise monitoring of fisheries to ensure that bycatches did not exceed target bycatch limits. The methodology was explored and explained in Northridge and Thomas (2003).

Mitigation work in the UK had involved a pinger trial that demonstrated a 93% reduction in porpoise bycatch in the hake gillnet fishery, and subsequent trials of pinger robustness that had been carried out by the UK industry body SeaFish. Pinger reliability or the lack thereof was highlighted as a major problem for fisheries in which pinger use was now mandatory. Work was underway to improve the reliability of pingers.

Analysis of UK gillnet observer data suggested major differences in porpoise bycatch rates in monofilament versus multifilament nets. However, a subsequent experimental paired trial of the two net types showed no difference in bycatch rates, highlighting the importance of testing causality in observed correlations between fishery-related parameters. A second experimental trial showed significantly lower porpoise and seal bycatch rates in thin twined small mesh nets compared with larger mesh thicker twine nets. The thinner twined nets also had more large holes, and it was suggested that one reason for this might be that seals and porpoises might become ensnared in thinner twined nets but subsequently escape. A third experimental trial compared barium sulphate filled nylon twine nets with standard nylon monofilament. Mesh sizes were smaller and twine diameters greater in the barium sulphate nets, but in contrast to two other experiments, greater bycatch rates of porpoises and seals were observed in the barium sulphate nets compared with the standard nets; the reasons for this were not known. Finally, work to develop and test exclusion devices to prevent dolphins from becoming caught in pelagic trawl nets was described. Dolphins had been observed caught in the final section of the net, and an exclusion device had been tested to prevent them from entering this section. Trials of such devices were ongoing.

WDCS congratulated Simon Northridge and the team on the research conducted so far, and encouraged further work.

France provided information on French and European research projects:

- **PETRACET:** The aim of this programme was to conduct observer surveys on 5% of fishing effort of pelagic trawling in sectors VII and VIII (UK, Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark and France). The fisheries target species were anchovy, tuna, sea bass, mackerel, herring, horse mackerel and sprat. Ifremer, the CRMM (Centre de Recherche des Mammifères Marins de La Rochelle), SMRU, DIFRES, RIVO, UCC and BIM were involved in this programme funded by the EU. The survey was initially planned to start in March. Surveying was begun in March in Ireland, and was to start elsewhere in August. The major goal of the programme was to assess the impact of pelagic trawling on small cetaceans.

- PROCET: This programme was initiated by the fishermen and the National Committee of the Fisheries with funding from FIFG. It aimed on the one hand to test the efficiency of acoustic deterrents placed on pelagic trawls in the Bay of Biscay and on the other hand to tag the cetaceans caught in order to study the drift of the carcasses and the body conditions when stranded. This programme had already started and was to continue with a better protocol. Scientific partners are the Aquatic Institute of Biarritz and Ifremer.
- NECESSITY: France was also involved in this EU-funded programme with five other states (UK, Netherlands, Spain, Denmark and Ireland).
This programme had several different parts:
 - to understand why, how and under what conditions small cetaceans were caught in pelagic trawls;
 - to develop acoustic deterrents and improve the selectivity of the trawls by using different mitigation means such as exclusive devices; and
 - to assess the economic implications of these gear modifications.

WDCS and Greenpeace had issued a report on bycatch in early 2004 to coincide with the launch of a winter survey of the fisheries and their bycatch to the south of the United Kingdom and promised an update on their observations for the next Advisory Committee.

5.4.1 EU Council Regulation on Incidental Catches of Cetaceans in Fisheries

WWF introduced Document 12 that included the WWF response to Council Decision of 22 March 2004 and the WWF Briefing on Commission Proposal (2003)451. WWF identified five key issues that had been amended or were missing from the final proposal. WWF was disappointed that observers would not be included on vessels under 15 metres, which excluded an important part of the fleet. WWF also noted that the use of pingers would not be mandatory for vessels under 12 metres, thus excluding large parts of member state fleets. Importantly, the total phase-out of driftnet fisheries in the Baltic would not occur until January 2008, with no immediate restriction to 2.5 kilometres as originally suggested. WWF stressed that Parties had committed to observing what was happening in fisheries, but to date many Parties had not done so. It was disappointing that the opportunity had been missed, and expressed the view that this did not reflect well on ASCOBANS, particularly as regards the situation in the Baltic. The representative of WWF was interested to know how delegates to ASCOBANS corresponded with their colleagues who attended European Community meetings. WWF was also interested to learn if Parties had identified what this would mean for small cetaceans in the Agreement Area. The WWF had long been a keen supporter of ASCOBANS and had funded projects, and so it was with regret that WWF had to make these points and reiterate that ASCOBANS was dealing with one of the most endangered species of small cetaceans. WWF feared that very little would happen immediately in the Baltic despite agreement of the Jastarnia Plan in 2002, and asked Parties to reflect on this.

Iwona Kuklik noted that a general ban on driftnets would not solve the problem of harbour porpoise bycatch in the Baltic, nor was this required under the Jastarnia Plan. This point was missed in the EU Regulation which therefore might not be helpful. Work which was appropriate to local fishing activity and identified hotspots was needed at the national level on the conflict with fisheries. This was of relevance to Polish waters.

Estonia informed the meeting that it had requested exemption from the observer scheme for subregions 28, 29 and 32 under the Regulation. Harbour porpoises were almost extinct in Estonian waters and the annual cost of observers was quite substantial. Also, observers caused problems because the number of people allowed on each boat would be exceeded.

The Chairman commended the EU for addressing the issue but expressed his disappointment that the Regulation did not go as far as the European Commission had recommended and perhaps the Commission's recommendation had not gone as far as it could have. Article 12 (4) Habitats

Directive still applied and should be implemented. He noted that there were financial mechanisms in the EU to support relevant schemes and Parties should use these.

WWF suggested that the ASCOBANS Secretariat could promote or recommend that the dialogue between fisheries and environment ministries took place. The Chairman noted that all delegates should take this message to their national governments but that it was the responsibility of individual governments to promote ASCOBANS activities at the EU level.

5.4.2 Other bycatch-related issues

The Netherlands noted that the problem of bycatch in Dutch waters had not been addressed by ministries because it had not been thought to be caused by Dutch fisheries. A few initiatives had now begun. It was hoped that more information would be provided at the next Advisory Committee. The issue of investigating cetacean bycatch by Dutch pelagic trawlers had been incorporated into the NECESSITY project (EU Programme, cf. above). It aimed at developing effective gear modifications, bycatch reduction devices, acoustic deterrents, alternative fishing tactics, to review current knowledge of cetacean bycatch in pelagic fisheries, and to collect biological data of cetaceans landed. A limited programme on investigating bycatch in Dutch coastal waters had just started. This was prompted by recent information showing that, for example, approximately 50 % of all stranded porpoises were bycaught. Around 100 stranded harbour porpoises were reported annually. Increases in the number of strandings corresponded with sightings. The initiative comprised two steps: 1) to investigate which fisheries were involved and the extent of bycatch; and 2) to investigate the feasibility of the observer scheme and to investigate the relationship between sightings/abundance and strandings.

The United Kingdom noted that NECESSITY would end in 2006 and most of the 23 participating countries were involved in the other part of the project, which dealt with Nephrops. Only six participating countries were concerned with cetaceans.

Germany introduced Document 10 on the German part-time fishermen in the Baltic Sea and their bycatch of harbour porpoises. Bycatch was the most serious threat to harbour porpoises in the western and central Baltic, and occurred primarily in bottom set gill nets. In addition to working less than full-time fishermen, part-time fishermen had small boats (rarely longer than 8 metres and frequently shorter than 5 m) and smaller catches. Document 10 estimated that fishing with bottom set gill nets resulted in a total of 57 harbour porpoises being taken incidentally in the western Baltic and 25 in the central Baltic. Based on these estimates, part-time fishermen were responsible for 27% of the estimated bycatch.

Sweden introduced Document 17 on the Swedish Harbour Porpoise Action Plan, which was in line with the Jastarnia Plan and covered all Swedish waters. The Plan included several measures, including the production and distribution of an information leaflet on the harbour porpoise and setting up of a reporting system for sightings, an aerial inventory of harbour porpoises in the southern Baltic, and the production by an independent scientist of a synthesis of all available data to determine harbour porpoise population structure in Swedish waters. It also included a number of measures to reduce bycatch.

The Chairman thanked Sweden and added that he was looking forward to implementation and learning from Sweden's experiences.

France pointed out that effort maps for the Channel fleets (particularly the French and English) in 2003, produced by Ifremer in collaboration with CEFAS, were now available. An atlas had been produced and an electronic database that could be updated. There was also a GIS project in relation to this.

