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DANISH WHALE STRANDINGS AND BY-CATCHES 1986-88

by

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Abstract

408 strandings or by-catches of cetaceans (406 odontocetes and 2 mysticetes) are reported for the years 1986-88 from Danish coasts. The frequency by species was as follows: 393 Phocoena phocoena, 9 Lagenorhynchus albirostris, 1 L. acutus, 1 Globicephala melas, 1 Delphinapterus leucas, 1 Physeter macrocephalus, and 2 Balaenoptera acutorostrata.

Résumé

Cette communication rapporte 408 observations de Cétacés (406 Odontocètes et 2 Mysticètes) trouvés sur les côtes danoises au cours des années 1986-88. La fréquence par espèce est la suivante: 393 Phocoena phocoena, 9 Lagenorhynchus albirostris, 1 L. acutus, 1 Globicephala melas, 1 Delphinapterus leucas, 1 Physeter macrocephalus, and 2 Balaenoptera acutorostrata.

Introduction

18 cetaceans have been reported from Danish waters (BONDESEN 1977, KINZE et al 1987) and can be grouped as follows: 1) Inner waters residents: Phocoena phocoena 2) North Sea residents: Phocoena phocoena, Lagenorhynchus albirostris, L. acutus, Orcinus orca, Globicephala melas, and Balaenoptera acutorostrata. 3) Northern or cold water stragglers: Delphinapterus leucas 4) Southern or warm water stragglers: Delphinus delphis, Tursiops truncatus, Grampus griseus, and Pseudorca crassidens 5) oceanic stragglers: all other species (see table 1). Records compiled here for the years 1980 - 1983 comprise carcasses washed ashore as well as fresh by-catches landed in Danish harbours.
Methods

The collection effort for the period under consideration presents the onset of a more systematic collecting scheme. Prior to 1986 cetaceans other than harbour porpoises were collected when ever possible, but major numbers of smaller odontocetes certainly have been lost. In 1986 a special project on the harbour porpoise was implemented and contacts were made to a wider range of institutions and people in order to enlarge the collecting effort.

Results

408 stranding/bycatch records (figs. 1 & 2) were collected presenting 6 odontocete and a single mysticete species:

Phocoena phocoena  Harbour Porpoise

Reports of 393 specimens (1986: 141 1987: 128 1988: 124) either drowned in fishing gear or found washed ashore on the beach were collected. About one half of these specimens were incorporated in the collection of the Zoological Museum. The geographical distribution of the records is shown in fig. 1. Detailed information on single records will be published elsewere.

Lagenorhynchus albirostris  Whitebeaked Dolphin

Lagenorhynchus acutus  Whitesided Dolphin


Globicephala melas  Longfinned Pilot Whale


Delphinapterus leucas  White Whale


Physeter macrocephalus  Sperm Whale


Balaenoptera acutorostrata  Minke Whale


Discussion

The "remoteness" of the Danish waters predicts a diluted version of the North Atlantic whale fauna mainly consisting of groups 1 and 2 of the introduction. Only the two records of a white whale and a sperm whale respectively of the present compilation are neither North Sea or Baltic Sea residents. The white whale is an infrequent guest in Danish waters. Nonetheless a rise in frequency has been observed in the 1980's with two sightings individuals in Danish and adjacent Baltic and North Sea waters during the years 1983 and 1984 (JENSEN, KINZE & SØRENSEN 1987). Sperm whale strandings seem to occur with some frequency along all shallow coast lines and since 1979 five strandings have occurred on Danish coasts which is marked rise in frequency compared to the previous 15 years period with only a single stranding in 1974 (BONDESEN op. cit. and KINZE et al op. cit).
References


Table 1: List of Danish cetaceans

Phocoenidae: Phocoena phocoena

Delphinidae: Lagenorhynchus albirostris
Lagenorhynchus acutus
Orcinus orca
Globicephala melas
Delphinus delphis
Tursiops truncatus
Grampus griseus
Pseudorca crassidens

Monodontidae: Delphinapterus leucas

Ziphiidae: Hyperoodon ampullatus
Mesoplodon bidens

Physeteridae: Physeter macrocephalus

Balaenopteridae: Balaenoptera musculus
Balaenoptera physalus
Balaenoptera borealis
Balaenoptera acutorostrata
Megaptera novaeangliae
Fig. 1: Documented strandings and bycatches of harbour porpoises

Numbers of stranded and bycaught harbour porpoises 1986-88
N North Sea, Sk Skagerrak, L Limfjorden, K Kattegat, Wb Western Belt Sea, Eb Eastern Belt Sea, F Fehmarn Belt area, So Sound, Ww waters around Bornholm.

Fig. 2: Danish whale strandings 1986-88 (harbour porpoises not included)

- Lagenorhynchus albirestris
- Globicephala melaena
- Lagenorhynchus acutus
- Delphinapterus leucas
- Physeter macrocephalus
- Balaenoptera acutorostrata