



# Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

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## 14<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE CMS SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

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Agenda item 9

### OBSERVER'S REPORT ON THE 2006 MEETING OF THE IWC SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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The IWC SC met 26 May to 6 June in St Kitts. A summary of deliberations and actions relating to cetacean species on CMS Appendices I and II follows.

#### Appendix I (species with asterisk also in Appendix II):

**Sperm whale** (*Physeter macrocephalus*)\* - Japan reported the scientific take of 5 sperm whales in the western North Pacific.

**Gangetic river dolphin** (*Platanista gangetica gangetica*) \* - Not considered.

**Franciscana** (*Pontoporia blainvillei*)\* - An aerial survey of part of the southern coast of Brazil resulted in an estimate lower than that from a previous survey, although differences in methods made direct comparison difficult. Results of a survey of habitat suggest that area closures may not be useful in minimizing bycatch.

**Short-beaked common dolphin (Mediterranean population)** (*Delphinus delphis*)\* - Not considered.

**Sei whale** (*Balaenoptera borealis*)\* - Japan reported scientific take of 100 sei whales in the western North Pacific.

**Fin whale** (*Balaenoptera physalus*)\* - Japan took 10 fin whales in the Southern Ocean under scientific permit and reported that biomass appears to be similar to that of Antarctic minke whales.

Pre-implementation (of the Revised Management Procedure - RMP) assessment of North Atlantic fin whales continued in preparation for management of future commercial takes by Iceland. Progress was made on compilation of historical catch series and estimates of life-history parameters to be used in the simulation trials of the RMP prior to implementation. Work continues on genetic identification of population subdivisions in the North Atlantic.

Denmark reported aboriginal/subsistence takes of 13 fin whales by Greenland. Work continues in an attempt to assess the population exploited by Greenland.

For reasons of economy, documents are printed in a limited number, and will not be distributed at the meeting. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copy to the meeting and not to request additional copies.

**Blue whale** (*Balaenoptera musculus*) - Work commenced on an in-depth assessment of Southern Hemisphere blue whales. A large-scale ecological study found that blue whales are most likely to be found around the oceanic margins, especially in deep-water regions characterized by high biological productivity. They are exceedingly rare in the Antarctic compared to historical catches and have almost vanished from South Georgia and south-west Africa but are more concentrated south of Madagascar, around Sri Lanka, off western and southern Australia and off the west coast of South America. Pygmy blue whales (*B. m. breviceauda*) do not take part in the classical migration to feeding grounds in Antarctic and therefore may have avoided the worst effects of Antarctic whaling. Genetic and populational relationships among "true" blue whales, pygmy blue whales and blue whales in the northern Indian Ocean are as yet unclear. The most recent estimate of abundance for Antarctic Areas II-E, IV, V and VI-W south of 60 degrees S is 1,300 (possibly all "true" blue whales).

**Humpback whale** (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) - A Comprehensive Assessment of Southern-Hemisphere stocks has been underway since 1999 and was completed in 2006 for 3 breeding stocks (A, G and D). An intersessional workshop reviewed stock-structure and abundance estimates. It was agreed at the workshop that an estimate of intrinsic growth rate of 12.6% that had been previously used in assessments was biologically implausible and that further efforts should be made to settle on a more defensible estimate. An upper bound of 10.6% was agreed in this meeting. Abundance and trend estimates were agreed for the 3 breeding stocks. Abundance for the 3 stocks totaled about 22,500. A number of papers presented new information on humpback whales in Antarctica, the Indian Ocean, Australia, and the South Pacific.

**Bowhead whale** (*Balaena mysticetus*) - Planning continued for a bowhead Implementation Review in 2007. A first Intersessional Workshop occurred in early March 2006 to specify simulation trials and ranges of parameter values. At the 2006 Annual Meeting, stock structure was discussed and progress made on simulation trial design and coding. At a second Intersessional Workshop in late 2006, trial structures were finalized. At the third Intersessional Workshop in early 2007, parameter values will be selected, and trials will be run in advance of the 2007 meeting, when trial results will be examined and plans made for revision of the management protocol made if necessary. Plans were made for various field studies and data analyses to be carried out intersessionally.