5.5 Disturbance to small cetaceans due to seismic surveys

Germany provided information on seismic activities (Document 6), explaining that it had provided preliminary information to the 9th and 10th Meetings of the Advisory Committee. Although small amounts of data were still missing and needed to be added at a later date, the existing German information could be integrated with other data gathered by other Parties to ASCOBANS.

The Chairman commended Germany for this exemplary report and urged other Parties to submit similarly thorough information.

In response to a query from the WDCCS, the United Kingdom noted that small technical changes to the UK guidelines on seismic surveys had been made. From 2003 it had made it a condition of consent for undertaking any oil and gas survey that JNCC guidelines were followed. A consultation on a Position Paper was underway. The UK wanted to introduce the more widespread use of listening devices as well as observers, and also management initiatives. In collaboration with some oil companies, funding had been provided for a widescale programme to examine all sources of industry noise so that mitigation and management of sources other than seismic could be prioritised. It was hoped that at the next meeting of the Advisory Committee the UK would be able to report on the pattern of seismic activity in UK waters over the past years. JNCC was also working with the US Marine Mammal Commission to hold a workshop in London in Autumn 2004 on policies for noise pollution mitigation.

5.6 Population distribution, sizes and structures (review of new information)

ICES referred to the 2003 report by the ICES Advisory Committee on ecosystems (see www.ices.dk) that included much information on marine mammal distribution and status in both the Baltic and North Seas. The next meeting of this Committee was to take place in June 2004.

The Chairman noted that this work had been done at the request of HELCOM and the European Commission, and many of their decisions were based on advice from ICES.

Germany introduced Document 8 on the summer abundance and distribution of harbour porpoises in the German North and Baltic Seas, which described aerial surveys undertaken from May to August 2002 and 2003 in the German exclusive economic zone. Abundance was in the order of 16,500 porpoises in both years, with large variation between smaller areas of the German EEZ. The western and central Baltic was much more thinly populated by harbour porpoises, in particular with respect to the area east of the Darss Sill, where abundance declined substantially. Estimates of abundance in the German part of the central Baltic ranged from 2,000 in 2002 to 0 in 2003.

The Executive Secretary provided information on bycatch of harbour porpoises in Latvian waters in 2003/2004 (Document 20). In October 2003, fishermen in the Gulf of Riga had found a dead harbour porpoise in their nets. A further porpoise was bycaught in the Gulf of Riga in January 2004. Document 20 included a compilation of articles in the Latvian press, and an English summary provided by the Secretariat. These events showed that harbour porpoises did exist in these waters. It was encouraging that the Latvian press reported on these events, although public interest in nature in Latvia generally seemed to focus more on the terrestrial environment. In some of the articles, reference was also made to ASCOBANS and the ASCOBANS exhibition shown in Latvia in 2002. However, regrettably, the articles stressed that these strandings were rare events in Latvian waters, thereby playing down their significance. In the light of this information, Parties strongly encouraged Latvia to accede to the Agreement.

Belgium introduced Document 24, prepared by France and Belgium, on the recent increase in harbour porpoises observed in northern France and Belgium. Since 1995 more porpoises had been observed, and since 1997 strandings had increased considerably. With reference to the national report of Belgium (Document 30), it was illustrated that this trend continued in 2003. In Spring 2004 a relatively high bycatch was observed in Belgium. The majority of this bycatch had most

probably occurred in small-meshed bottom set gill nets set from the beach in recreational fisheries. In order to reduce this bycatch in recreational fisheries, a technical note had been written to the relevant national authorities. France noted a similar increase in sightings of harbour porpoises in Brittany.

In response to a question, the representative of the European Commission explained that it was a matter for Member States to issue codes relating to recreational fisheries and was not a matter of exclusive competence of the EU. These codes should respect the rules of sustainability. This was a primary matter for national authorities, but the European Commission could take action where necessary.

Germany reported that the Federal State of Lower Saxony had also witnessed an increase in bycatch in the last three or four years.

The Netherlands provided some information on harbour porpoise distribution and occurrence but were not yet in a position to present a paper. Increased sightings concurred with the information on Belgium and Lower Saxony. The Netherlands were undertaking a project related to the proposed construction of windfarms. An environmental assessment was being conducted into the number of cetaceans occurring in an area before the construction began. Ship-based surveys were undertaken every two months. Continued monitoring was conducted using acoustic monitoring devices (PODs).

The Estonian Fund for Nature introduced Document 23, which constituted an application for support for an acoustic survey of Baltic harbour porpoises. IFAW expressed the view that this was an important project to find out more about endangered populations in the Baltic, and stated that it was considering funding part of the project. The Chairman noted that this project was consistent with the Jastarnia Plan, which encouraged the use of innovative ways to track trends in porpoises, rather than to determine absolute numbers.

The WDSCS noted that the funding that ASCOBANS had available was quite limited and suggested that an approach could be made to CMS for research funding which was available to support endangered species. The Chairman stated that it was not appropriate for ASCOBANS to make such an approach, but that individual projects could examine whether this funding was possible. The Secretariat might be able to assist by providing relevant information.

5.7 Needs of ASCOBANS in extended Agreement area

The Executive Secretary provided an update on the extension of the Agreement area. The Resolution adopted at MoP4 was in English. It was necessary to translate the amendment into the other three authentic versions (French, German, Russian), which must be transmitted to the depositary, the Secretary General of the United Nations in New York. The translations had been produced. Approval for the translation into German had been obtained from the German Foreign Office, but the Secretariat was still awaiting approval from France and Russia. Once approval had been obtained, these translations would be transmitted to the depositary.

At the suggestion of the Chairman, WDSCS agreed to chair an ad hoc working group to develop ideas for this agenda item.

The meeting agreed the following action points:

- The Secretariat and Parties should encourage France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, the Isle of Man and the remaining Channel Islands to accede to the Agreement.
- Noting the likely geographic scope of SCANS II, the meeting felt that special attention should also be paid to the cetacean populations in the Bay of Biscay and the Atlantic Frontier.

WDCS noted that these were important areas for cetaceans whose biology was little known, and expressed the hope that more activities would take place in the future, including studies from ferries in the area. The Chairman suggested that NGOs in the area, such as the BDRP, ORCA and Spanish NGOs, could be invited to the next meeting of the Advisory Committee.

The representative of the ECS noted that a workshop on small cetacean populations in the Bay of Biscay had been held at the recent ECS conference and that a report would be published soon.

- More attention needed to be paid to the remaining inshore bottlenose dolphin populations, including their size, structure, population trends, links and habitat needs.

WDCS explained that this was important because of the small population/group sizes of this species, nearly all of which occurred in Atlantic waters to the west of the new Agreement area. He also noted that there might be significant public relations advantages to focusing on this popular species and expressed the view that it would be beneficial to ASCOBANS to bring together scientists concerned with this species.

ECS pointed out that discussions were taking place as to the possibility of the ECS holding a workshop on this species at its next annual conference.

The Chairman of the Advisory Committee suggested that ASCOBANS could sponsor an ECS workshop on *Tursiops*. The results of the ECS workshop could be presented at the next Advisory Committee. It was agreed that the Advisory Committee could benefit from having specialists from France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain attend the next meeting of the Advisory Committee.

- It was noted that Risso's dolphin biology was little understood, and, unlike in other regions of the world, in the ASCOBANS area the species was regularly present in scattered localities on the continental shelf. Further research was recommended.
- Common, striped and Atlantic white-sided dolphins were also identified as deserving of special attention because of bycatch impacts and lack of information about seasonal distributions.
- There was agreement that a summary of knowledge about beaked whales and pilot whales would be useful and that this might lead in due course to the formation of a working group. It was agreed that these cetacean groups should be considered by future Advisory Committee meetings.
- Further genetic studies were recommended for all cetacean populations to help delineate biologically significant divisions, including any for harbour porpoises on the French coast.

France agreed to speak to fishermen in the area to see if further specimens could be obtained, and noted that new sightings surveys were being conducted in French waters. The French observer confirmed that post-mortem work in France included collection of material for genetic studies.

The ECS noted that a review paper on harbour porpoises stranded in the UK would shortly be published, which indicated that animals from the western Channel were distinct from those in the rest of the UK.

- Parties and others were encouraged to submit more information on historical distributions, potentially leading to a review document that would help better target conservation efforts.

WDCS explained that it would be helpful to the public if it could be shown what populations of cetaceans had been historically, and where and to what extent they had subsequently

disappeared from their range. It was agreed that it was useful to compare historical information with more recent developments.

