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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*.

Resumé

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 1986 - 1988 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 elsewhere.

Lagenorhynchus albirostris Whitebeaked Dolphin

1. Male 210 cm. Hvide Sande 30.7.1986. Skeleton in the Zoological Museum (CN 317).
2. Female 250 cm. Nymindegab 23.2.1987. Skeleton in the Zoological Museum (CN 360).
3. Not sexed 220 cm. Slette Strand 26.2.1987. Not collected.
4. Not sexed 250 cm. Blåvand 12-13.4. 1987. Not collected.
5. Not sexed and measured. Skiveren 20.4.1987. Not collected.
6. Female 255 cm. Måde Strand 18.6.1987. Skeleton in the Zoological Museum (CN 392).
7. Male 248 cm. Bjerregård Strand 2.7.1987. Skeleton in the Zoological Museum (CN 394).
8. Female 222 cm. Furreby. 22.2 1988. Skeleton in the Zoological Museum (CN 433).
9. Male 269 cm. Klitmøller 19.8.1988. Skeleton in the Zoological Museum (CN 509).

Lagenorhynchus acutus Whitesided Dolphin

1. Male est. 210 cm. Fanø 20.4.1988. Not collected.

Globicephala melas Longfinned Pilot Whale

1. Male 425 cm. Nyord 7.1.1988. Skeleton in the Zoological Museum (CN 425).

Delphinapterus leucas White Whale

1. Male 425 cm. Alholm 9.4.1987. Skeleton in the Zoological Museum (CN 367). See KINZE (1987).

Physeter macrocephalus Sperm Whale

1. Male 1463 cm. Sæby 30.11.1988. Skeleton in the Zoological Museum (CN 540).

Balaenoptera acutorostrata Minke Whale

1. Female 500 cm. Bjergeborg Strand 26.2.1986. Skeleton in the Zoological Museum (CN 306).

2. Not sexed 300-400 cm. 25 nautical miles WNW off Hanstholm. By-catch in Sandeel net. Not collected.

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'ies 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

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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*

Ziphidae: *Hyperoodon ampullatus*
Mesoplodon bidens

Physeteridae: *Physeter macrocephalus*

Balaenopteridae: *Balaenoptera musculus*
Balaenoptera physalus
Balaenoptera borealis
Balaenoptera acutorostrata
Megaptera novaeangliae

