

SC/68D/O/5Rev

Sub-committees/working group name: O

Cooperation with Other Organisations

IWC Secretariat



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COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The reports of observers representing the Commission at the following meetings are attached as the Appendices indicated:

Appendix	Meeting	IWC Observer(s)
A	Report from the 2021 activities in ICES	<i>Tore Haug (Norway)</i>
B	2021 Meeting of PICES held virtually - 13 - 30 October 2021	<i>Tsutomu Tamura (Japan)</i>
C	NAMMCO Scientific Committee	<i>Tore Haug (Norway)</i>
D	Cooperation with IMO	<i>Russell Leaper (UK)</i>
E	Report from ASCOBANS to IWC SC68D	<i>Mark Simmonds (UK)</i>
F	Report from IUCN 2021-2022	<i>Randall Reeves</i>
G	Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) of the Cartagena Convention for the Wider Caribbean	<i>David Mattila (Secretariat)</i>

Appendix A

REPORT FROM THE 2021 ACTIVITIES IN ICES

Tore Haug (Norway)

ICES WGMME

The ICES Working Group on Marine Mammal Ecology (WGMME) met online during 1–4 February 2021.

Two terms of references were standing ToRs; under the first of these, ToR A, new and updated information on cetacean (and seal) population abundance, population/stock structure, management frameworks as well as anthropogenic threats to individual health and population status were reviewed along with findings on threats to marine mammals such as bycatch, pollution, marine debris and noise. ToR B is a cooperation with the ICES Working Group on Biodiversity Science (WGBIODIV) to review species-specific foraging distributions (considering horizontal and vertical dimensions depending on data availability) and to estimate consumption by marine mammal species representative in case study areas. ToR C was implemented to review aspects of marine mammal fishery interactions not covered by the ICES Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC). ToR D is the second standing ToR and concerns updating the WGMME seal database, which was updated with the latest data.

Under ToR B it was emphasized that when estimating diet and prey consumption of marine mammals, aspects like (1) non-representativeness of samples (e.g. stomachs from stranded or bycaught individuals or scats from seal haul outs) for the population, (2) not recoverable remains of some prey items and (3) the partially (and maybe completely) digestion of hard prey remains in the gastrointestinal tracts of the predator, are important to consider. To illustrate the available data and meta-information some example case studies were summarised. An outline methodology for combining and analysing data useful for prey guild modelling and ECOPATH modelling is presented.

Under ToR C, Regulations for acoustic deterrent devices to mitigate marine mammal bycatch and legislation requirements for monitoring of bycatch were reviewed along with updated information on bycatch. A questionnaire survey to European stranding networks mapped information pertinent to bycatch assessments.

ICES WKMOMA

The ICES Workshop on estimation of Mortality of Marine MAMmals due to Bycatch (WKMOMA) met by correspondence during 13-15 and 20-21 September 2021.

The WKMOMA addressed a special request from OSPAR regarding the bycatch mortality of harbour porpoise, common dolphin (and grey seal within the OSPAR maritime area. The objective of the workshop was to generate bycatch rates and associated confidence intervals for static and towed gears for relevant species within the three species assessment areas defined by OSPAR. Subsequently, the species-specific bycatch mortality estimates in the defined assessment area were requested. OSPAR provided thresholds for the relevant species/assessment units and ICES were tasked to compare the mortality estimates to the provided thresholds and identify any critical issues relevant for the comparison.

ICES issued an official data call requesting 18 of the 20 ICES countries with fisheries operating in the OSPAR area to provide data. Norway, the Faroes, and Russia did not submit bycatch monitoring and effort in response to the data call, and it was therefore not possible to estimate bycatch in these waters. The data call aimed to collect data describing total bycatch monitoring/sampling effort and grey seal, harbour porpoise and common dolphin bycatch incidents from the years 2005 until 2020

from fisheries operating in the OSPAR Region. Most of the contacted countries submitted data, but the quality and quantity of the data provided varied widely among nations. Regarding data on fishing effort, ICES asked all EU member states for permission to use fishing effort data held in the ICES Regional Database (RDB) which contains data on fishing effort data in various metrics by métier level, country, vessel size and ICES rectangle. When permission was granted, a data extraction was undertaken by the ICES data centre providing effort data from 2015 to 2020.

All submitted monitored effort data from 2005 until 2021 was summarized and resulted in a total of 884 common dolphins, 1221 harbour porpoises and 574 grey seals were observed bycaught from 2005 to 2021.