- A similar review of the occurrence and factors affecting baleen whales and the cachalot (sperm whale) would help inform the debate about the species mandate of the Agreement.
- Noting that there had been ongoing field trials of military sonar in the Agreement area, Parties and the Secretariat were encouraged to approach the relevant authorities in order to update the Advisory Committee.
- Further research should be encouraged on the possible effects on cetaceans of renewable marine energy generation sources, and it was noted there might be a workshop on windfarms at the next ECS conference.

Belgium expressed the view that the information on windfarms in Denmark and Sweden, produced as a result of environmental impact assessments, was valuable and hoped that information would continue to be circulated. The Advisory Committee acknowledged that a considerable amount of research was ongoing and the Advisory Committee should wait for the results of this research before deciding whether to prepare a synthesis of results on this issue. Parties were encouraged to provide information.

HELCOM pointed out that it had a recommendation concerned with gravel dredging and national reports had been submitted which could be circulated to ASCOBANS. It was requested that the Secretariat investigate this.

- The Advisory Committee should maintain a watching brief on the climate change associated developments that may affect cetaceans. It was decided that this could be included in the remit of the pollutants working group.
- PR and education activities needed to be enhanced and in particular it was agreed that Parties and the Secretariat:
 - consider novel ways to communicate with the public;
 - produce material appropriate to the language needs of the extended area;
 - develop a biennial prize for the best ASCOBANS related PR/educational initiative; and
 - develop appropriate film material. It was noted that NGOs might be able to assist with providing film and editing a short documentary.

In general, WDCCS noted that this was an area where ASCOBANS had an important and unique contribution to make. In his opinion, the best way to engage with the public was to provide them with moving pictures. Some of the film material collected in recent years could be used to make a short documentary with commentary added in appropriate languages.

Both Greenpeace and ECS stated that they had some imagery which could be made available to ASCOBANS. The meeting noted that the GSM had produced a video entitled 'Small Whale in Big Trouble'.

6. Ongoing Issues

6.1 Effects of pollution, noise pollution and disturbance

6.1.1. High Speed Ferries

At its 7th Meeting in March 2000, the Advisory Committee had asked the Secretariat to continue to monitor information on high-speed ferries and their potential impact on small cetaceans. The Secretariat introduced Document 18, which presented information on high-speed ferries. The Executive Secretary stressed that again only five Parties had reported and that consequently the compilation did not cover the whole of the Agreement area. The information received for certain regions was likely to be incomplete. He explained that a comparison between this year's report and those of previous years was therefore once again likely to be of limited use in ascertaining trends. The Executive Secretary also noted that a map was produced last year and the Secretariat had attempted to analyse the data received in the past. However, there had been no subsequent improvement in the information received.

Poland noted that there had been no change in ferry use off Poland and therefore the information from last year also applied to this year. Similarly, the UK noted that the routes of high-speed ferries in its waters were fairly constant.

The Advisory Committee agreed that the use of high-speed ferries appeared to be a growing industry, and that despite the problems encountered by the Secretariat in collecting information on this, ASCOBANS should at least keep a watching brief on the situation. The meeting therefore decided that Parties should report every year as previously agreed. The information could be submitted alongside the national report.

The Advisory Committee accepted an offer made by Peter Evans to interpret the information received by the Secretariat and to produce an analysis of trends. If necessary, he could approach individual countries for further information.

SFTS International pointed out that it had been working on a questionnaire which included a broad range of questions, including questions on high-speed ferries. This questionnaire could be obtained at www.sailingforthesea.com. The questionnaire was aimed at operators of conventional commercial vessels and high-speed vessels/ferries as well as the owners of leisure vessels. The aim was to obtain information to assist in preventing collisions between cetaceans and vessels. The questionnaire could be used in a broad spectrum of research projects. It was presented to the meeting for information, and a report of results would probably be available in two or three years. Parties and others were asked to facilitate completion of the questionnaire by operators and others.

6.1.2 Military Activities

The ECS had held an international workshop on active sonar and its effect on cetaceans in 2003. A report was now available for purchase.

In the Netherlands, discussions had commenced with the military authorities, particularly the Navy. Although they were aware of the threat to cetaceans posed by military activities, issues of national security were also relevant. Therefore military activities could have been occurring but the information was not readily available.

The Chairman acknowledged the sensitivity of this issue and noted that in the United Kingdom the military authorities had undertaken some environmental impact assessments on sonar exercises.

The WDCS stressed that military activities were an emerging issue of potential danger to cetaceans and were therefore of considerable importance. Furthermore, when scientists were undertaking projects to assess cetacean populations, it would be useful to know when military activities were occurring as these might affect behaviour and distribution.

It was agreed that Parties should try to include information in their national reports as to whether environmental impact assessment of military exercises had been carried out. It was also agreed that the relevant military authorities should be invited to provide ASCOBANS with information on military activities, and representatives should also be invited to speak at meetings of the Advisory Committee. At the invitation of ASCOBANS, Mr Walter Zimmer of the NATO SACLANT Undersea Research Centre had attended the 10th Meeting of the Advisory Committee. The Executive Secretary explained that contact with Mr Zimmer had been maintained but that he had been unable to attend the 11th Advisory Committee.

6.1.3 Report by the Pollutants Working Group

The intersessional working group introduced summaries of recent literature on chemical and noise pollution (Annexes 4 and 5). Parties were encouraged to add to these reports and provide details of any papers of relevance that had been missed. It was noted that a number of more exotic chemical compounds were being found in cetacean tissues.

The Netherlands noted that there were two projects of interest to the Advisory Committee. Several Parties were participating in the BIOCET project, aiming at bioaccumulation, pathways and transport of persistent organic pollutants in cetaceans. The other project, FIRE, related to the study of the impact of flame-retardants in marine mammals. This project had just started.

The Chairman noted that he was attending a workshop on marine issues and shipping noise that was to take place in Washington soon. He would report back to the Advisory Committee on this.

WDCS commended the UK for its ongoing pollution study on dead animals. The purpose of the review was to maintain the information flowing to Parties and NGOs so that relevant information could be sent to OSPAR or elsewhere for consideration and appropriate action.

The Chairman thanked Mark Simmonds and Peter Reijnders for facilitating the flow of information, and asked delegates to suggest any other publications.

6.2 Post-mortem and stranding schemes

The Executive Secretary introduced Document 19 on information submitted by Parties and Range States in response to the post-mortem research questionnaire.

The UK noted that it was funding a new research project looking at cetacean ears for signs of traumatic and degenerative changes associated with exposure to loud noise or blast trauma. This project would start in the summer.

In response to a question from ECS, the Netherlands explained that it was difficult to maintain the Dutch strandings scheme, since this project was largely the result of the personal motivation of Chris Smeenk and his team. To date, the Dutch Ministry had not considered the strandings scheme to be a high priority for funding, although discussions were taking place to determine whether the scheme would be continued and possibly extended to all Dutch waters.

The Advisory Committee agreed that where relevant papers had been published, they should ideally be included in the national reports or presented separately for consideration at the Advisory Committee.

6.3 Publicity/PR Issues

6.3.1 Parties/Range States

Belgium explained that it had not produced any specific publicity material but had used porpoises that had been stranded to illustrate their plight. The last two bycaught individuals had been shown to the Minister of Science and the press, and one had also been displayed at a recent symposium on cetaceans.

In relation to its National Action Plan (Document 15), Sweden explained that it had produced a brochure on harbour porpoises in order to enhance public awareness and knowledge.

France reported that in 2003 it had used the ASCOBANS exhibition in Brest as part of a French event which aimed to publicise science and increase public awareness of the value of environmental conservation.

Poland introduced Document 28, which outlined several activities by Poland to raise awareness of the problems faced by small cetaceans in the Baltic Sea. Activities to disseminate knowledge on Baltic porpoises and on the implementation of a protection programme had been carried out principally by the Hel Marine Station of Gdańsk University. An International Baltic Harbour Porpoise Day had been organised on 17 May 2003, in accordance with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee. The event was of an educational nature and aimed to promote action for the protection and conservation of the species. It also aimed to increase awareness of the Jastarnia Plan. A Scientific Festival had been organised in Gdynia, where a display of hydro-acoustic methods was shown. This had also been shown during the 'Environmental Friendship', an ecological exhibition in Warsaw. A permanent exhibition dedicated to small cetaceans inhabiting the Baltic Sea and the promotion of ASCOBANS had been opened at the Hel Marine Station. With the support of the PKN ORLEN Oil Company, a public campaign had been launched to inform the public of the importance of protecting the porpoise population of the Baltic Sea. In 2002 information on the status of small cetaceans was included in an educational programme for students and school children. In collaboration with the ASCOBANS Secretariat, a Polish edition of the 'PROJECT C' CD had been issued.

