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 (western North Atlantic 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
Greenlandic:	nisa

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)

Population estimates exist for the Bay of Fundy approaches, with approximately 7,000-8,000 porpoises, although a total of 15,000 could inhabit the east coast of North America between the Gulf of Maine and South Carolina (Gaskin, 1984; Gaskin et al., 1985).

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 North Atlantic, harbour porpoises feed primarily on clupeoid and gadoid fishes. Squids and benthic invertebrates have also been recorded, the latter considered as secondarily introduced (Gaskin et al., 1974; Gaskin, 1982; Recchia and Read, 1989).

2.4. Migrations

Harbour porpoises arrive in the Bay of Fundy area in July, staying there until approximately late September. There is little evidence that the region may be significant either as a mating area or a calving ground. The arrival of females with calves timed with the arrival of juvenile herring is more suggestive of a feeding ground. Observations gathered from surveys off New Hampshire suggest this may be part of the wintering areas for the Bay of Fundy population, which may have a north-south (and inshore-offshore) seasonal migration limited to the continental shelf in the eastern seaboard (Gaskin, 1984; Gaskin and Watson, 1985; Gaskin et al., 1985).

3. Threat Data

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

At present the species is hunted in large numbers only in West Greenland, where around 1,000 porpoises are taken annually using rifles and hand-thrown harpoons (Kapel, 1983; Kapel and Larsen, 1984; Gaskin, 1984; IWC 1989a).

In the western Bay of Fundy approximately 70 harbour porpoises are trapped every year in herring weirs from which an average 27 die (Smith et al., 1983). A small number of porpoises may die as a result of entanglement in the mackerel gill net fishery in Cape Cod Bay (Read and Gaskin, 1990). Larger incidental catches occur in the groundfish gillnet fisheries in the Bay of Fundy and Gulf of Maine. An estimate of 100 porpoises die every summer in the western Bay of Fundy, while the number of porpoises that get entangled in the Gulf of Maine may be much higher (Gaskin, 1984; Read and Gaskin, 1988; Read, 1989).

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

The large rivers of New Brunswick Province empty into the waters of the Bay of Fundy, transporting, among other pollutants, DDT heavily used in the forest in the past (Gaskin, et al., 1982).

3.3. Indirect threat (e.g. reduction of breeding success by pesticide contamination)
There are reports of DDT, PCBs and heavy metals in the species. The levels of DDT, although relatively higher in this population than in porpoises from adjacent areas, are lower

than those reported for other small odontocetes (Gaskin, 1982; Gaskin et al, 1982). No studies on the effects of pollutants in the population have been performed.

3.4. Threats connected especially with migrations

Harbour porpoises migrating to the western Bay of Fundy in summer months are affected by the groundfish gillnet fishery. It has been suggested that the area maybe a feeding ground for most of the Bay of Fundy-Gulf of Maine population (see 2.4 and 3.1).

3.5. National and international utilization

Some local people in northern Canada may hunt the species for food, while others may eat the meat of animals trapped in herring weirs (Gaskin, 1984).

4. Protection status and needs

4.1. National protection status

The species is protected in both the USA and Canada. There is no legislation concerning this species in Greenland (Klinowska, in press).

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 (Klinowska, in press). No specific international agreement includes the western North Atlantic population.
The species is categorized as "Insufficiently Known" by the IUCN (Perrin, 1989).

4.3. Additional protection needs

Incidental catches represent the most serious threat in the area, mostly because of the difficulty of reducing their occurrence. Information on biology, population dynamics and level of by-catches are urgently needed.

5. Range States

Canada, France (St Pierre-et-Miquelon), Greenland and the USA.

6. Comments from Range States

7. Additional remarks

8. References

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