As recommended in ICES WGBYC 2020, a modelling procedure was carried out to generate bycatch rates. Before bycatch modelling occurred, statistical tests were run on the datasets of the three species to test how bycatch rates were affected by year, month, vessel size, ICES sub-area, and métier (level 4). Results varied between the three species, with all three species having higher bycatch rates the more recent years (2015-2020) and significant effects of sub-areas and métiers. Vessel size was significant factor for harbour porpoise with larger vessels (12-15m or larger) having higher bycatch rates, while the opposite was true for grey seals for which smaller vessels (up to 12 m) had higher bycatch rates. Thereby the monitored effort data sets were pooled from 2015 to 2020 for further analyses and for harbour porpoise and grey seal data was stratified by vessel size.

A Gamma Hurdle model was used to estimate bycatch rates per day at sea. This two-step process first estimates the probability of a bycatch occurring, and then their intensity (number of animals being caught). Multiplying those values together results in an overall bycatch rate for the observed days at sea.

For common dolphin, the highest frequencies bycatch events over 2015-2020 were recorded in pelagic trawls (PTM and OTM) in ICES area 27.8 and OTM in ICES area 27.6. In ICES Subarea 27.7, highest frequencies were estimated in trammel nets (GTR) and midwater trawls (OTB and OTT). Bycatch event frequencies were also estimated for gill nets (GNS) and purse seine (PS) gears in ICES area 27.9 however these rates were below 0.01 events per day at sea.

The average number of common dolphins/bycatch event was close to one individual in most gears operating in ICES area 27.7 and static gears in 27.8. It ranged from 1.5 to 2 individuals in PS and GNS in ICES area 27.9. The numbers of common dolphins bycaught per pelagic trawl haul was highest in PTM in 27.8 and OTM in 27.8 and 27.6 (3.58 common dolphins/bycatch event), and in bottom trawl (PTB) operating in 27.8 (4.09 common dolphins/bycatch event).

The bycatch rates extrapolated to the fishing effort gave the total number of common dolphins bycaught estimated to 6,404 individuals (95% CI 3,051-9,414) in 2020 for the entire assessment area. The highest bycatch estimate was calculated for pair trawl PTM followed by gill nets GNS/GND and trammel net GTR. Bycatch estimates in 2020 are consistent with previous understanding of common dolphin bycatch and remain in the same order of magnitude as previous ICES bycatch estimates based on observer programs and strandings. However, the 2020-point estimate is higher than that of the mean annual bycatch estimate across all métiers of 3973 (95% CI 1998–6599) dolphins for 2016-2018 for the Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast.

Highest frequencies of harbour porpoise bycatch events were recorded in large vessels using GNS in ICES areas 27.3 and 27.4, when all data (2015-2020) are considered. However, sampling by one country in that area was unrepresentative due to non-random sampling and constitutes a very high proportion of the observed effort. Without that country, the rates are much lower for ICES Subarea 27.4. Small vessels using gill nets GNS also had relatively high rates in subareas 27.4 and in 27.3. Rate of bycatch

events was also high in GNS within ICES subarea 27.5 and in Subarea 27.7 the highest bycatch rates were found in GNS/GTR/ for large vessels. In midwater trawls OTT and OTB there were few bycatch observations and therefore bycatch in all areas were grouped together to calculate the rate.

The average number of porpoises/bycatch event over 2015-2020 was generally between 1 and 1.5 individuals in most métiers and areas, apart from large vessels using gill nets GNS in ICES Subarea 27.4 where 2.5 individuals were observed on average per bycatch event if the non-random sampling observer effort is included. Removing that sampling lowers that estimate down to 1.33 individuals/bycatch event.

The mortality for harbour porpoise was estimated for all requested assessment areas except the Belt, the Faroes and the Iberian Peninsula. WKMOMA estimates that the bycatch in 2020 in the West Scotland and Ireland assessment unit to be 305 (134-686) harbour porpoises. In the Irish Sea's assessment unit 12 (6-27) porpoises were bycaught, of which 2 individuals were estimated to be caught in GNS/GND while 10 individuals were estimated to be caught in midwater trawls OTB/OTT. WKMOMA estimates bycatch in the Icelandic assessment unit to be 1712 (1123-1973) harbour porpoises, all caught in gill nets GNS. In the North Sea two estimates are presented, one higher estimate including submitted data from all countries, but heavily skewed due to very frequent bycatch observations from targeted few vessels and one estimate where the monitoring effort data from this country has been taken out. The two estimates for the North Sea are 5929 (95% CI 3176- 10739) and 1627 (95% CI 922-3325; not including the unrepresentative data). Majority of the bycatch is estimated to be from gill nets GNS/GND in both cases (1306/5327 individuals), followed by trammel net GTR (198/479 individuals) and to lesser extent from midwater trawls OTB/OTT (123/123 individuals).

