

Agenda Item 4.2: Abundance survey planning (SCANS II), update

**Opportunistic Sightings of Harbour Porpoises
(*Phocoena phocoena*) in the Baltic Sea**

Submitted by: Germany



ASCOBANS

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

Opportunistic Sightings of Harbour Porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) in the Baltic Sea

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The harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) was once so common in the Baltic Sea that all or most bordering countries had directed porpoise fisheries during the 19th century (Berggren, 1994). Although there has been no porpoise hunting in the Baltic Sea since the 1940's, the population has continued to decline. The causes may include the commercial catching of porpoises historically (Kinze 1995), the periodic catastrophic mortality resulting from severe winter ice conditions (Teilmann and Lowry 1996), and habitat degradation (e.g. pollution, noise, decrease in prey abundance or quality; cf. Teilmann and Lowry). Whatever other factors may be involved, however, it is very likely that incidental mortality in fishing gear has played a major role in reducing porpoises to a small fraction of their historical abundance in the region, and is now helping to prevent their recovery (Jastarnia Plan 2002).

As further discussed in the ASCOBANS Recovery Plan for the Harbour Porpoises in the Baltic Sea, the problem of harbour porpoise conservation in the Baltic Sea is marked by scientific uncertainty. While recognising the need for more research and monitoring, the ASCOBANS Baltic Discussion Group (ABDG) and the Jastarnia workshop strongly emphasise that there is no need to wait for further research before implementing a by-catch reduction plan by reducing fishing efforts in certain fisheries (Recovery Recommendation, Jastarnia Plan 2002).

In addition to by-catch reduction, an increase in research and monitoring, and establishing marine protected areas, increasing public awareness has been identified as an essential part of the recovery plan: "Unless people are convinced that porpoises are present in their local waters, that these creatures are worth saving, and that the animals' existence is threatened, they are not likely to support recovery efforts." The elements of a comprehensive public awareness campaign are outlined in Appendix 3 of AC 9 D Doc 7, and one of the four principal recommendations reads as follows: "In relation to the preceding recommendation, explicit efforts should be made to enlist the help of the general public in obtaining reports of porpoise observations throughout the Baltic. This can be expected to improve understanding of porpoise distribution, relative abundance, and by-catch, while at the same time enhancing public support for recovery efforts."

GSM-Gesellschaft zum Schutz der Meeressäugetiere (Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals) has taken up the model of the Danish programme "Look Out For Whales and Dolphins in Danish Waters" and has made an appeal to the (mainly sailing) public in 2002 in order to collect data of sightings in German waters (as well as in the Baltic in general). The response was very positive. The programme will continue in 2003 and GSM expects an even wider response due to the positive support it has seen already. The data will be at the disposal of FTZ -Forschungs & Technologie Zentrum Westküste (Research and Technology Centre West Coast).

The Danish programme served as a basis for the questionnaire used by GSM. The (updated) questionnaire can also be found on the GSM web site (www.gsm-ev.de) and in "calls for action" in pamphlets and news clips, published mainly in magazines like yachting magazines. Even though the project began late in the season in 2002 and was only published in two yachting magazines ("*Die Yacht*" and "*Segeln*"), where it was announced in small editorial contributions, the response was impressive. GSM received records of 120 sightings, 80 of which were from the Baltic Sea. These sightings were transferred to official sea charts by BSH (Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency), see attachment.

The first version of the questionnaire has meanwhile been edited in collaboration with researchers from the FTZ (see attachment), so that the data compiled by GSM are more compatible with other data collected on this matter. (We are very sorry to hear that the Danish programme has been terminated).

In order to increase awareness of the sightings program, the company "jump-design" in collaboration with GSM has developed a poster which will be distributed to clubs and harbour masters through the sailing association (see attachment). Additionally, the newspaper "*NV. Navigator*" (Nautische Veröffentlichungen), which produces 50.000 free copies, will allow for a whole page on our program including the questionnaire. The newspaper also promised further collaboration with the GSM. Finally, GSM will also contact fisheries associations (e.g. the International Baltic Sea Fisheries Commission (IBSFC) and other media in order to reach additional important target groups.