The Chairman commended Poland for these activities and noted that Poland continued to lead the way in this regard.

The ECS noted that, with funding from DEFRA, the Sea Watch Foundation had organised a dolphin and porpoise watching weekend which involved more than 1,000 people around the UK and achieved much media coverage.

The GSM had devised a special pennant, which would be provided to participants of its sightings project in order to increase public awareness.

Following a discussion about how to promote education, it was agreed that, on a biennial basis, starting from 2005 and during the annual meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee, a small working group, excluding anyone with a direct interest in any of the projects being considered, consisting of

- i. The Advisory Committee Chair (or his/her nominee)
- ii. The Executive Secretary
- iii. An NGO with educational experience
- iv. A few Party delegates that wish to take part

will evaluate educational initiatives that relate to the aims of ASCOBANS. These initiatives will be brought to the attention of the working group by Parties and others and the team will be tasked with judging which has made the most valuable contribution to the aims of the Agreement.

The winner will be awarded a certificate and efforts will be made to find sponsorship for a small financial or other material prize.

6.3.2 Secretariat (Report on PR activities in 2003/2004)

The Executive Secretary presented his biannual report on the Secretariat's public information and educational activities (Document 16). He stressed that the Secretariat had continued to enhance ASCOBANS' PR work and noted that cooperation with Poland in this sector had been frequent and fruitful. The Secretariat had taken a three-tiered approach; producing general information material, information targeted towards the Baltic, and information targeted towards the extended Agreement area. Moreover, the Secretariat had also tried to produce material specifically for certain target groups such as fishermen and managers. The Executive Secretary thanked Parties for their voluntary contributions, notably Germany and UK, which had informed the Secretariat of its intention to provide financial support for the translation of ASCOBANS brochures and other materials. He expressed the hope that Parties would continue to support the activities of the Secretariat in this regard, since the costs of PR activities were high.

The Executive Secretary highlighted some of the activities recently undertaken in respect of the extended Agreement area and the Baltic. Thus, translations of the brochure into French and Spanish were under preparation. Translations of Fact Sheet No. 1, the ASCOBANS brochure and the Power Point presentation on the Jastarnia Plan into the languages of all countries around the Baltic had either been produced or were in the process of being produced. A poster specifically for the Baltic region would be printed soon. Events in Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden would mark the International Day of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise on 16 May 2004.

The Netherlands and Belgium offered to try to find means to produce and print Dutch translations of the ASCOBANS brochure.

It was noted that it had been useful to have the documents for the 11th Advisory Committee available on the ASCOBANS website and no particular problems had been encountered by participants in obtaining these documents. In this context, the Committee commended and thanked the Secretariat for its excellent work in preparing the meeting.

6.4 Accession of new Parties

The Executive Secretary informed the Advisory Committee that Lithuania and Estonia were still in the process of acceding to the Agreement. No progress had been made concerning Russia. Latvia remained unwilling to accede to the Agreement on the grounds that small cetaceans did not occur in Latvian waters. As regards the extended Agreement area, Ireland currently seemed reluctant to join the Agreement, while Portugal was currently unwilling to accede since it was already a Party to ACCOBAMS. Spain had expressed an interest in acceding in the past. The Executive Secretary planned to travel to Spain and Portugal in order to encourage these countries to accede.

Estonia confirmed that the Estonian Ministry of Environment hoped to have the relevant papers for ratification available to the Estonian Parliament in the summer of 2004.

France noted that there had been considerable progress concerning accession. The Ministries of the Environment and Foreign Affairs had been discussing the French ratification and it was hoped that further information would be available soon.

It was agreed that the Secretariat should continue its efforts to get more range states to join, and should write to Latvia and Russia.

The Secretariat stated that it would continue its activities to encourage further ratification of the Agreement. However, the Executive Secretary also urged Parties to support the Secretariat in

encouraging non-Parties to join the Agreement through their diplomatic channels and to inform the Secretariat of their progress/actions in this regard.

6.5 Cooperation with international organisations

The Executive Secretary noted that ASCOBANS continues to co-operate with relevant regional organisations as well as CMS and CMS-related Agreements. A successful exercise of exchanging national reports had taken place with HELCOM as reflected in the 2003 compilation of national reports, and he thanked HELCOM and, notably, Ewa Włodarczyk of the Polish HELCOM Secretariat, for their co-operation.

WDCS noted that some of the activities of the IWC were of relevance to the work of ASCOBANS, including the long-standing project POLLUTION 2000+ on contaminants, and the work of the small cetacean working group.

7. Other Issues

7.1 Budgetary Issues

7.1.1 Report on Budget for 2003

The Chairman explained that the Administration and Budget Working Group had examined the issue of using the surplus of the previous triennium above and beyond the six-month operational reserve to reduce the annual contributions of Parties (cf. MOP4, Res. 3, Annex 4, para. 19). According to the (provisional) figures contained in Document 21, the total surplus amounted to approximately 126,627.70 USD. Given the necessary six-month operational reserve of 100,000 USD, 26,000 USD could be allocated to reducing Party contributions in 2005 and 2006. The Advisory Committee felt, however, that it would be more beneficial to allocate 13,000 USD of this money to funding ASCOBANS projects, of which 5,000 USD to fund attendance of Baltic fishermen at the Jastarnia Group meeting, and a further 5,000 USD for a specified further Jastarnia Plan-related project. 3,000 USD should be used for a specified purpose in connection with the extension of the Agreement area. The remaining 13,000 USD should remain in the Trust Fund for the time being, and a decision as to what purpose the sum should be allocated to should be taken in 2005. The meeting instructed the Secretariat to inform the coordinating authorities accordingly and to seek their consent for this arrangement.

7.2 Administrative Issues

7.2.1 Report on operation of CMS Agreements Unit

The Executive Secretary reported that despite the difficult period the CMS Secretariat was going through, the Agreements Unit was currently functioning relatively smoothly and that the ASCOBANS Secretariat was receiving satisfactory support. This was primarily attributable to the excellent work of the seconded UNON staff member, Mr Kariuki, and the new Finance JPO, Ms Rucker, funded by Germany. The meeting expressed its thanks to these colleagues.

7.2.2 Meetings to be attended during 2004

The Executive Secretary introduced Document 14 (Revision 2), which listed several dates of interest. It was noted that to date the focus had been on meetings relevant to the Baltic and North Seas, but other meetings might be of relevance in the light of the expansion of the Agreement area. It was agreed that Parties or others could communicate any additional suggestions to the Executive Secretary later.

8 Date and venue of next meeting

France announced its intention to host the 12th Meeting of the Advisory Committee in Brest, France, close to a protected area for marine mammals. A date had not yet been decided upon but it was envisaged that this would take place shortly after the ECS meeting to be held on 5 - 7 April 2005. To this end, France would consult with the ECS and would notify the Secretariat of the proposed date as soon as possible. The Chairman thanked France for this very welcome offer.

A small steering group, consisting of the Advisory Committee Chairman, Sami Hassani, Peter Evans, Mark Simmonds and others, will be established for the ECS/ASCOBANS workshop on Tursiops.

9 Agreement on draft report

The report was agreed.

10 Close of meeting

The Chairman thanked the Polish Government and Ministry of Environment for hosting the meeting and, in particular, acknowledged the work of Iwona Kuklik and Krzysztof Skóra in the organising the meeting. He also thanked the Secretariat for their work during the meeting.

Germany thanked the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for having done a good job.

The meeting was closed at midday.

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Recent Literature with regard to Chemical Pollution

Borrell, A; Aguilar, A; Cantos, G; Lockyer, C; Heide-Jorgensen, M.P. & J. Jensen. 2004. Organochlorine residues in harbour porpoises from southwest Greenland. *Environmental Pollution* **128**: 381-391.

Organic pollutant concentrations in 75 porpoises from West Greenland were sampled. Each porpoise was measured, weighed, sexed, aged and reproductive status ascertained. The general conclusion was that concentrations were low, in the middle range of pollutant levels recorded for other marine mammals in Greenland. Contaminant trends within different sexes and age classes were consistent with well established trends in other studies i.e. levels in males increased with age, levels in females increased until maturation but decreasing in individuals that showed evidence of having calved. Juveniles showed different contaminant ratios to mature females, calves having lower concentrations of the more chlorinated and higher molecular weight PCD congener groups. Differential transfer rates of PCB groups between mother and calf and/or differential uptake of PCB groups were suggested to explain these differences. The health consequences of eating harbour porpoise are raised with regard to Inuit consumers. The paper also contains a useful summary table that outlines mean, min and max PCB, DDT and HCB concentrations (mg/kg lipid weight) of various pollutant studies on harbour porpoises in the North Atlantic.