ICES WGBYC

The Working Group on Bycatch of Protected Species (WGBYC) met by correspondence on 28 September –1 October 2021.

WGBYC was established in 2007 and collates and analyses information from across the Northeast Atlantic and adjacent sea areas (Baltic, Mediterranean and Black Seas) related to the bycatch of marine mammals, seabirds, turtles, and sensitive fish species in commercial fishing operations. Sensitive fish species were not considered at the 2021 meeting pending approval from the ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM) on fish species lists of bycatch interest that were developed at the ICES Workshop on Fish of Conservation and Bycatch Relevance (WKCOFIBYC) in 2020. WGBYC seeks to describe and improve understanding of the likely impacts of fishing activities on affected populations at biologically relevant scales, to inform on the suitability of existing at-sea monitoring programmes for the quantification of robust bycatch estimates, and to collate information on and coordinate bycatch mitigation efforts at an international scale.

In 2021, WGYC met to address eight Terms of Reference (ToR), including a data scoping exercise as part of a special request on seabird bycatch from the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), which concluded that there was insufficient bycatch monitoring data from NEAFC waters to warrant further analyses at this time. The report also provides an overview of monitoring and fishing effort data contained in the WGBYC database for 2019 and 2020. This showed that during 2020, in most geographical areas of relevance, at-sea monitoring effort was significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Specific analyses were carried out to describe potential fisheries impacts (reported bycatch numbers, min/max bycatch rates and/or mortality estimates) for harbour seal in the Greater North Sea ecoregion and parts of the Baltic ecoregion, three turtle species in four Mediterranean ecoregions and in the Azores and Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast ecoregions, and several seabird species in six ecoregions (Adriatic, Baltic, Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast, Celtic Seas, Greater North Sea and Icelandic Waters). A risk-based approach, developed by WGBYC in 2020 to highlight monitoring gaps, was expanded using information from multiple sources and identified several high-

risk métiers for bycatch which are relatively under-sampled by existing data collection programmes. Several members of WGBYC also participated simultaneously in the ICES Workshop on Estimation of Mortality of Marine Mammals due to Bycatch (WKMOMA) which ran over schedule due to data issues.

Data used by WGBYC on fishing effort, at-sea monitoring effort and bycatch records are primarily acquired through an ICES dedicated data call which has been issued annually to all ICES member states since 2018 and all non-ICES EU coastal states from 2021. Although data quality and quantity are improving, WGBYC reiterate that significant gaps remain in data collection efforts and in data resolution, that limits the Working Group's ability to provide useful assessments of the likely impacts of fishing activity across a wide range of protected species and areas. WGBYC note that broadscale low level monitoring programmes may be insufficient to highlight very rare bycatch occurrences for populations at low abundance and/or low susceptibility to bycatch, but which could have significant population levels impacts.

ICES ASC

Because of the global COVID-19 crisis, the 2021 ICES Annual Science Conference (ASC) was held as a virtual conference 6-10 September 2021. Theme session A was an ICES/PICES session dealing with top predators, food webs, and ecosystem-based fisheries management. The conference included no particular theme session devoted entirely to marine mammals, but also some other sessions were designed with marine mammals included as an integral part. More information is available at the ICES web side <https://www.ices.dk/events/asc/ASC2021/Pages/default.aspx>

Appendix B

Observer Report of the 2021 PICES Annual Meeting*Tsutomu Tamuta (Japan)*

The North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) is an inter-governmental organization in which Canada, China, Japan, Korea, Russia and the United States participate. PICES has four committees: the Biological Oceanography Committee (BIO), the Fisheries Science Committee (FIS), the Marine Environmental Quality Committee (MEQ), and the Physical Oceanography and Climate Committee (POC). In addition, it has one technical committee for data exchange (TCODE). PICES has been conducting a research project titled FUTURE (Forecasting and Understanding Trends, Uncertainty and Responses of the North Pacific Ecosystems) since 2008.

PICES meets once a year for its regular meeting and its associated symposium with over 500 participants. Since 1997, PICES has addressed marine birds and marine mammals as relevant ecosystem components in the North Pacific, and has established a special working group to assess the impact of feeding by marine birds and marine mammals upon ecosystems (WG11). There was also a marine birds and marine mammals advisory panel (AP-MBM) under the BIO to examine the relationship between climate change and ecosystem fluctuation in the North Pacific Ocean, and compare the situation with those in other oceanic basins. Since 2016, the AP-MBM is under Section-MBM (S-MBM) under the BIO.

