



**CONVENTION ON  
MIGRATORY  
SPECIES**

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17<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE  
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Agenda Item 17.3.3

**OBSERVER'S REPORT ON MEETING OF IWC SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE  
TROMSØ, NORWAY, 30 MAY TO 11 JUNE, 2011**

William F. Perrin

*Appointed Scientific Councilor for Aquatic Mammals*

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A number of species in CMS Appendices I and II were discussed in the meeting.

**Appendix I species** (in order listed in Appendix 1):

*Physeter macrocephalus* - Three sperm whales were taken by Japan in 2010 in its research program under special permit in the western North Pacific (JARPNIII).

*Pontoporiablainvillei* - Four stocks have been defined: 3 in Brazil, one of which extends into Uruguay, and one in Argentina. Methods used to refine abundance estimates were reviewed. Note was taken of a study that concluded that fishery bycatch may have a disproportionate effect on individuals (and associations) with the highest reproductive value to the populations. The first workshop to develop a national plan of action to reduce interactions between marine mammals and fisheries was held in June in Argentina.

*Balaenoptera borealis* - An in-depth assessment is planned for 2013; a working group was established to coordinate the preparations. One hundred sei whales were taken by Japan in 2010 in the western North Pacific in its JARPNIII research program.

*Balaenoptera physalus* - Four fin whales were landed by Greenland in 2010. The Committee agreed that a strike limit of 16 would not harm the stock. Work continued on developing a strike limit algorithm for the Greenland whale fishery.

Iceland took 142 fin whales in 2010. The Committee reviewed implementation alternatives under the Revised Management Procedure (RMP) for North Atlantic fin whales and agreed that certain versions could be implemented, some with and some without research programs. Necessary adjustments to implementation simulation trials were agreed. First analyses of data from the Icelandic fin whale registry of whales taken were reviewed and suggested strong stock structure. First results of abundance surveys conducted in 2005 and 2006 were presented. An implementation review may be conducted in 2014.

Two fin whales were taken by Japan in 2010 in its whale research program under special permit (JARPAII).

It was agreed that with recently available data on shipping traffic and whale abundance, it may be possible to develop quantitative models of ship-strike risk, and an intersessional working group will draft an analysis for the 2012 meeting.

*Balaenoptera musculus* - The report of an intersessional working group on population estimates for Chile and western Australia was received. The blue whale population off Chile appears to be smaller than those around Antarctica and western Australia. The Committee recommended that genetic research on pygmy blue whales (*B. m. brevirostris*) be expanded to determine connectivity between populations. The Committee received updates on three photo-ID catalogues and their actual and potential integration. The largest, the Southern Hemisphere Blue Whale catalogue contains component catalogues from Chile, the eastern tropical Pacific, Ecuador-Galapagos, southeastern Australia, western Australia, Timore Leste and Sri Lanka.

*Megapteranovaeangliae* - Reports of ship strikes in Hawaii increased after 2003, possibly due to an awareness campaign. Newly available Automatic Ship Identification (AIS) data may prove to be valuable in estimating risk of ship strike globally by region.

A total of nine humpbacks were landed in Greenland. Work continued on developing a strike limit algorithm for the Greenland whale fishery. The Committee agreed that a block limit 20 strikes for the period 2008-2012 for the fishery off St Vincent and the Grenadines would not harm the stock.

The Committee continued its assessment of Southern Hemisphere stocks. Seven breeding stocks are currently recognized. Assessment was completed this year of Breeding Stock B (west coast of Africa from Guinea to western South Africa). It was agreed that the stock has probably recovered to about half of its pre-exploitation level. The Committee also reviewed new information on movements and population estimates for other SH stocks. It was agreed that enough information now exists on the small and endangered Arabian Sea stock for development of a Conservation Management Plan. Unusually high mortality was reported for Breeding Stock A humpbacks off Brazil. The Committee recommended consultation with CCAMLR's ecosystem modeling program to evaluate potential linkage with changes in the marine ecosystem, necropsies to determine cause of death, and studies of health of whales in the free-ranging population. An update was received on the Antarctic Humpback Whale Catalogue maintained by the College of the Atlantic; it now includes images of 740 whales. Priority will be given next year to assessment of Breeding Stocks E and F (eastern Australia and western/central South Pacific).

