

ASCOBANS AC25 – Stralsund, Germany, 17-19 Sept 2019

Agenda Item 2:

Review of new information on threats to small cetaceans

2.2 RECREATIONAL SEA USE

Relevant Resolutions: 8.9, 8.2, 8.1, 7.1, 6.1, 5.4



AIM: To determine whether recreational sea use is detrimental to small cetaceans and, if so, to identify types of activity and areas of concern

Recreational use of the sea by humans includes a wide variety of activities, some of which are known to have a potential negative impact on small cetaceans. This includes RIBs (rigid-hulled inflatable boats), hard-hulled boats exceeding 10 knots in speed, yachts and personal water crafts such as jet skis and kayaks; and excludes recreational fishing and sea-angling.

Interactions can cause animals to change behaviour and move away, but can also have more serious impacts, such as injury or even death due to collision. ASCOBANS has agreed on a number of resolutions that highlight the importance to review all available information on recreational use of the sea. Obtaining an overview of best practices and guidelines will enable comparisons to be made across the Agreement Area, and ultimately may lead to the provision of overall, consistent guidelines that might be developed at a regional or national level. In this section we strive to obtain an overview of potential risk areas and national sources that have data on incidents with small cetaceans related to recreational sea use.

National Reporting on Recreational Sea Use

BE	DK	FI	FR	DE	LT	NL	PO	SE	UK
6.1. Are data on recreational sea use available for your country?									
yes		yes	no	yes		yes	no		yes

→ Most countries collect data on recreational sea use but often this is indirect in terms of location of marinas, numbers of registered vessels, or answers to questionnaire surveys, rather than actual direct mapping of recreational sea use. The problem with the former is that it does not measure actual at sea activity which is from where the pressure comes.

6.2. Is information on main areas of recreational sea use available for your country?									
n/a		yes	sort of	no		no	no		yes

→ **Finland:** Register of vessels which gives some idea of area of operation, recreational areas generally identified along with numbers of visitors

France: Three main recreational areas recognised – Normandy to Brittany Gulf (Channel), Iroise Sea (Celtic Sea / northern Bay of Biscay), Capbreton Trench (Iberian Sea)

UK: Marine Scotland published a Marine Recreation & Tourism Survey in 2015 derived from questionnaire surveys; these include maps of relative importance of recreational activities within coastal waters of Scotland. Sea Watch Foundation has a mapping project of different recreational activities from at-sea surveys. It has applied this to two regions so far: West Wales & Hebrides

BE	DK	FI	FR	DE	LT	NL	PO	SE	UK
6.3. Were there any incidents of disturbance to small cetaceans in relation to recreational sea use in your country?									
no		unknown	unknown	unknown		no	no		yes

→ **Reported incidents of disturbance:** Incidents reported to the police in the UK include: 1) an incident in the River Tyne at Newcastle involving jet skiers and bottlenose dolphins, with a warning given (June 2019); 2) several incidents in the Moray Firth involving water sports and bottlenose dolphins with warnings given (summer 2018); and 3) several incidents involving water sports/recreational boats in Scotland with warnings given (summer 2017). Cetacean species involved include killer whales (Shetland), bottlenose dolphins (Moray Firth, Aberdeen Harbour, Firth of Tay), and humpback whales (St Cyrus National Nature Reserve).

6.4. Does your country have any codes of conduct to mitigate disturbance through recreational sea use?									
yes		no	yes	yes		yes	no		yes

→ **Codes of Conduct:** Most countries have general guidance on best practice around wild cetaceans; these apply to both commercial operators and recreational sea users, and usually do not target one or other group.

BE	DK	FI	FR	DE	LT	NL	PO	SE	UK
6.5. List initiatives/projects (including PhD, MSc) in 2016-2018 involving studies on the disturbance or harassment of cetaceans through recreational sea use in your country									
none		n/a	unknown	unknown		none	n/a		yes

→ **UK: MSc & PhD Projects/Theses & Contract Reports:**

ABPmer (2017) *Managing marine recreational activities: a review of evidence*. Contract Report for Marine Management Organisation & Natural England.

Koroza, A.A. (2018) *Habitat use and effects of boat traffic on bottlenose dolphins in New Quay harbour*. MSc thesis, University of Bangor.

Lowe, E. (2016) *Impacts of boat activity on Cardigan Bay bottlenose dolphin (Tursiops truncatus) behaviour and their implications for the future*. BSc thesis, Plymouth University.

Pena Vergara, A. (2019) *Integrating bottlenose dolphin conservation with ecotourism development*. PhD thesis, University of Bangor.

Whiteley, L. (2016) *Variation in bottlenose dolphin (Tursiops truncatus) whistle parameters in relation to group composition, surface behaviour and vessel sound profiles*. MSc thesis, University of Bangor.

6.9. Is the perceived level of pressure from recreational sea use in your country increasing, decreasing, staying the same or unknown?

Belgium

Scientific name of the species	Increasing	Decreasing	Staying the same	Unknown
Harbour porpoise			X	

France & The Netherlands

Scientific name of the species	Increasing	Decreasing	Staying the same	Unknown
Harbour porpoise (The Netherlands)				X
All small cetaceans (France)				X

UK

Scientific name of the species	Increasing	Decreasing	Staying the same	Unknown
Bottlenose dolphin	X			
Common Dolphin	X			
Killer Whale				X
Harbour Porpoise	X			
White beaked dolphin	X			
Risso's dolphin	X			

National Reporting on Recreational Sea Use

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage **all** Parties & Range States to contribute national information for a more complete picture
- Recreational sea use is poorly mapped across the Agreement Area. Countries should work towards undertaking mapping by at-sea surveys
- Countries should be encouraged to keep a log of cases of harassment/disturbance as reported to regional or national authorities. Since at the regional level, many different management bodies may be involved, it is important there is good communication across all sectors
- National guidelines/codes of conduct should be developed for all countries. It would help if these were consistent both within and between countries. They could be incorporated within guidelines for commercial cetacean watching, but recreational sea users represent a much wider and more heterogeneous target group and so may require greater effort on education and outreach.