A further goal of GSM is to select a small group of contributors who are very engaged in the sightings program in order to collect more detailed data in the future. Behavioural observations and data logs of the complete track route of individual voyages (including data on no sightings) will be included so that knowledge of "sightings per unit effort" can be gathered. Thus, we hope to be able to help generate abundance estimates of harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea, which are currently missing or incomplete.

Although there is no doubt that opportunistic observations and reports have to be interpreted cautiously, the information collected through our sightings may well have scientific relevance and may help conservation efforts, since they will supplement the official aerial and on-board abundance sightings such as SCANS II.

The European Union's Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats & Species Directive) requires the designation of special conservation areas for harbour porpoises (listed on Annexes II and IV). It is expected that the impending review of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) will deal with the issues related to interactions between fisheries and ecosystems. The European Commission has indicated its intention to deal with the problem of cetacean by-catch. Agreed plans to establish wind parks on the German coastline and in other areas may have additional impact on cetaceans, at least during the construction phase of the parks.

Acknowledgements:

We wish to thank all those who have participated in the sightings scheme and helped to make it public. We especially thank Karl-Hermann Kock, Sabine Kroker, Justin Cooke, Werner Evers, Wolfram Kroker, Cornelia Scheidt, Florian Graner, Gina M. Truesdell, Marte Ludwig. This project has been made possible with the support of the International Fund for Animal Welfare. We would also like to thank the ASCOBANS Secretariat for its support.

References:

- Berggren, P. 1994. Bycatches of the harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) in the Swedish Skaggerrak, Kattegat and Baltic seas; 1973-1993. Rep. Int. Whal. Commn. (Special Issue 15): 211-215.
- Kinze, C.C. 1995. Exploitation of harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) in Danish waters: a historical review. Rep. Int. Whal. Commn. (Special Issue 16): 141-153.
- Koschinski, S. 2001. Current Knowledge on the harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) in the Baltic Sea, Review. *Ophelia* 55 (3): 167-193.
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Report us sighted harbour porpoises, 2002

Formularbeginn

Formularübermittl

Formularübermitt

http://www.gsm-

Form for registration of sighted harbour porpoises

If you do not have any possibility to send this online-form now, please use our fax print-out. Please fill in as many fields in the form as possible.

Period of time and position

Date:

http://w w w .gsm

Time:

Fairway/Area:

GPS-position:

Latitude:

Degree:

Min.:

Longitude:

Degree:

Min.:

If there is no GPS-position: position to navigational aid or land

Number of sighted ships within 1 sea mile (1.85 km)

Swell

[selection could be: sea like glass, broken waves, no broken waves, rippling water]

Sighting

Number of harbour porpoises certain sighting uncertain

Of which juveniles certain sighting uncertain

Young harbour porpoises can be recognized by being half as big as the grown-ups.

They always swim close to the mother animals.

Behaviour

Behaviour of harbour porpoises:

[selection could be: constant course, regular diving (travelling?), different course, circulating, irregular diving (looking for food?), longer time on surface (resting?), different behaviour]

If different behaviour, please describe:

Behaviour towards the ship

[selection could be: no effects, effects on the swimming direction]

If effects, which? (e.g. leaving or getting closer)

Ship/Boat

Name of ship:

Home port:

Boat model:

Comments

Particulars

Name:

Address:

Telephone/Mobile:

Fax:

Email:

Data are compiled together with the Centre of Investigation and Technology West Coast (Werftstr. 6, 25761 Büsum) and the German Museum of Oceanography (Katharinenberg 14-20, 18439 Stralsund).

send

reset

Formularende

REGISTRATION FORM FOR SIGHTINGS OF HARBOUR PORPOISES 2003

<i>What do we want to know?</i>	<i>How should it be reported?</i>	Sighting 1	Sighting 2	Sighting 3
When did you see the animals?	Date / time			
Where did you see the animals?	Sea position (longitude/latitude, fairway, navigational aid) Land position (island, next place, part of the beach)			
How many animals were there at least? - Were they close together or spread out?	Minimum number (additional in brackets: of which juveniles ; juveniles are half as big as grown-ups) - clear schools or mother with young animal, single?			
Where did the observation take place?	boat / ship / beach or plane			
How long was the distance to the whales?	estimated distance in metres to the observer			
How did the animals behave? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ swimming, travelling ▪ looking for food ▪ resting ▪ other behaviour 	S = constant course, regular diving F = changing course, circulating, irregular diving R = swimming slowly, longer time on the surface . e.g. jumping, coming to the boat, please describe.			
Which drive was used during the observation?	M = engine S = sail A = anchor / no speed T = drifting			
What about wind force / direction?	e.g. sw = southwest / wind force in Beaufort			
What about swell / water level?	0 = sea like glass 1 = rippling water 2 = no broken waves 3 = broken waves (whitecaps) hw/lw = high or low water, flood/outgoing tide			
Other / distinguishing marks	Boats nearby / clear notches in the fin			