The PICES-2021 meeting was held online between 13 and 30 October 2021. The S-MBM Business meeting was held on 29 September and focused on the ongoing activities such as S-MBM next five years project. Four S-MBM members representing Canada, Japan, Korea and the USA were present, while those from China and Russia did not attend PICES-2021.

S-MBM in 2021 reviewed the 2022-2026 project titled “Interaction between MBMs and other ecosystem components and stressors”, and concluded that it will be held on some Workshops between 2022 and 2026.

Below is a brief outline of the most relevant events at the 2021 S-MBM Business meeting:

1. S-MBM leadership

The business meeting of S-MBM was convened by Dr. K. Hattori (National Research and Development Agency, Japan) and Dr. P. O’Hara (Canadian Wildlife Service, Canada).

2. Reports from IWC SC

At the meeting held on 29 September, Tamura (Institute of Cetacean Research, Japan), as the representative of the IWC-SC, presented the observer report of the 2021 IWC/SC meeting on topics related to the North Pacific (*e.g.* the Research Plan for the IWC/POWER cruise).

3. Activity in 2021

There was no activity of the S-MBM in 2021 because of COVID-19.

4. Activity plan in 2022

It was decided to extend the project due to COVID-19. It was proposed and agreed that the revised future five-year project (2022-2026) focuses on the “Interaction between MBMs and other ecosystem components and stressors”. This will include important sub-themes such as:

- Forecasting changes in forage species and response of top predators.
- Marine birds and marine mammals as ecological indicators and predictors of changing marine ecosystems.

It was decided to continue discussing possible activities of the S-MBM for this new focal project until PICES-2022 by e-mail, and make a proposal of the future five-year project to BIO at PICES-2022.

5. Other matters

The 2022 annual meeting of the PICES will be held at Busan, Korea. The meeting will be held between 23 September and 2 October 2022.

NAMMCO – Scientific Committee

Tore Haug (Norway)

The 27th meeting (SC27) of the NAMMCO Scientific Committee (SC) was held online 25 – 29 January 2021.

By-catch

The NAMMCO By-catch Working Group (BYCWG) had met online 28 May 2020. Estimates for by-catch of marine mammals in Icelandic lump sucker gillnets were reviewed, and the SC *endorsed* the stratified estimates and *recommended* the estimates with stratification by management area for use in assessments. The limitations and lack of reliability of self-reporting for estimating by-catch were again underlined and the SC *endorsed* the BYCWG recommendation that additional sources of information always be sought. The SC also *recommended* that the BYCWG provide to the next SC meeting an update on the effectiveness of video monitoring systems (being trialed in Norway and in use elsewhere), together with an update on the use of pingers as a by-catch mitigation measure. The SC *endorsed* all the recommendations for research from the BYCWG. The SC also agreed with the proposal of the WG to continue fulfilling its ToRs by reviewing the extent of all fisheries and associated by-catch risks.

Ecosystem issues

Multi-species Approaches to Modelling:

Updates from recently published research on determining the weight of minke whales was presented, as well as ongoing work on a joint study estimating consumption done by marine mammals in the entire North Atlantic.

Other Environmental Issues:

The SC received an update on the Mary River mine project, noting that Greenland and Denmark had brought issues related to transport and shipping to ESPOO so that transboundary impacts could be considered within the environmental impact assessment. The SC *endorsed* the JWG recommendation that a workshop be held to assess the impacts of disturbance from the Mary River mine on narwhals, beluga and walrus, although it asked the JWG to provide more specific terms of reference. Updates from recently published research on harp seals as monitors of change and ongoing research projects on human activities and stressors in the Barents Sea and along the Norwegian coast were also provided. The SC *recommended* that all NAMMCO member countries ensure that relevant information from seismic surveys be made available to enable proper sound estimation and impact assessment.