The Committee reviewed results of studies and plans for further studies of stock structure prompted by the finding of possible multiple genetic stocks involved in the U.S. aboriginal/subsistence fishery in Alaska. The results are yet equivocal and the work continues. The recommendation to the Commission was that no change yet be made to the current block quota for 2003-2007.

First estimates of abundance of bowhead whales migrating past Chukotka in Russia ranged from 426 to 774.

Several lines of evidence point to the existence of only one stock of bowhead whales in the eastern Canadian Arctic and Greenland waters, but genetic data still could be interpreted to indicate two stocks. Research to resolve this question continues.

**North Atlantic Right Whale** (*Eubalaena glacialis*) - The results of a genetic analysis of bone samples indicate that historical whaling greatly reduced mtDNA variability.

**North Pacific Right Whale** (*Eubalaena japonica*) - Two right whales were sighted in the North Pacific in 2005.

**Southern Right Whale** (*Eubalaena australis*) - Abundance surveys off southern Western Australia and South Africa yielded estimates of 600 whales and 260 cow-calf pairs, respectively. The increase rate for cow-calf pairs off Australia is estimated at 7.53%.

**Appendix II** (species with asterisk also in Appendix I):

**Sperm whale** (*Physeter macrocephalus*)\* (see above).

**Gangetic River Dolphin** (*Platanista gangetica gangetica*)\* - Not considered.

**Franciscana** (*Pontoporia blainvillei*)\* - (see above).

**Amazon River Dolphin** (*Inia geoffrensis*) - The Committee noted a report of 354 Amazon river dolphins killed for fish bait in Brazil and that this was likely an underestimate. This catch may be at unsustainable levels.

**Beluga** (*Delphinapterus leucas*) - Concern has been expressed about the status of the West Greenland stock. A joint working group of NAMMCO and the Canadian Government recently reported that a new assessment indicates that the ongoing takes are likely not sustainable and also expressed concern about takes at Admiralty Inlet in Canada and in East Greenland. The Committee noted particularly the inconsistencies between the catch limits recommended by the scientific advisory body and the actual quotas implemented by the Greenland management authorities.

**Narwhal** (*Monodon monoceros*) - The Committee expressed concern about the status of narwhal populations and recommended that the stocks that are either depleted, small in size or declining in range or numbers should be considered "of highest conservation concern.". The joint working group of NAMMCO and the Canadian Government concluded that the stocks in Canada (Admiralty Inlet) and East Greenland may be overexploited.

**Harbour Porpoise** *Phocoena phocoena* (North and Baltic Sea populations, western North Atlantic population, Black Sea population) - Recent abundance estimates for the North Atlantic were reviewed. These included about 34,000 in 2004 and 65,000 in 2005, respectively, in the German North Sea; 2,000 in 2004 and 5,000 in 2005 in the Baltic; and 380,000 in the entire North Sea in 2005. The Committee endorsed the view of NAMMCO that the sustainability of substantial directed catches in Greenland and bycatches in Icelandic and Norwegian fisheries should be assessed.

**Burmeister's Porpoise** (*Phocoena spinipinnis*) - Not considered.

**Spectacled Porpoise** (*Phocoena dioptrica*) - Not considered.

**Finless Porpoise** (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*) - Not considered.

**Dall's Porpoise** (*Phocoenoides dalli*) - The Committee expressed continued concern over possible unsustainability of the ongoing annual quota of 17,700 set by Japan for its hand-harpoon hunt and recommended that abundance be reassessed.

**Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin** (*Sousa chinensis*) - Concern was expressed about the impacts of planned industrial development on a small isolated population in Sanniang Bay in southern China.

**Atlantic Humpback Dolphin** (*Sousa teuszii*) - Bycatch in the Gulf of Guinea has been documented, and the Committee recommended research to assess its impact.