Your address (name and address or name of the ship; phone / fax / email):

You can send all reports and photos from sighted harbour porpoises to:

Forschungs- und Technologiezentrum Westküste, Werftstraße 6, D-25761 Büsum, Fax: 04834 – 604 199

Data are compiled together with the Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals (GSM e.V.), Kieler Str.2, 25451 Quickborn.

Sightings of Harbour Forpoises in the Western Baltic in 2002

Total number of observations: 60 = > 249 specimens

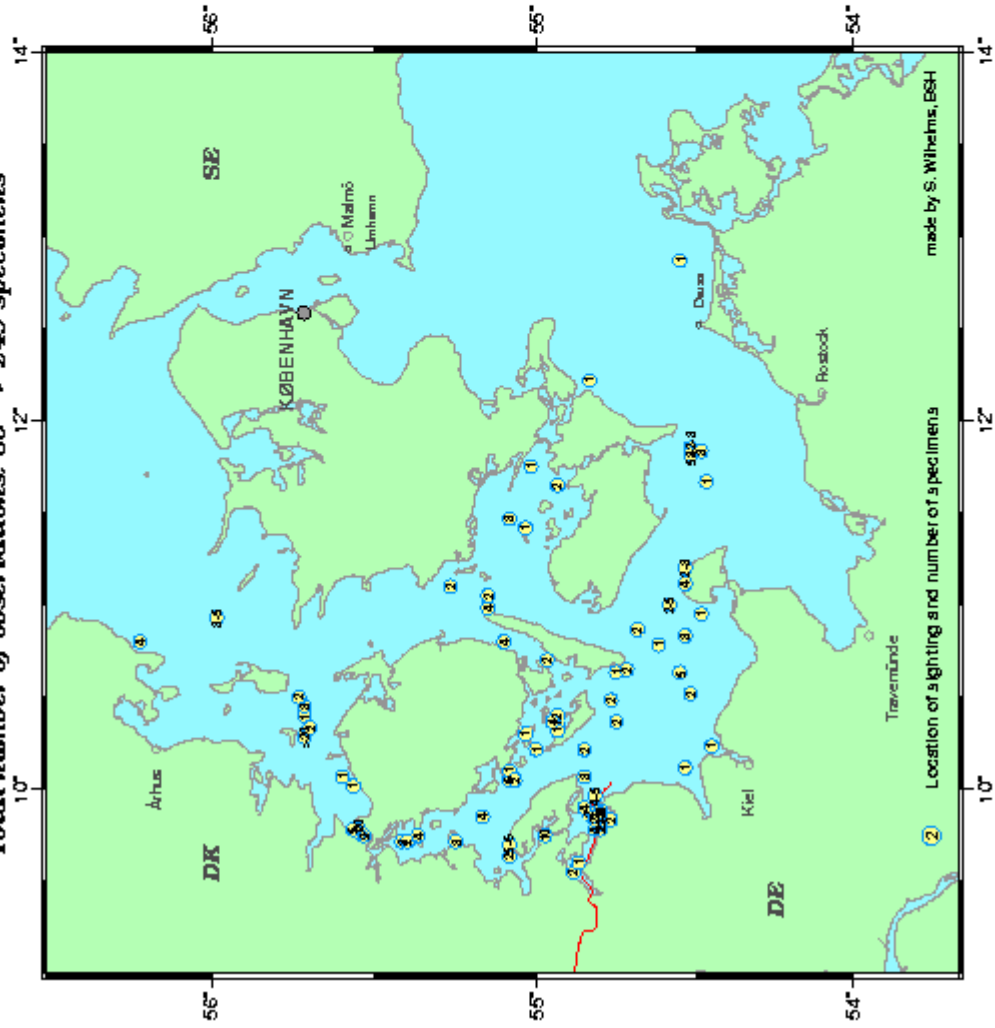