Cetaceans stocks

Narwhal:

The NAMMCO-JCNB Joint Working Group (JWG) on Narwhal and Beluga had met online 26–30 June 2020. No management advice was given for narwhals at the JWG meeting because the West Greenland abundance estimates and correction factors required a more focused review. Updating the metapopulation and allocation model could therefore not be finalized during the meeting. A quantitative subgroup (QSG) was established to work intersessionally on this review and its advice will be reported at the next meeting of the JWG. The JWG was informed that preliminary results from ongoing genetic analyses indicate three main populations (West Greenland-Eastern Canada, East Greenland and North-East Greenland-Svalbard) and a possible genetic distinction in East Greenland between narwhals that summer in Scoresby Sound and those that enter in the spring. Information from satellite tracking in Eclipse Sound also indicate that some narwhals are visiting two summering grounds. A new abundance estimate for Eclipse Sound (12,039; 95% CI: 7,768–18,660) was *endorsed*

for use in assessment, however the estimates from an aerial survey performed by Golder Associates Ltd. for Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation required further discussion. For Melville Bay and Inglefield Bredning, it was agreed that the choice of models and correction factors required more discussion within the QSG before they could be accepted. A significant decline in the area of narwhal sightings in Melville Bay was noted as indicating a possible population decline. Updated catch statistics were presented and accepted, with the JWG highlighting that the level of hunting in the Melville Bay Nature Reserve had increased. To assist determinations of maturity, the SC *endorsed* the JWG recommendation that hunter reports include the body length of the animal.

In addition to the information provided on narwhals in the JWG report, the SC received a specific update on narwhals in East Greenland. It was noted that the advice from SC26 that harvest in all three management units in southeast Greenland (Ittoqqortoormiit, Kangerlussuaq and Tasiilaq) should be reduced to zero had not yet been reviewed by the Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC) due to the cancellation of meetings in 2020. The SC was informed that quotas set for these three areas in 2020 totaled over 50 animals. The SC reiterated its concern for the status of narwhals in East Greenland and the high risk of extirpation of the stocks if harvest at any level continues.

Beluga:

The JWG was informed that ongoing genetic analysis preliminarily indicates at least 5 genetically distinct groups in the western Atlantic, with finer level structuring possible in some groups. A new abundance estimate for the eastern part of the North Water from the aerial survey in April 2018 (2,063; 95% CI: 513–8289) was *endorsed* for use in assessments, as well as catch statistics from Greenland and Nunavut. Following a precautionary approach and a request from Greenland, the JWG performed an assessment of beluga in the North Water as a separate stock. The placement of a border at Cape York to separate the West Greenland and North Water stocks was deemed most reasonable based on the available evidence from satellite tracking, timing of catches, and genetic data. The population assessment for West Greenland was updated and a new assessment developed for the North Water. *Management Advice-West Greenland:* To maintain a 70% probability for population increase, an annual landed catch of no more than 265 individuals south of Cape York and north of 65° was recommended. *Management Advice-North Water:* To maintain a 70% probability for population increase, an annual landed catch of no more than 37 individuals north of Cape York was recommended. The SC *endorsed* all the recommendations for research and conservation and management from the JWG and *reiterated its recommendations* that there be seasonal closures and no hunt of beluga south of 65°.

Humpback whale:

An update on the research collaboration on North Atlantic humpback whale satellite tracking was provided. It was noted that tagging and metadata (including biological information) have now been shared within the group and that analysis will begin in spring 2021.

Bottlenose whale:

The first abundance estimate from the Norwegian mosaic survey 2014–2018 (7,800; 95% CI: 4,400–13,900), was *endorsed*. The SC *recommended* a single estimate for the whole Faroe-Iceland-Norway area be produced.

Killer whale:

The first abundance estimates from the Icelandic/Faroes NASS ship surveys were *endorsed*. Due to the low numbers of sightings and high encounter rate variance, estimate precision was low. The SC *endorsed* the 2015 estimate for the Faroe-Iceland-Norway areas as the more robust for use in assessment (22,100; 95% CI: 15,300–32,000).

Pilot whale:

The Faroe Islands provided an update on the information available to inform an assessment. Abundance estimates for the Central North Atlantic from the Icelandic and Faroese shipboard surveys in 2007 and 2015, and an analysis of trends in relative abundance in the Northeast Atlantic, are now published. Life history information would be updated in 2021 through an analysis of teeth and ovary samples. Tracking data for 10 pods is also available. Greenland also informed the SC that it had catch statistics and two abundance estimates available, but no biological samples.