**Tucuxi** (*Sotalia fluviatilis*) - The Committee conducted a review of the status of small cetaceans in the Caribbean, including that of the tucuxi. Distribution, abundance, stock structure, life history, ecology, habitat use, directed takes, and incidental mortality were reviewed. The Committee recommended in particular that regional attention should be given to problems of bycatch of bottlenose dolphins and tucuxi and contamination of their habitats.

**White-beaked Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*) (North and Baltic Sea populations) – Not considered.

**Atlantic White-sided Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*) (North and Baltic Sea populations) – Not considered.

**Dusky Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus obscurus*) - Not considered.

**Peale's Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus australis*) - Not considered.

**Risso's Dolphin** (*Grampus griseus*) (North and Baltic Sea populations) - Not considered.

**Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin** (*Tursiops aduncus*) (Arafura/Timor Sea populations) - Not considered.

**Common Bottlenose Dolphin** (*Tursiops truncatus*) (North and Baltic Sea populations, western Mediterranean population, Black Sea population) - The Committee endorsed proposals for abundance surveys of cetaceans of the Mediterranean and Black Seas planned by ACCOBAMS and encouraged member states to support them.

**Pantropical Spotted Dolphin** (*Stenella attenuata*) (eastern tropical Pacific population, Southeast Asian populations) - Not considered.

**Spinner Dolphin** (*Stenella longirostris*) (eastern tropical Pacific populations, Southeast Asian populations) - Not considered.

**Striped Dolphin** (*Stenella coeruleoalba*) (eastern tropical Pacific population, Mediterranean population) - Not considered.

**Short-beaked Common Dolphin** (*Delphinus delphis*) (North and Baltic Sea populations, Mediterranean population, Black Sea population, eastern tropical Pacific population) - As noted above, the Committee endorsed proposals for abundance surveys of cetaceans of the Mediterranean and Black Seas planned by ACCOBAMS and encouraged member states to support them.

**Fraser's Dolphin** (*Lagenodelphis hosei*) (Southeast Asian populations) - Not considered.

**Irrawaddy Dolphin** (*Orcaella brevirostris*) - This species was addressed by the Small Cetaceans Sub-Committee in 2000. Subsequently, five isolated populations has been classified by IUCN as "Critically Endangered" due to small population size and continuing decline [candidates for Appendix I listing?].

**Commerson's Dolphin** (*Cephalorhynchus commersonii*) (South American population) - Not considered.

**Chilean Dolphin** (*Cephalorhynchus eutropia*) - Not considered.

**Haviside's Dolphin** (*Cephalorhynchus heavisidii*) - Not considered.

**Killer Whale** (*Orcinus orca*) - Not considered.

**Short-finned Pilot Whale** (*Globicephala melas*) (North, Baltic Sea populations) - Not considered.

**Baird's Beaked Whale** (*Berardius bairdii*) - Not considered.

**Northern Bottlenose Whale** (*Hyperoodon ampullatus*) - Not considered.

**Antarctic Minke Whale** (*Balaenoptera bonaerensis*) - The status of this species remains a major item of discussion and analysis in the Committee. Estimates of circumpolar population for three cycles of survey and assessment are 594, 000; 769,000 and 362,000. The significance and reliability of the decrease in the estimate from Cycle II to Cycle III are being explored and the estimates refined in intersessional work. It is expected that final estimated will be produced during the 2007 annual meeting in Anchorage, Alaska.

**Bryde's Whale** (*Balaenoptera edeni*) - Japan has declared an intent to harvest Bryde's whales commercially in the western North Pacific, and the necessary activities in the Committee to prepare for implementation of the Revised Management Procedure are underway. Final preparations for running of implementation simulation trials (ISTs) were completed during this meeting. Results of the trials were reviewed in an intersessional workshop in December, 2006. The goal is to complete the implementation in 2007.

**Sei Whales** (*Balaenoptera borealis*) \* (see above).

**Fin Whale** (*Balaenoptera physalus*) \* (see above).

**Pygmy Right Whale** (*Caperea marginata*) - Not considered.