

Proposal for the Inclusion of Species on the Appendices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

A. Proposal: Inclusion of Phocoena phocoena, Black Sea population, in Appendix II.

B. Proponent:

C. Supporting Statement

1. Taxon

- 1.1. Classis Mammalia
- 1.2. Ordo CETACEA
- 1.3. Familia Phocoenidae
- 1.4. Genus/Species/Subspecies Phocoena phocoena
(Linnaeus, 1758)
- 1.5. Common Name(s):
 - English: harbour porpoise
 - Spanish: marsopa comun
 - French: marsouin
 - Russian: morskaya svinia
 - Turkish: mutur

2. Biological data

2.1. Distribution (current and historical)

The harbour porpoise is found only in the northern hemisphere, with a circumpolar distribution in temperate waters of the North Atlantic, North Pacific and adjacent seas (Tomilin, 1967; Gaskin, 1984). Based on comparison of skull measurements, Yurick and Gaskin (1987) have suggested the existence of four major populations: North Pacific population, eastern North Atlantic population, western North Atlantic population and a Black Sea-Sea of Azov population. Several sub-populations were proposed for the North Pacific and North Atlantic populations (Gaskin 1984), but at present their limits can not be fully established (Yurick and Gaskin, 1987).

2.2. Population (estimates and trends)

No reliable estimates exist for the Black Sea-Sea of Azov population of harbour porpoises (Smith, 1982) , but Gaskin (1984) pointed out that there were hardly any porpoises left in the Azov Sea. The overall small cetacean population of the Black Sea has been recently estimated at nearly half million animals (Celikkale et al., 1989) but the proportion of harbour porpoises in the estimates is not known.

2.3. Habitat (short description and trends)

The harbour porpoise is primarily a coastal species, although in certain areas it shows preference for waters between 10 and 200 m deep (Watts and Gaskin, 1985; Kinze, 1988). Occasionally the species may travel considerable distances up rivers (Tomilin, 1967). In the Black Sea the species feed primarily on horse mackerel, striped mullet, European anchovy and sprat (Tomilin, 1967; Celikkale et al., 1988).

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

The Black Sea population is relatively isolated with no evidence of interaction with Atlantic populations. The presence of the species in the Sea of Marmara and in the Strait of Bosphorus has not been confirmed since an early report in 1926 (Gaskin, 1984). According to Mal'm (1932, see Gurevich 1982) "along the Crimean coast of the Black Sea (Yalta-Sebastopol regions) the common [harbour] porpoise arrives in large numbers in October-November, when the Black Sea sprat begin to migrate; the same situation is observed in March-April when the Azov sprat begin to migrate". However, there are no recent accounts of movements of the species in this area.

3. Threat data

3.1. Direct threats to the population (factors, intensity)

A directed fishery for harbour porpoise, bottlenose dolphin and common dolphin existed for several years in the Black Sea. This fishery was started in 1870 by the USSR, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. Purse seines were used, and up to 2,500 dolphins and porpoises were reportedly taken in a single haul (Tomilin, 1967; Celikkale, et al. 1988, 1989). Statistics refer only to total catch, without indications of the catch composition. Russian fishing reached a peak in 1938 with a total catch of 135,000-140,000 dolphins and porpoises. After a very small catch in 1964-1966, the dolphin fishery was closed by the USSR, Bulgaria and Romania in 1967 (Smith, 1982; Celikkale et al., 1988). Turkey continued the hunting until 1983. According to the records, 157,000-185,000 animals were taken in the Turkish fishery between 1951 and 1958 and about 1,300,000 were taken between 1967 and 1981 (IWC, 1983). An average annual take of 34,000 to 44,000 animals was estimated from weight data for the period 1976-1981 (IWC, 1984: 151). Statistics provided recently by M. Celikkale (pers. comm.) from official sources give a total catch of nearly 10,000 tons for the period 1954-1983. This would yield an approximate 8,000 dolphins per year. As can be seen from these different figures, the question about the extent of the dolphin fishery in the Black Sea is yet unresolved.

3.2. Habitat destruction (quality of changes, quantity of loss)

According to Tomilin (1967) the absence of dolphins and porpoises in the Azov Sea are result of the high levels of contamination of these waters. Pollution is a matter of concern in the Black Sea. The main sources are the industrial wastes carried for several rivers that drain into in the Sea, domestic effluents and pesticides (Celikkale, 1990).

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

Fisheries operating in the Black Sea take around 560,000 tons of fish every year, the most important being the European anchovy and the Mediterranean horse mackerel, important prey species for the dolphin populations in the Black Sea (Northridge, 1984; Celikkale, 1990).

3.4. Threats connected especially with migrations

No information

3.5. National and international utilization

The main products obtained from dolphins in the Black Sea were meal and oil. Exportation of these to the European Economic Community is no longer possible because of a prohibition of imports of cetacean products (Klinowska, in press; Perrin, 1988).

4. Protection status and needs

4.1. National protection status

The species is protected by specific legislation in the USSR, Romania and Bulgaria. A temporary ban has been adopted by Turkey, where the dolphin fishery is scheduled to be reopened when a stock assessment has been completed (Berkes, 1977; Klinowska, in press; Perrin, 1988).

4.2. International protection status

Phocoena phocoena is listed in Appendix II of CITES and Appendix II of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats. Further protection is provided by the International Convention on Marine Resources of the Black Sea established in 1966 by the USSR, Romania and Bulgaria to evaluate the populations of small cetaceans of the Black Sea (Klinowska, in press).

The species is categorized as "Insufficiently Known" by the IUCN (Perrin, 1989).

4.3. Additional protection needs

Establishment of a co-operative research effort between the Black Sea nations for limitation of pollution sources. Accurate estimations of abundance and a review of existing statistics of the dolphin fishery are urgently needed. Estimation of reproductive parameters and study of the evolution of pelagic fisheries will be necessary for future management decisions.

5. Range States

Bulgaria, Romania, the USSR and Turkey.

6. Comments from Range States

7. Additional remarks

8. References

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