Dolphins:

The information currently available to inform an assessment was presented by all member countries. In the Faroe Islands, biological samples collected from white-sided dolphins in 2001–2009 have been analyzed for sex and age composition, life history, feeding habit and genetics. Abundance estimates of white-sided dolphins from the Icelandic and Faroese components of the 2007 and 2015 NASS have also now become available. Iceland noted that in addition to abundance estimates, it had some information on by-catch and a few biological samples from strandings. Greenland informed that it had abundance estimates and catch statistics available. A dedicated sampling program has also been proposed for white-beaked dolphins in East Greenland and two different names for white-sided and white-beaked dolphins now introduced, which will allow for more specific catch reporting. The SC saw a possibility to assess white-sided dolphins in the Faroe Islands on the basis of the information available but concluded that there was insufficient information to carry out a full assessment for other species and areas.

Harbour porpoise:

Updates were provided from three published papers based on analyses of samples from by-caught harbour porpoises in Norway. This research suggested that harbour porpoises in Norway likely belong to a single population, that the species can potentially be used as tracers for plasticisers in marine environments, and that mercury concentrations were in the no risk category.

Bowhead whale:

Information on the status of the East Greenland-Svalbard-Barents Sea stock was presented, indicating that this stock may now be recovering from commercial exploitation. Large abundance estimates over the past decade indicate a healthy stock of at least several hundred bowhead whales between East Greenland and Franz Josef land.

Abundance estimate surveys

All the abundance estimates that could be generated for species covered by the previous NASS have now been completed and published, finalizing data analysis from 30 years of survey efforts. The SC *agreed* that based on the new information provided by member countries, 2024 was now the most appropriate year for the next coordinated survey.

Appendix D

Cooperation with IMO 2021-2022

Russell Leaper (UK)

The Secretariat and members of the Committee have continued to work with IMO particularly on underwater noise and ship strikes.

Underwater noise

The IMO adopted its Guidelines for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life in 2014, however there has been very little uptake on the guidelines and a wide recognition that further work was needed at IMO to address the issue of underwater noise from shipping. Following the postponement of the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 75) due to the Covid-19 pandemic noise issues were not discussed until MEPC 76 in June 2021. IWC submitted a short paper (MEPC 76-12) in response to a proposal for further work on underwater noise, noting that the IWC would welcome the opportunity to contribute through the work of its Scientific and Conservation Committees. At MEPC 76, the IMO agreed to review the 2014 Guidelines and identify next steps. This was addressed in the Ship Design and Construction Sub-Committee (SDC 8) in January 2022. IWC contributed a paper (SDC 8/14/5) to IMO SDC 8. An outcome from this meeting was the establishment of a correspondence group coordinated by Canada to work on updating the IMO noise guidelines and identification of next steps. IWC is a member of the correspondence group and will need to provide input over the coming year.

Ship strikes

France, Monaco, Spain and Italy submitted an information paper to MEPC 77 in November 2021 on 'Identification of Western Mediterranean Sea as PSSA to minimize the risk of ship strikes with cetaceans' (MEPC77.inf27). This paper was intended to start the consultation process for designation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) with associated measures to reduce ship strike risks to fin and sperm whales. It is expected that the full proposal will be submitted in June 2022 for consideration at MEPC 79 in December 2022.

The IWC Secretariat and HIM convenor met with the IMO Secretariat in February 2022 to discuss ongoing requests from the shipping industry for a new Traffic Separation Scheme south of Sri Lanka which would improve maritime safety and reduce ship strike risks to blue whales.

Report from ASCOBANS to IWC SC68D

Mark Simmonds (UK)

Since the previous meeting of the IWC Scientific Committee, the following ASCOBANS meetings have taken place:

- **Workshop on Management of MPAs for Small Cetaceans**, 18 May and 7-9 June 2021, online. The purpose of the workshop was to act as an open brainstorming session, allowing for innovative ideas rather than focusing on restrictions, in a group of experts on cetaceans, experts on threats to cetaceans, and MPA managers. The workshop reviewed and shared experiences on best practice approaches to MPA management, to make recommendations to ASCOBANS Parties (read more [here](#)). The workshop report is available [online](#). Participants felt that the workshop needed more time to make sound recommendations, which is why a second workshop is planned for 31 May-2 June 2022 in Finland.
- **17th Meeting of the Jastarnia Group** (Steering Group for the ASCOBANS Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoises in the Baltic Sea, and the Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and the Kattegat), 25-27 May 2021, online. The meeting discussed potential next steps to address the concern raised by some Baltic national navies over the use of acoustic deterrent devices and their alleged interference with military underwater acoustic activities (read more [here](#)). The meeting report is available [online](#).
- **26th Meeting of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee**, 8-12 November 2021, online. For the meeting, Parties [reported](#) on the following pressures and threats to small cetaceans: underwater noise, ocean energy, unexploded ordnance, and marine spatial planning. The species in focus at this meeting were harbour porpoise, bottlenose dolphin, beaked whales, and *Lagenorhynchus* species. The meeting agreed on [29 Action Points and 19 Recommendations](#) in its Scientific Session.