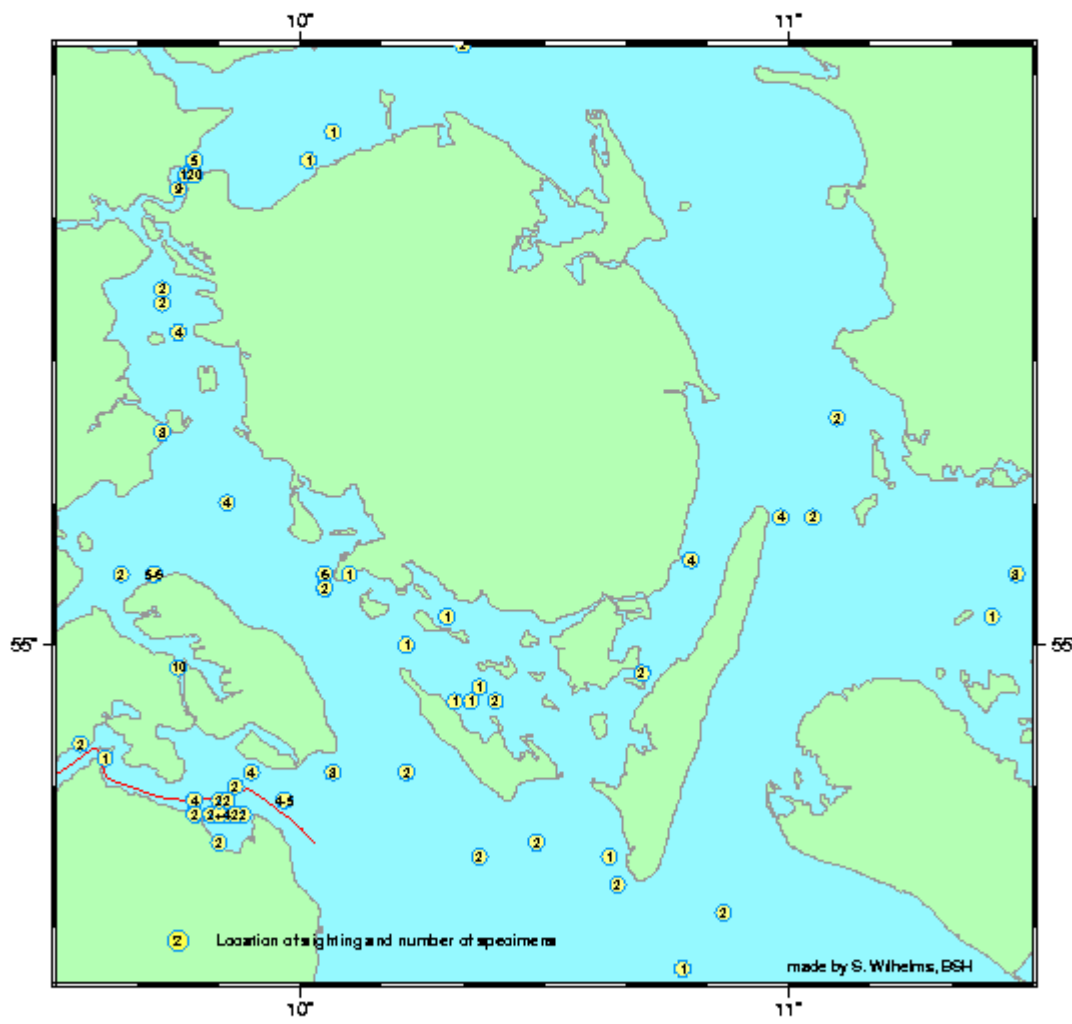


Figure 1: Overview

Sightings of Harbour Porpoises in the Western Baltic in 2002
Belt Sea: 54 observations => 160 specimens



SCHWEINSWALE

PHOCOENA PHOCOENA

GESUCHT

Größe: ca. 1,60 m

In der Ostsee leben nur noch 600 Schweinswale.
Sie sind vom Aussterben bedroht.

Helfen Sie mit, diese 'Kleinen Tümmler' zu retten!

Melden Sie uns jede Sichtung,
wenn möglich mit GPS-Daten an:

www.gsm-ev.de

GSM

Gesellschaft zum Schutz der Meeressäugetiere e.V.

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