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

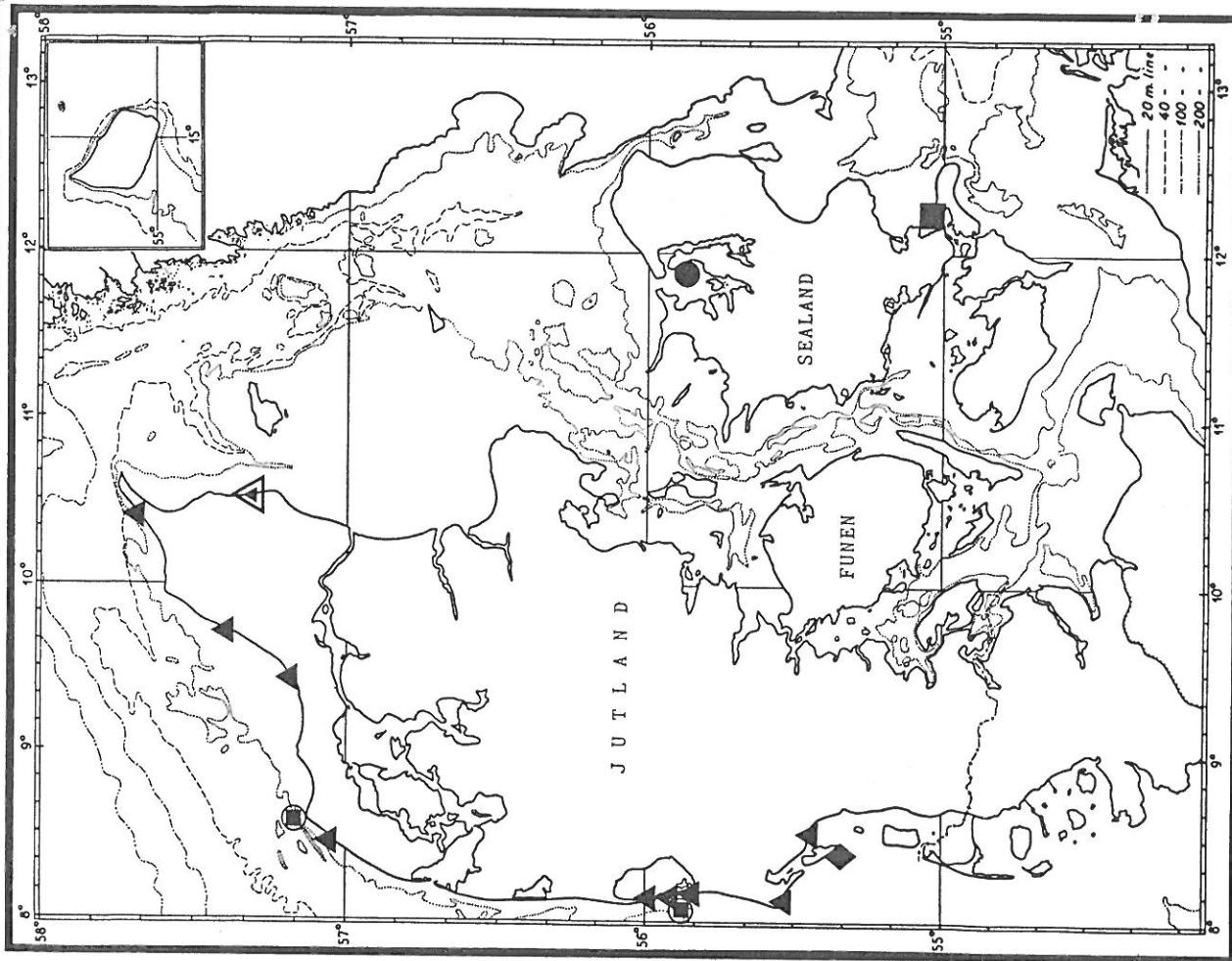
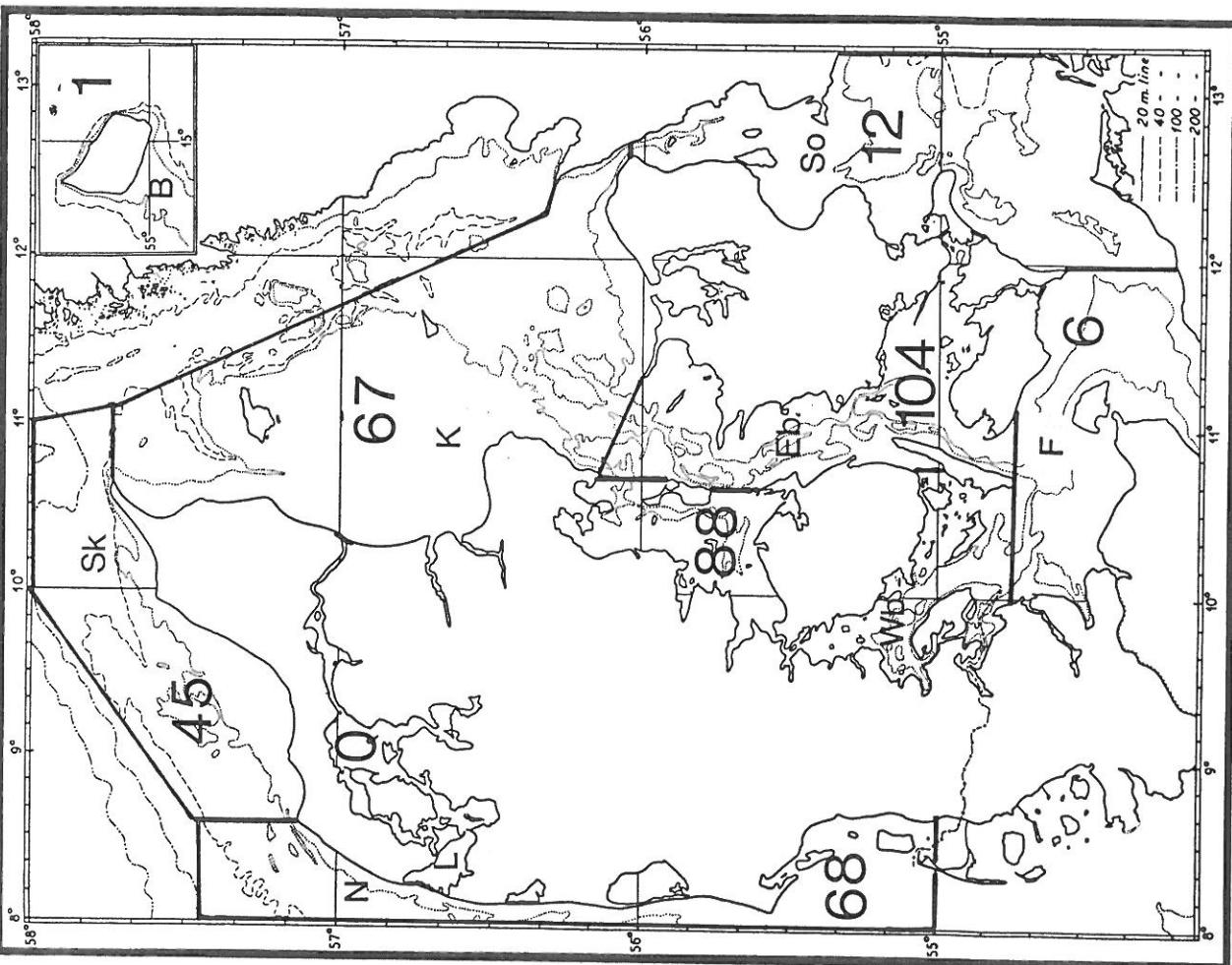


Fig. 1: Documented strandings and bycatches of harbour porpoises



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
 B waters around Bornholm.

- ▲ Lagenorhynchus albirostris
- ◆ Lagenorhynchus acutus
- Delphinapterus leucas
- △ Physter macrocephalus
- Balaenoptera acutorostrata