The Advisory Committee considered project proposals submitted to the Secretariat and agreed to provide funding to three of them: (1) Using fishers' knowledge to understand the use of alternative gears to static gillnets in the ASCOBANS region (2) Prediction of the cochlear frequency maps of harbour porpoise and (3) Status of the Iberian harbour porpoise. Funding was also granted for coordination of the ASCOBANS species action plans for harbour porpoises and the common dolphin.

Workshops and meetings that were agreed to be organised (may be subject to availability of funding; timing to be determined):

- An expert workshop to recommend small cetacean conservation objectives in relation to anthropogenic removals;
- A second workshop on management of MPAs for small cetaceans;
- Workshop to review conservation units and their delineation for bottlenose dolphins and some other small cetacean species within the ASCOBANS region;
- A brainstorming meeting on a strandings and necropsy database;
- Meeting on presenting results of marine mammal indicator assessments used for reporting by EU Member States under the MSFD; and

- Workshop with national navies to consider mitigation protocols for use of military sonar and management of other activities that can contribute to potentially harmful underwater noise, and solutions for acoustic monitoring and bycatch mitigation (deterrent devices) in synergy with national security activities.

Please contact the [ASCOBANS Secretariat](#) if you have questions on any of the points above.

Additionally, the ASCOBANS Beaked Whale working group is still progressing its work and is presently focused on taking forward a paper for publication.

- **10th Meeting of the North Sea Group**, 18-19 January 2022, online. The meeting discussed key priorities such as the implementation of existing bycatch regulations and investigation of the effects of anthropogenic sounds on harbour porpoises. The meeting expressed concern regarding population level impacts of noise levels and exposure duration, and learned about the findings of the mass stranding event that occurred on the Dutch Wadden Sea Islands in August 2021 (read more [here](#)). Priority Recommendations are available [online](#).
- **18th Meeting of the Jastarnia Group**, 28-30 March 2022, Gothenburg, Sweden. The meeting discussed i.a. progress on implementation of the action plans, status of the delegated act to minimize bycatch of the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise and current discussions in BaltFish on further measures, results of the MiniSCANS-II project, and the status of the draft proposal to list the Baltic Proper harbour porpoise to CMS Appendix I. The meeting report will be posted on the [ASCOBANS website](#) in due course.

In addition to the ongoing work and the above-mentioned species working groups, the ASCOBANS Secretariat would welcome IWC participation to the following working groups:

- **Data Deficient Taxa:** the group aims to identify the barriers to understanding and improving conservation status of data deficient species of small cetaceans. This will include identifying which species and populations are of particular concern and how their status might be best remedied.
- **Lagenorhynchus species:** the group aims to: (1) Review the available information on population structures and trends, distribution, abundance, mortality, reproductive output, health, diet, and data gaps related to both species in the northeast Atlantic; (2) Review issues that pose a conservation threat to the species and their populations; and (3) Review recommendations proposed at AC26 and take note of relevant recommendations from AC24.
- **Cetacean-friendly MSP:** the group aims to elaborate on how to best develop guidelines for cetacean-friendly marine spatial plans, and draft resolution for MOP10 in 2024.

The following ASCOBANS Technical Series publications were released in the past year:

- [Monitoring Cetacean Bycatch: An Analysis of Different Methods Aboard Commercial Fishing Vessels](#) by Grant P. Course: The report reviews the different monitoring options that are available for obtaining counts of the number of cetacean bycatches that occur in European fisheries. Three methods were adjudged able to obtain these data: self-reporting by fishers, at-sea observers, and remote electronic monitoring (REM) systems with CCTV. Only a REM system with integrated satellite tracking, fishing activity sensors, and closed-circuit television cameras (CCTV), was considered a full remote electronic monitoring system with verification.
- [Cost-benefit Analysis for Mitigation Measures in Fisheries with High Bycatch](#) by Fiona L. Read: The report reviews different mitigation measures (acoustic deterrent devices, porpoise alerting devices, reflective nets, acrylic echo enhancers, lights and various

technical modifications and changes to fishing practices) that have been trialled in the ASCOBANS region. The cost of implementation and pros and cons of each method are discussed in detail in the relevant sections. The report also reviews alternative fishing methods to replace static nets (i.e. gillnets and entangling nets). The cost of implementation, and pros and cons of the different gears, are discussed in depth in the relevant sections.