Chu, S. Covaci, A; Van de Vijver, K; De Coen, W; Blust, R. & P. Schepens. 2003. [Enantiomeric signatures of chiral polychlorinated biphenyl atropisomers in livers of harbour porpoises \(*Phocoena phocoena*\) from the southern North Sea.](#) *Journal of Environmental Monitoring* **5**: 521-526

The authors explore the merit of using enantiomeric ratios (ERs) of different PCB chiral atropisomers to provide information on the environmental behaviour and degradative kinetics of PCB congeners. They also address their use in assessing the health status of biological systems. Using samples from 11 porpoises from the southern North Sea, it is shown that ERs are not related to total PCB concentration in individual porpoises but are more dependent on the initial value in prey species and the exposure period. They illustrate correlations between the ERs of various PCB congeners and the ratio of PCB153/PCB101 concentration. Because this ratio is indicative of the proportion of PCBs that have been metabolised by the porpoise, and hence the level of contamination, the authors offer ERs as a potentially useful biomarker.

Covaci, A; Van de Vijver, K; DeCoen, W; Das, K; Bouquegneau, J.M; Blust, R. & P. Schepens. 2002. Determination of organohalogenated contaminants in liver of harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) stranded on the Belgian North Sea coast. *Marine Pollution Bulletin* **44**: 1152-1169.

Liver samples from 21 harbour porpoises stranded on the Belgian coast between 1997 and 2000 were analysed for a range of persistent pollutants including congeners and metabolites of PCBs, HCHs, HCB DDTs and PBDEs. Life history data, recorded at time of stranding, are presented for information. Higher values were found in males than females for PCBs, DDTs, PBDEs and HCB. Furthermore, an increase in concentration with age was found PCBs, DDTs and PBDEs but not for HCB and HCHs. The authors compare values for all contaminants with other studies in the North Sea and north Atlantic and discuss the relative concentrations of different congeners and their toxicity. The mean concentration for 59 PCB congeners (in 19 samples) was 36.3 ± 26.4 $\mu\text{g/g}$ lipid. This value excludes two extremely high figures for two harbour porpoise livers of 359 and 404 $\mu\text{g/g}$ lipid. The mean concentration of the seven ICES IUPAC congeners was 17.8 ± 13.7 $\mu\text{g/g}$ lipid. This figure was used in a comparison with other areas in the North Sea, Baltic and elsewhere in the north Atlantic. A concentration gradient is suggested in which higher concentrations are documented for the eastern North Sea, and particularly in southern areas, compared with more north and westerly regions. A similar comparison is made with PBDEs and, conversely, higher levels have been recorded for the west coast of the North Sea than in eastern areas.

Das, K; Beans, C; Holsbeek, L; Mauger, G; Berrowd, S.D; Rogand, E. & J.M. Bouquegneau. 2003. Marine mammals from the southern North Sea: feeding ecology data from $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ measurements. *Marine Ecology Progress Series* **263**: 287-298.

An investigation into the feeding ecology of a selection of marine mammals found stranded in the southern North Sea based on inferences from $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ data from muscle samples and a number of prey species. Trophic enrichment of carbon and nitrogen isotope ratios is a well known phenomenon and has provided information to compliment feeding ecology data and been used to infer trophic positions of many marine animals. In this study the harbour seal, the grey seal, the white-beaked dolphin and cod were deemed to occupy to highest trophic level. However, harbour porpoises had a relatively low $\delta^{14}\text{N}$ compared with that of the piscivorous fishes, suggesting that porpoises tend to feed on fishes lower down the food web. Inter-sex differences in $\delta^{14}\text{N}$ for porpoises indicate that female porpoises feed at a slightly higher trophic level than males. The fin whale, sperm whale and white-sided dolphin had $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ ratios that indicate that they do not feed in the North Sea basin which is in agreement with accepted values for oceanic species compared to coastal and benthic feeders. On the contrary, $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ data indicate that the other marine mammal species are a part of the southern North Sea food web.

Das, K; Beans, C; Holsbeek, L; Mauger, G; Berrowd, S.D; Rogand, E. & J.M. Bouquegneau. 2003. Marine mammals from Northeast Atlantic: relationship between their trophic status as determined by $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ measurements and their trace metal concentrations. *Marine Environmental Research* **56**(3): 349-365.

This study looks at stable isotope and trace metal data from cetaceans stranded on Irish and French Channel coasts. Marine mammal species studied were the striped dolphin *Stenella coeruleoalba*, common dolphin *Delphinus delphis*, Atlantic white-sided dolphin *Lagenorhynchus acutus*, harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*, white beaked-dolphin *Lagenorhynchus albirostris* and the grey seal *Halichoerus grypus*. Although there are underlying differences in inshore and offshore habit, the variation in isotopic ratios of $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ and $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ among these species is thought to be largely a consequence of their trophic status. Relative isotopic ratios are similar in the same species from Irish coasts compared to French coasts suggesting that individual species retain their trophic status regardless of region. The more offshore species, *S. coeruleoalba*, *D. delphis* and *L. actus*, show lower $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ and $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ values than the recognised inshore species. Cd concentrations in the liver and kidney were negatively correlated ($p < 0.001$) to $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ values. This relationship reflects the diet of the offshore species which is thought to consist of a higher proportion of oceanic cephalopods than that of inshore species. Hg, Zn and Cu concentrations did not show any such relationship.

Fossi, M.C; Marsili, L; Neri, G; Natoli, A; Politi, E. & S. Panigada. 2003. The use of a non-lethal tool for evaluating toxicological hazard of organochlorine contaminants in Mediterranean cetaceans: new data 10 years after the first paper published in MPB. *Marine Pollution Bulletin* **46**: 972-982.

This paper details toxicological analysis of skin biopsy samples taken from four Mediterranean cetacean species between 1994 and 1998. Organochlorine contaminant (OC) levels, heavy metal content and BPMD activity (benzo(a)pyrene monooxygenase) were determined for the samples taken from fin whales, striped dolphins, bottlenose dolphins and common dolphins. Biopsy samples were taken from the fin whale, bottlenose and common dolphin at a distance using a crossbow and aluminium biopsy dart and were taken from the striped dolphins using a pole with a biopsy tip used at the bow of the boat. The paper first presents a review of chemicals with known endocrine disrupting (ED) properties. Levels of OC contaminants, bar the op'DDT%, were generally lower in the fin whale compared with the odontocete species. Striped dolphins showed the highest levels of OCs followed by *T. truncatus*, *D. delphis* and *B. physalus*. Significant correlations were found between a number of OCs with ED capacity and BPMD activity. The significance of correlations varied with species, sex and OC group/congener and were not found in every comparison. For example, BPMD activity in *S. coeruleoalba* was correlated to OC levels in males and not in females. Significant correlations (OC/BPMD activity) were found for certain congeners in common dolphins and fin whales. It is suggested that this biomarker method is a valuable indicative tool for assessing the toxicological stress of OCs with ED capacity in these species. The authors also highlight concern over the high levels of OCs with ED capacity in Mediterranean cetaceans. They cite a number of

examples from elsewhere in the world where disruptive effects of comparably high levels of OCs have been documented.

Hall, A.J; Kalantzi, O.I. & G.O. Thomas. 2003. Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) in grey seals during their first year of life - are they thyroid hormone endocrine disrupters? *Environmental Pollution* **126**(1): 29-37.

This work explores a relationship between blubber polybrominated diphenyl ether (PBDE) concentration and blood thyroid, cholesterol and albumin concentrations in grey seals. The median PBDE concentrations in pup blubber and first year animals were 170 and 460 ng g⁻¹ respectively. A positive concentration was found after taking into account age and condition. This is presented as evidence to suggest that PBDEs have a role as endocrine disrupters in grey seals although more work is needed to support this hypothesis.

Hansen, L.J; Schwacke, L.H; Mitchum, G.B; Hohn, A.A; Wells, R.S; Zolman, E.S. & P.A. Fair. 2004. Geographic variation in polychlorinated biphenyl and organochlorine pesticide concentrations in the blubber of bottlenose dolphins from the US Atlantic coast. *The Science of the Total Environment* **319**: 147-172.

