

# CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS

## A. PROPOSAL

To include *Balaenoptera acutorostrata* in Appendix II of the Convention; only the populations of the Baltic Sea and the North Sea.

## B. PROPONENT

Kingdom of The Netherlands.

## C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

### 1. Taxon

1.1 Classis	Mammalia
1.2 Ordo	Cetacea
1.3 Familia	Balaenopteridae
1.4 Genus and species	<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i> Lacepede 1804
1.5 Common names	
English	Minke whale
French	Baleine d'été
Spanish	
Dutch	Dwergvinvis

### 2. Biological data

#### 2.1 Distribution (current and historical) - see also 5

The minke whale is a cosmopolitan species, occurring from the arctic and antarctic icefields to the subtropical region. A few individuals may penetrate the tropical region from time to time.

In the North Atlantic this whale is found from Spitsbergen, Novaya Zemlya en Baffin Bay to the south of Spain and the latitude of New York. It enters the Mediterranean and occasionally the Baltic. It is rather common in the North Sea in summer (Evans 1987). One stranding is recorded from Florida and two from the Black Sea. It is more common in the continental shelf areas, with variation in density in different areas which may reflect distribution of prey species (Hershkovitz 1966; Marcuzzi & Pilleri 1971; Mitchell 1975; Tomilin 1957; Jonsgard 1951 and 1966).

IWC recognises four stocks in the North Atlantic: Canadian East Coast, West Greenland, Central North Atlantic and Northeast Atlantic (IWC 1980). There are seasonal movements to the north in summer and to the south of the range in winter. Females appear to predominate in coastal areas (Marcuzzi & Pilleri 1971; Jonsgard 1951 and 1966).

#### 2.2 Population (estimates and trends)

The short history of catching and management, particularly in the southern hemisphere, has caused the IWC Scientific Committee great difficulty in making population estimates and hence catch limits. Five different methods were tested at the 30th Meeting, all except one (Doi 1978) based on effort data. A basic problem is that reduction in the populations of the other baleen whales allowed the minke whale population to increase prior to exploitation. On present information it was considered impossible to determine reliably either the 'initial' population or the present changing capacity of the minke whale environment and hence its MSY level and MSY. Catch limits were based on replacement yields as a temporary measure in the Southern Hemisphere Areas (IWC 1978a and b).

In the North Atlantic there is a long history of catching, but records are only complete for the Norwegian catches (Jonsgard 1977; Mitchell 1975b). Only the Northeast Atlantic total stock has a numerical estimate, based on mark returns, of 120 000 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 75 000 to 198 000 (Christensen & Rorvick 1980). Evans (1987) mentions for the entire population of the Northern Hemisphere 125 000 in 1986.

### 2.3 Habitat

In the north Atlantic, capelin (Mallotus villosus) is the predominant prey species in Newfoundland, Barents Sea and East Greenland, off West Greenland sandeel and krill are taken. Dogfish, herring, cod, whiting, Norway haddock and pollock are also reported as well as some Euphausiidae. Ichthyophagy is also marked in the North Pacific stocks, with walleye pollock, saffron cod, herring, capelin, sand lance and anchovy (Eugraulis mordax) reported. Some pelagic crustaceans are also taken. In contrast, the Southern Hemisphere stocks feed almost exclusively on krill, predominantly Euphausia superba (Tomilin 1957; Mitchell 1975a).

No major habitat problems are reported for the North Atlantic or North Pacific, although the effect of the Newfoundland capelin fishery is difficult to assess as Canada has banned commercial whaling (Mitchell 1975a). In the Southern Hemisphere, the reduction of the populations of other baleen whales has had a major effect on the minke whale, allowing populations to increase prior to commercial exploitation.

### 2.4 Migrations (kinds of movement, distance, proportion of the population migrating)

There are seasonal movements to the North and offshore in summer and to the South of the range in winter.

## 3. Threat data

### 3.1 Direct threat of the population (factors, intensity)

The minke whale is hunted for meat and oil. A large proportion of the meat was used for human consumption, particularly in Japan, Norway and Greenland. Tomilin (1957) reports an 8.7 m female weighing 5 tons yielded 2.400 kg of meat and that fat specimens yield up to 1 ton of oil or more. Foote (1975) gives a very comprehensive account of the Norwegian industry

and its economics, unfortunately now somewhat out of date. Catching in the North Atlantic is by small boats, which are not only dedicated to whaling but take fish at other times of the year. Since 1986 only Iceland continues to catch minke whale from the Northeast Atlantic stock; recently the Icelandic government set the annual quatum at 78.

### 3.2 Habitat destruction (quality of changes; quantity of loss)

The North Sea habitat changes through disturbance, such as by ships and mineral surveys, pollution, and possibly food limitation through overfishing (Evans 1987).

### 3.3 Indirect threat (e.g. reduction of breeding success by pesticide contamination)

No information.

### 3.4 Threat connected especially with migrations

None known.

### 3.5 National and international utilization

As one of the last of the larger species to be exploited, particularly in the Southern Hemisphere, the minke whale now carries the main burden of commercial whaling. The meat is in particular demand and the high populations in relation to earlier levels make the species particularly attractive for harvesting. Without IWC control catching would almost certainly be much higher.

Some of the meat and oil may enter international trade, particularly from North Pacific catches, but published trade statistics do not allow identification of species involved nor is information available from other sources.

## 4. Protection status

### 4.1 National protection status

Belgium:	
Denmark:	Protected
Federal Republic of Germany:	
Finland:	
France:	Protected
German Democratic Republic:	
Norway:	
Poland:	
Sweden:	Protected
The Netherlands:	Not Protected
Union of Socialist Soviet Republics:	
United Kingdom:	Protected

### 4.2 International protection status

CITES Appendix II

IWC regulates catches; moratorium on catches 1986-1990

#### 4.3 Additional protection needs

Within IWC the lack of population information and consequent difficulties in estimating catch limits is, in spite of the very large amount of time and effort devoted to the problem, a serious matter. The sort of information required for population estimates using the standard models may never be available from some of the fisheries in remote areas.

The IWC Scientific Committee has recommended further research on the stock position.

#### 5. Range states (North Sea, Baltic Sea)

Belgium, Denmark, France, Norway, The Netherlands, Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, United Kingdom, international waters.

#### 6. Comments from Range States

None received.

#### 7. Additional remarks

None.

#### 8. References

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