Upcoming meetings:

- **Second Workshop on Management of MPAs for Small Cetaceans ([MPA-WS2](#))**, 31 May - 2 June 2022, Helsinki, Finland.
- **27th Meeting of the Advisory Committee ([AC27](#))**, 28-30 September 2022, venue to be confirmed.
- **11th Meeting of the North Sea Group ([NSG11](#))**, 31 January - 1 February 2023, venue to be confirmed.

Report from IUCN 2021-2022

Randall Reeves

IUCN has been directly involved in cetacean research and conservation in three main work streams: (i) for the past half-century, activities undertaken under the aegis of the Species Survival Commission's Cetacean Specialist Group, which notably includes overseeing Red List assessments; (ii) since 2013, the Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force, a joint project of the International Committee on Marine Mammal Protected Areas, World Commission on Protected Areas and Species Survival Commission; and (iii) since 2004 and through March 2022, independent review panels to advise on western gray whale conservation. Progress since SC/68C is summarized briefly below. More information on the three work streams can be found on the Cetacean Specialist Group web site (iucn-csg.org), the Important Marine Mammal Areas web site (<https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/immas/>) and the Western Gray Whale Advisory Panel web site (<https://www.iucn.org/western-gray-whale-advisory-panel>).

Of particular interest to many is the evidence regularly posted on the Cetacean Specialist Group web site (e.g. reports, videos, photographs) of continued illegal fishing in critical vaquita habitat (<https://iucn-csg.org/illegal-fishing-remains-the-sole-immediate-threat-to-vaquitas/>).

Red List Assessments

Barbara Taylor serves as the Red List Authority Coordinator for cetaceans and she is regularly assisted in this work by Gill Braulik and Gianna Minton (Deputy Chairs of the Cetacean Specialist Group) and other members of the Cetacean Red List Authority. Progress on and plans for Red List work are summarised in SC/68D/01.

The next edition of the Red List (version 2022-1), scheduled for publication in July 2022, will include an assessment of Rice's whale, *Balaenoptera ricei*, as Critically Endangered and assessments of the Indus River and Ganges River dolphins, *Platanista minor* and *P. gangetica*, both as Endangered, as well as an updated assessment of the Critically Endangered vaquita, *Phocoena sinus*. Also included will be ten new or updated assessments of Mediterranean subpopulations of small and large cetaceans.

Conservation Planning

Barbara Taylor and Grant Abel co-chair the conservation planning component of the Cetacean Specialist Group and a section of the CSG web site is devoted to planning efforts, which focus on seriously threatened species and populations of small cetaceans (<https://iucn-csg.org/integrated-conservation-planning-for-cetaceans-icpc/>). Those efforts are summarised in SC/68D/SM/11.

Important Marine Mammal Areas

Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara (Deputy Chair of the Cetacean Specialist Group) and Erich Hoyt continue to lead ongoing efforts to identify, describe and formally list Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) (see marinemammalhabitat.org/imma-eatlas for map). A thorough summary of the IMMA programme and process was published in March 2022 (<https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2022.841789>).

As noted at SC/68C, the most recent regional workshop, covering the Caspian and Black Seas and the Sea of Marmara and connecting straits, was held in February 2021. The next workshop will cover the South East Temperate and Tropical Pacific Ocean and is planned to take place in Costa Rica (dates not yet announced).

Western Gray Whale Panels

As noted at last year's SC meeting (SC/68C/CMP/19), the Western Gray Whale Advisory Panel's work was expected to be concluded by the end of 2021. The final meeting of the panel took place in Gland, Switzerland in November 2021. Although the report of that meeting was finalised in January 2022, it has yet to be released and posted on the IUCN web site. Some panel work continued through most of February 2022 and more work was planned through March 2022. However, due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine which began on 24 February 2022, all work stopped. A 'closing statement' by the panel is given in SC/68D/CMP/13.

Appendix G

**Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) of the
Cartagena Convention for the Wider Caribbean**

David Mattila (IWC Secretariat)

The Secretariat has continued engagement with counterparts in SPAW on a (draft) MoU to facilitate collaboration in areas of common interest in cetacean science and stewardship. The draft, along with Bureau comments and recommendations, will be presented to the Commission at IWC/68.

In the meantime, the Secretariat has participated in several virtual meetings of various SPAW activities, including technical meetings of SPAW-STAC (Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee) and their COP. In addition, members of the Secretariat have continued to engage with stranding, entanglement and research initiatives in the Region.