PCB and OC contaminant levels were analysed in blubber samples from live animals in a capture-release program and from biopsy sampling of wild dolphins along the east coast of the USA. Samples locations were Charleston, South Carolina; Beaufort, North Carolina and the Indian River Lagoon, Florida. PCB levels and congener profiles vary between sex, age and sampling location. Generally, males had the highest levels of OCs followed by juveniles and then reproductive females. The effectiveness of the sampling methods employed are also discussed. Different OC congener profiles in different locations support the use of these profiles in stock definition and the different contaminant loadings at different sites may implicate particular problems for resident populations of bottlenose dolphins.

Heldal, H.E; Fofn, L. & P. Varskog. 2003. Bioaccumulation of ¹³⁷Cs in pelagic food webs in the Norwegian and Barents Seas. *Journal of Environmental Radioactivity* **65**: 177-185.

Samples of different species from a number of trophic levels, including the copepod, *Calanus finmarchicus*, (trophic level 2), herring, capelin and mackerel (level 3), cod (level 4) and the harbour porpoise (level 5), were analysed for ¹³⁷Cs levels. Levels were found to be generally low with the lowest levels in the Barents Sea but there was a marked accumulation (10 fold) of ¹³⁷Cs in the harbour porpoise compared to the lowest trophic level.

Hites, R.A; Foran, J.A; Carpenter, D.O; Hamilton, C.M; Knuth, B.A. & S.J. Schwager. 2004. Global Assessment of Organic Contaminants in Farmed Salmon. *Science* **303**(5655): 226-229.

This paper presents data on the levels of various organochlorine (OC) compounds including PCBs and DDT in farmed and wild salmon from across the world. The authors demonstrate that significant sources of these chemicals remain as farmed the salmon analysed had markedly increased levels of OCs compared to their wild conspecifics. Furthermore, European raised salmon show higher levels than reared salmon tested from north and south America. Health considerations are discussed for consumption of farmed salmon by humans.

Hobbs, K.E; Muir, D.C.G; Born, E.W; Dietz, R; Haug, T; Metcalfe, T. & N. Oien. 2003. Levels and patterns of persistent organochlorines in minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutostrata*) stocks from the North Atlantic and European Arctic. *Environmental Pollution* **121**: 239-252.

PCBs and OC pesticide residues were determined from a total of 155 minke whales from seven regions in the north Atlantic. Samples were taken from whales caught in the Barents Sea, North Sea, Vestfjorden/Lofoten, west Svalbard, Jan Mayen, and west and southeast Greenland. These areas constitute IWC small areas for purposes of stock management. Concentrations of PCBs, DDTs, CHLs, HCHs,

dieldrin, endrin, mirex, endosulfan and lindane are presented for males and females from each region. OC levels in the whales generally increased from west to east. Mean Σ PCB (sum of 102 congeners) and Σ DDT (sum of o,p- and p,p'-DDE, -DDD, -DDT) concentration in the North Sea were 1840 and 964 ng/g lipid for females and 6120 and 3190 ng/g lipid for males respectively. Minke whales in the North Sea had higher levels of more highly chlorinated PCBs and OCs than Greenland. Sex-adjusted comparison of the regions showed that whales from the Barents Sea had significantly higher levels of Σ PCBs than the North Sea, Vestfjorden/Lofoten and west Svalbard. Similarities in Σ PCB Σ DDT and Σ CHL in these areas (and in Jan Mayen) suggest that minke whales in the northeastern Atlantic are mobile and feed in multiple areas, across assigned IWC management boundaries.

Kershaw, P.J; Heldal, H.E; Mork, K.E. & A.L. Rudjord. 2004. Variability in the supply, distribution and transport of the transient tracer ^{99}Tc in the NE Atlantic. *Journal of Marine Systems* **44**: 55-81.

This paper maps the dispersal progress of the tracer technetium (^{99}Tc) from the Sellafield nuclear processing plant into the waters of the north-east Atlantic. An increased output of ^{99}Tc since 1994 due to an altered removal process has meant it was possible to track the tracer. Increased dispersal rates from the Irish Sea matched variations in the north Atlantic Oscillation and the speed of transport was slowed passing the north Norwegian coast. Transport times from Sellafield to west-southwest of Bear Island and west of Spitsbergen were estimated to be 3 to 4 and 4 to 6 years, respectively. The study serves as a useful example of a dataset describing dispersal pattern of a radioactive tracer in the north-east Atlantic.

Law, R.J; Alae, M; Allchin, C.R; Boon, J.P; Lebeuf, M; Lepom, P. & G.A. Stern. 2003. Levels and trends of polybrominated diphenylethers and other brominated flame retardants in wildlife. *Environment International* **29**: 757– 770.

This paper constitutes a thorough review of the extent of polybrominated diphenylethers (PBDEs) in wildlife around the globe. By taking examples from a number of studies on a range of different species it is evident that PDBEs have pervaded both deep offshore and coastal marine food webs and temperate and arctic ecosystems. A general reduction in PDBE levels is expected for temperate, source, regions whereas levels in arctic regions are predicted to continue to increase. The extent and bioaccumulation potential differs between PDBE congeners and a better understanding of these differences is anticipated as more information comes to light.

Lindahl, P; Ellmark, C; Gafvert, T; Mattsson, S; Roos, P; Holm, E. & B. Erlandsson. 2003. Long-term study of ^{99}Tc in the marine environment on the Swedish west coast.

The authors present data on levels of the radioactive tracer, Technetium (^{99}Tc), determined from samples of seaweed and seawater collected from the Kattegat, on the west coast of Sweden in 1991, 1995 and 2001. An increase in activity concentration is reported over time and from south to north in the Kattegat seaweed samples. The major source of ^{99}Tc in the North and Baltic Seas is discharge from the Sellafield nuclear processing plant into the Irish Sea. A transport time of approximately 4-5 years was calculated for ^{99}Tc between this source and the Kattegat.

Van de Vijver, K.I; Hoff, P.T; Das, K; Dongen, W.V; Esmans, E.L; Jauniaux, T; Bouquegneau, J-M; Blust, R. & w. De Coen. 2003. Perfluorinated chemicals infiltrate ocean waters: link between exposure levels and stable isotope ratios in marine mammals. *Environmental Science and Technology* **37**(24): 5545-5550.

Concentrations of perfluorinated organochemicals (FOCs) were determined in samples from animals found stranded in the southern North Sea (Belgian, French and Dutch coasts). This is the first study to do so for these chemicals in cetaceans from this region. The species sampled were the harbour porpoise, Atlantic white-sided dolphin, white-beaked dolphin, striped dolphin, sperm whale, fin whale, and the harbour, hooded and grey seal. Perfluorooctane sulphonate (PFOS) was the predominant FOC found. FOC levels correlated strongly with trophic position for species that are known to belong to the southern North Sea food web. Indeed, the typically offshore species were found to have lower concentrations than the inshore

species sampled. In this study, females harbour porpoises and harbour seals show higher levels of FOCs than their male counterparts. This pattern of accumulation is different to that of other OCs and may be due to the lack of lactation as an elimination pathway and to the higher trophic position of females. The study also demonstrates the potential for FOCs to bioaccumulate. The levels of FOCs were comparable to those of striped and bottlenose dolphins off the coast of Florida and because of their presence in marine mammal livers of all the species studied here it is likely that this group of chemicals has pervaded many regions of the marine biome.

Yoshitome, R; Kunito, T; Ikemoto, T; Tanabe, S; Zenke, H; Yamauchi, M. & N. Miyazaki. 2003. Global distribution of radionuclides concentrations (Cs-137 and K-40) in marine mammals. *Environmental Science & Technology* **37**(20): 4597-4602.

A study into the global distribution of the radionuclide ^{137}Cs . The ^{137}Cs concentration of muscle samples from 10 species sampled between 1981 and 2000 were determined. The species sampled were the northern fur seal, Dall's porpoise, Fraser's dolphin, ringed seal, spinner dolphin, Blainville's beaked whale, Weddell seal, Baikal seal, Caspian seal and the harbour porpoise. Samples indicated that the area with the highest concentrations was the UK coastline, the main contributing sources of radionuclide contamination in this region being discharges from Sellafield nuclear processing plant in the UK and fallout from the Chernobyl nuclear power station accident. ^{137}Cs concentrations in muscle samples were compared with ambient sea water from the sampling location and a positive correlation found. Concentration factors (CF) were also explored and piscivorous species showed a higher CF than species that feed on cephalopods.

Other papers of note

Debier, C; Pomeroy, P.P; Dupont, C; Joiris, C; Comblin, V; Le Boulenge, E; Larondelle, Y. & J. P. Thome. 2003. Quantitative dynamics of PCB transfer from mother to pup during lactation in UK grey seals *Halichoerus grypus*. *Marine Ecology Progress Series* **247**: 237-248.