*Balaena mysticetus* - Three bowheads were harvested by Greenland in 2010. Work continued on developing a strike limit algorithm for the Greenland whale fishery. The need will be for about 5 strikes per year, plus a small number of strikes from the same stock for the Canadian fishery. The Canadian quota for 2011 was set at a maximum of 4 bowheads. The Committee recommended that the hypothesis of a single stock in eastern Canadian and Greenland waters be further examined with additional genetic markers and samples.

Planning progressed for an implementation review in 2012 of the U.S. and Russian fisheries for bowheads from the B-C-B stock of bowheads. A total of 71 whales were struck in 2010, resulting in 45 landed. The Committee reviewed new estimates of abundance.

*Eubalaenaglacialis* - Ship-strike mortality was estimated for the North Atlantic in three components: observed mortality, mortality inferred from strandings, and fraction undetected. The most recent stock assessment reported a minimum of 345 whales alive in 2005, while examination of the cooperative photographic catalogue suggests that there may have been some 473 in 2009.

*Eubalaena australis* - Southern right whale papers were referred to a workshop to be held in Argentina in September. Progress was reported on the Southern Ocean Right Whale Catalogue, which now contains images of 206 whales. An annual rate of increase of ~6.8% was reported for right whales off the southern coast of Australia. A model of population history for the species suggests an overall annual rate of increase of about 4.6%.

**Appendix II species** (excluding those covered under Appendix I):

*Delphinapterus leucas* - A 3-day workshop on anthropogenic impacts on Arctic cetaceans is planned for 2012. Impacts on the beluga will be considered. An intersessional working group was established to guide development of the workshop. Also planned, tentatively for autumn of 2013, is a global review of the monodontids, to involve inter alia the IWC, NAAMCO and JCMB (the Canada-Greenland Joint Commission on Narwhal and Beluga).

A panel of independent experts was convened by IUCN in March to assess the sustainability of live-capture removals of belugas in the Ohkotsk Sea. The panel concluded that removal of 29 belugas annually would be sustainable.

*Monodon monoceros* - The narwhal will be considered in the planned workshop on anthropogenic impacts on Arctic cetaceans and the global review of the monodontids.

*Phocoenaphocoena* - A report was received of an estimated annual bycatch of 6,900 harbor porpoises in the Norwegian anglerfish and cod fisheries. The Committee recommended research approaches to reduce the wide confidence interval on the estimate and noted the lack of abundance estimates for the fishery region.

*Sousa chinensis* - A report was received of a study of correlations between genetic data and oceanographic patterns for humpback dolphins in the western Indian Ocean (Oman, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa).

*Orcinus orca* - The Committee received a report on presence and distribution of type-B and type-C killer whales in the western Ross Sea and a report of progress in a project on distribution, relative abundance, migration patterns and foraging ecology of three ecotypes of killer whales in the Southern Ocean funded under the Southern Ocean Research Partnership (SORP).

*Hyperoodon ampullatus* - The Small Cetaceans Sub-committee reviewed the biology and status of the northern bottlenose whale. Catches principally between 1872 and 1972 of about 65,000 depleted the population. No abundance estimates are available for the entire range. The estimate for the eastern North Atlantic is 20,456. Present threats are interactions with fisheries and anthropogenic noise.

*Balaenoptera bonaerensis* - The Committee is in the process of undertaking an in-depth assessment of the Antarctic minke whale. Large declines in estimates occurred in Areas I, II and V between successive circumpolar surveys. There is no agreement on whether this reflects a decline in abundance, variation in ice coverage and survey conditions, or both. Different models and datasets produce different estimates; the Committee expects to settle on an estimate of current population size next year.

One hundred and seventy Antarctic minke whales were taken in 2010 by Japan in its JARPAII research program.

*Balaenoptera aedeni* - Fifty Bryde's whales were taken by Japan in the western North Pacific in 2010 in its JARPNIII research program.

It was agreed that a variant of the RMP for western North Pacific Bryde's whales incorporating a research program could be implemented, and that preparation for an implementation review in 2012 would commence in 2012.