Derraik, J.G.B. 2002. The pollution of the marine environment by plastic debris: a review. *Marine Pollution Bulletin* **44**: 842-852.

Fossi, M.C; Marsili, L. & G.N. di Sciara. *in press*. The role of skin biopsy in the detection of exposure of endocrine disrupting chemicals in mediterranean cetaceans. *Journal Cetacean Research Management*

Hario, M; Hirvi, J-P; Hollmen, T. & E. Rudback. 2004. Organochlorine concentrations in diseased vs. healthy gull chick from the northern Baltic. *Environmental Pollution* **127**: 411-423.

This paper explores hypotheses that attempt to explain the cause of high mortality rates of lesser black-backed gull chicks due to diseases in the northern Baltic Sea. Concentrations of a number of POPs were determined from chick liver samples. Starvation was ruled out as a cause of intestinal inflammations in the chicks. Levels of DDE in diseased chicks were higher than levels previously linked to negative affects on reproduction. An elevated DDT/PCB ratio in the chicks suggests that these chicks have a greater exposure to DDT than other seabirds in the Baltic.

Jenssen, B. M; Haugen, O; Sormo, E.G. & J.U. Skaare. 2003. Negative relationship between PCBs and plasma retinol in low-contaminated free-ranging gray seal pups (*Halichoerus grypus*). *Environmental Research* **93**(1):79-87.

Jepson, P.D. 2003. Pathology and toxicology of stranded harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) in UK waters. PhD thesis, Royal Veterinary College, London.

This PhD thesis documents the pathology and toxicology of UK stranded harbour porpoises between 1989 and 2002. Main causes of death were by associated pathology from entanglement in fishing gear, as a result of injuries sustained from attack by bottlenose dolphins and from symptoms of infectious diseases. From the liver and blubber levels of PCBs (25CBs), OC pesticides, BTs, PBDEs (15BDEs) and a number

(11) of heavy metals were determined. Using this information the author explores the relationship between exposure to persistent OCs, pesticides and heavy metals and porpoise mortality to assess the immunotoxicological effects of these chemicals on porpoise populations in the region. The data infer that there is a relationship and that the toxicological effects may be a factor in population declines of harbour porpoises in UK waters.

Lie, E.; Bernhoft, A; Riget, F; Belikov, S.E; Boltunov, A. N; Derocher, A. E; Garner, G. W; Wiig, O. & J. U. Skaare. 2003. Geographical distribution of organochlorine pesticides (OCPs) in polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*) in the Norwegian and Russian Arctic. *Science Of The Total Environment* **306**(1-3): 159-170.

Concentrations of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in blood samples from 90 polar bears across the Norwegian and Russian Arctic were determined for bears from Svalbard, Franz Josef Land, the Kara Sea, the East-Siberian Sea and the Chukchi Sea. Variation in ΣPCB concentration was found between sample locations. In general bears from the Western Russian Arctic had the highest contaminant levels and the study recommends that further research is needed in this region.

Marsili, L; Fossi, M.C; Focardi, S. & G.N. di Sciara. 2002. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in cetaceans of the Mediterranean “Whale Sanctuary”. *Marine Environmental Research* **54**: 829-851.

Reijnders, P.J.H. 2003. [Interim report on pollution 2000+: 2002-2003](#). SC/55/E21

Reijnders, P.J.H. 2003. [Reproductive and developmental effects of environmental organochlorines on marine mammals](#). In *Toxicology of Marine Mammals*, Vos, JG; Bossart, GD; Fournier, M; O'Shea, TJO, Taylor & Francis (eds), London.

Reijnders, P.J.H. & M.P. Simmonds. 2003. Global temporal trends of organochlorines and heavy metals in pinnipeds. In *Toxicology of Marine Mammals*, Vos, JG; Bossart, GD; Fournier, M; O'Shea, TJO, Taylor & Francis (eds), London.

Storelli, M.M. & G.O. Marcotrigiano. 2003. [Levels and congener pattern of polychlorinated biphenyls in the blubber of the Mediterranean bottlenose dolphins *Tursiops truncatus*](#). *Environment International* **28**: 559-565.

Struntz, W.D.J; Kucklick, J.R; Schantz, M.M; Becker, P.R; McFee, W.E. & M.K. Stolen. 2004. Persistent organic pollutants in rough-toothed dolphins (*Steno bredanensis*) sampled during an unusual mass stranding event [rapid communication] *Marine Pollution Bulletin* **48**(1-2): 164-17.

Rare report on persistent organic pollutants POPs for this species. This species does not exist in the Agreement area but is an example of work on a little studied offshore species. Concentrations of POPs from 15 animals that stranded in the Gulf of Mexico in 1997 were determined, including PCBs, HCHs, DDT and its derivatives.

Tanabe, S. 2002. Contamination and toxic effects of persistent endocrine disrupters in marine mammals and birds. *Marine Pollution Bulletin* **45**:69-77.

This paper serves as a useful review of the presence and extent of OCs and related compounds in marine mammals globally. With his general focus on Asia and the Pacific, the author reviews documented examples of toxic effects, the distribution of different OCs in Asian coastal waters and the Pacific Ocean (taken from the literature) and outlines potential future trends in OCs contamination of marine mammals and the marine environment.

Wolkers, H; Lydersen, C. & K.M. Kovacs. 2004. Accumulation and lactational transfer of PCBs and pesticides in harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*) from Svalbard, Norway. *The Science of the Total Environment* **319**: 137-146.

Recent Literature with regard to Noise Pollution

Monteiro-Neto, C., Ávila, F. J. C., Alves-Jr., T. T., Araújo, D. S., Campos, A. A., Martins, A. M. A., Parente, C. L., Furtado-Neto, M. A. A. and Lien, J. 2004. Behavioural responses of *sotalia fluviatilis* (Cetacea, Delphinidae) to acoustic pingers, Fortaleza, Brazil. *Mar. Mam. Sci.* 20 (1): 145 – 151.

The authors suggest that acoustic pingers attached to gill nets along the Northeast coast of Brazil may be successful in preventing the bycatch of tucuxi, *Sotalia fluviatilis*, and other small cetaceans. They note that the study is preliminary and that although short term habituation was not detected, this may occur over longer time periods of months or years of exposure to the sound.

Barlow, J. and Cameron, G. A. 2003. Field experiments show that acoustic pingers reduce marine mammal by-catch in the California drift gill net fishery. *Marine Mammal Science* 19(2).

The authors report that pingers significantly reduced total cetacean and pinniped entanglement in drift gill nets in Californian waters without significantly affecting swordfish or shark catches. The authors echo the concerns of other studies that the animals may habituate to pingers, adding that this may be less of a concern for such a large area fished, as opposed to localised and intensive fisheries. They add that they believe that pingers are unlikely to reduce the bycatch of all cetacean species or all pinniped species.

Quick, N.J; Middlemas, S.J; Armstrong, J.D. 2004. A survey of antipredator controls at marine salmon farms in Scotland. *Aquaculture*, 230: 169-180.

A study of antipredator controls at marine salmon farms in Scotland revealed that the use of seal scarers has increased significantly from 10% in 1985 to 52% in 2001. Seven brands of seal scarer were identified and methods of deployment varied hugely. The authors report that variation in apparent effectiveness could result from real or perceived performance, where some reports stated that they believed the devices to be effective whilst others believed that the seals habituated to them. There is a need to understand the exact mechanisms by which these scarers deter seals and then to devise activation strategies for their use at specific sites. In terms of impacts on non target species, such as cetaceans, previous studies have clearly shown long term critical habitat avoidance (such as Morton and Symmonds, 2002) and this needs to be considered, especially as the use of such devices is likely to continue increasing as the number of marine fish farms continues to increase around the world. Regulation for the use of such devices remains minimal.

Koschinski, S; Culik, B; Henriksen, O; Tregenza, N; Ellis, G; Jansen, C; Kathe, G. 2003. Behavioural reactions of free-ranging porpoises and seals to the noise of a stimulated 2MW wind power generator. *Marine Ecology Progress Series* Vol 265: 263-273.

Simulated sounds of a 2MW windpower generator were played to harbour porpoises, *Phocoena phocoena*, and harbour seals, *Phoca vitulina*, in Fortune Channel, Vancouver Island, Canada in an attempt to obtain a behavioural response to the recorded sounds. The authors found that the harbour porpoises showed a distinct reaction to the sounds. Although animals were not deterred

from the general area, the minimum distance from the sound source increased substantially from 0.7 metres during control periods to 4.5 metres during playbacks. Harbour porpoises were found to use their sonar more often during periods of playback than control periods, the implications of which are not understood, although they seem to be investigating the sound source.

They suggest that masking of male harbour seal underwater low frequency calls might have a negative impact on reproduction. They state that future studies are necessary to assess the impact and critical values of construction noise, as well as possible mitigation measures, such as:

- scheduling activities to minimise impact (eg. Avoiding work during calving and reproductive periods in critical areas)
- allowing for sufficiently large low-noise habitat
- reducing sound emissions via technical measures such as bubble curtains

Fristrup, K. M., Hatch, L. T. and Clark, C. W. 2003. Variation in humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) song length in relation to low-frequency sound broadcasts. *J. Acoust. Soc. Am* 113 (6).

US SURTASS Low Frequency Active Sonar system was played at low levels to humpback whale in order to investigate song length in Hawa'ii. Although humpbacks responded to the introduced sound source, the authors report that much of the variation in song length remains unexplained. The long term significance of changing the length of the whales' songs are certainly not understood.

Johnson, J. S. 2004. High Frequency Marine Mammal Monitoring Active Sonar System. In the Proceedings of the Workshop on Active Sonar and Cetaceans. *Report of the 17th Annual European Cetacean Society*, March 2003.

The High Frequency Marine Mammal Monitoring (HF/M3) Sonar is designed to ensure that no marine mammals are within the volume of ocean where the received levels of the US SURTASS LFAS could potentially cause injury. It is reported in this publication that a 2.5 metre dolphin has a 100% probability of detection after 5 ensonifications of HF/M3, and that a stationary 20 metre whale has a 98% detection at 1 km and 160 metres depth.

Nachtigall, P.E., Pawloski, J.L. & Au, W.W.L. 2003. Temporary threshold shifts and recovery following noise exposure in the Atlantic bottlenosed dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*). *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 113(6): 3425-3429.

The authors examined the hearing thresholds of an individual bottlenose dolphin by exposing it to sounds for longer durations that had previously been studied. The aim was to estimate the exposure level and time required to induce TTS, as well as measure the recovery time of the animal. The auditory systems of beluga and the bottlenose dolphin have the capability to recover relatively rapidly from the TTS to which they were exposed. The authors report that the animal did not appreciate the fatiguing noise and was reluctant to participate as the experiment progressed.

Evans, P. G. H. and Miller, L. A. 2004. Proceedings of the Workshop on Active Sonar and Cetaceans. *Report of the 17th Annual European Cetacean Society*, March 2003.

The Proceedings of the Workshop on Active Sonar and Cetaceans (Evans and Miller, 2004), from the 17th Annual European Cetacean Society, detail the regional interest in noise pollution. The Proceedings acknowledge many important considerations, including the need for data-basing of marine mammal distributions in order to assist planners to avoid high densities of sensitive animals

Ketten, D. R., Rowles, T., Cramer, S., O'Malley, J., Arruda, J. and Evans, P. G. H. 2004. Cranial trauma in beaked whales. In the Proceedings of the Workshop on Active Sonar and Cetaceans. *Report of the 17th Annual European Cetacean Society*, March 2003.

The authors note in this paper that was presented at the Workshop on Active Sonar and Cetaceans. *Report of the 17th Annual European Cetacean Society* that the acute need to understand whether sonar was a direct or indirect agent in the injuries to these whales, the precise mechanism behind the traumas that were found and the nature and extent of potential impacts from man made sounds, particularly from sonar and impulse noise.

Further commitment to mitigation of noise pollution is witnessed through the review of the *JNCC Guidelines for Minimising Acoustic Disturbance to Marine Mammals from Seismic Surveys* and *Marine Mammal Observer (MMO)* have recently been completed in the UK and review of the *Guidelines on the application of the EPBC Act to interactions between offshore seismic operations and whales (large cetaceans)* are underway in Australia.

Other papers of note

Carron, M. 2004. nato saclantcen Marine Mammal Risk Mitigation Programme (Sound, Ocean and Living Marine Resources). In the Proceedings of the Workshop on Active Sonar and Cetaceans. *Report of the 17th Annual European Cetacean Society*, March 2003.

Evans, P. G. H. and Miller, L. A. 2004. Proceedings of the Workshop on Active Sonar and Cetaceans. *Report of the 17th Annual European Cetacean Society*, March 2003.

Fernández, A., M. Arbelo, E. Degollada, M. André, A. Castro-Alonso, R. Jaber, V. Martín, P. Calabuig, P. Castro, P. Herraes, F. Rodríguez and A. Espinosa de los Monteros. 2003. Pathological findings in beaked whales stranded massively in the Canary Islands (2002). Poster presented at the European Cetacean Society Conference, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, March 2003.

Frantzis, A. 2004. The first mass stranding that was associated with the use of active sonar (Kyparissiakos Gulf, Greece, 1996). In the Proceedings of the Workshop on Active Sonar and Cetaceans. *Report of the 17th Annual European Cetacean Society*, March 2003.

Freitas, L. 2004 The stranding of three Cuvier's beaked whales *Ziphius cavirostris* in Madeira Archipelago – May 2000. In the Proceedings of the Workshop on Active Sonar and Cetaceans. *Report of the 17th Annual European Cetacean Society*, March 2003.

Fernandez. 2003. Gas-bubble lesions in stranded cetaceans: Was sonar responsible for a spate of whale deaths after an Atlantic military exercise? *Nature* 425(6958):575-576.

Johnson, J. S. 2004. High Frequency Marine Mammal Monitoring Active Sonar System. In the Proceedings of the Workshop on Active Sonar and Cetaceans. *Report of the 17th Annual European Cetacean Society*, March 2003.

Kaiser, J. 2003. Military wins changes that may ease research. *Science* 302, 1487 – 1488.

Martin, V., Servidio, A. and Garcia, S. 2004. Mass strandings of beaked whales in the Canary Islands. In the Proceedings of the Workshop on Active Sonar and Cetaceans. *Report of the 17th Annual European Cetacean Society*, March 2003.

Morton, A. B. and Symonds, H. K. 2002. Displacement of orcinus orca by high amplitude sound in British Columbia, Canada. *ICES Journal of Marine Science*. 59: 71-80.

Tyack, P. L. 2003. Research Program to Evaluate Effects of Manmade Noise on Marine Mammals in the Ligurian Sea. Report to ACCOBAMS. CS2/Inf. 13.

Dates of interest to ASCOBANS in 2004/2005

| Date | | Organiser | Title | Venue | Participation |
|----------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 24 - 28 May | 2004 | HELCOM | 6 th Meeting of HELCOM HABITAT | St. Petersburg, Russia | Penina Blankett |
| 22 – 25 June | 2004 | UNEP/CMS | Standing Committee | Bonn, Germany | Executive Secretary |
| 23 June | 2004 | UNEP/CMS | 25 th Anniversary | Berlin, Germany | Executive Secretary |
| 29 June - 22 July | 2004 | IWC | Scientific Comm./WGs/IWC 56 | Sorrento, Italy | Vice-Chair |
| | 2004 | ACCOBAMS | Scientific Council | | Vice Chair |
| September | 2004 | OSPAR | MASH | Norway | Chair? |
| September | 2004 | ICES | Annual Science Conference | Vigo, Spain | |
| 9 – 12 November | 2004 | ACCOBAMS | MOP 2 | Palma de Mallorca, Spain | Executive Secretary/AC Chair(?) |
| 1 - 3 November | 2004 | HELCOM | HELCOM MARITIME | Denmark | Maj Munk (?) |
| 10 - 12 November | 2004 | EU Commission | European Marine Strategy Stakeholders Meeting | Rotterdam | Chair? |
| Late November | 2004 | UNEP/AEWA | 2 nd Meeting of Standing Committee | Bonn, Germany | Executive Secretary |
| Late 2004/Early 2005 | | UNEP/ASCOBANS | Workshop on North Sea Recovery Plan | | |
| Jan./Febr. | 2005 | OSPAR | OSPAR BDC | ? | J. Haelters or Exec. Secr. or Chair |
| 11 - 14 March | 2005 | Europ. Association of Aquatic Mammals | 33 rd Annual Conf. of Europ. Association of Aquatic Mammals | Harderwijk | Kai Mattsson and/or Vice Chair |
| 22 May - 24 June | 2005* | IWC | Scientific Comm./WGs/IWC 57 | Korea | Vie Chair |
| 5 – 7 April | 2005 | ECS | 19 th Annual Conference | La Rochelle, France | Executive Secretary |

* tentative dates