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ABUNDANCE OF ATLANTIC WALRUS (*Odobenus rosmarus rosmarus*) IN EAST GREENLAND

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Abstract

A geographically and genetically distinct population of Atlantic walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus rosmarus*) is found in East Greenland. This population has its main distribution north of 73° 30' N but is hunted for subsistence purpose farther south in East Greenland. To determine the abundance of walrus in East Greenland, visual aerial surveys were conducted between 74° N and 81° 45' N during 12-19 August 2009. The surveys were designed as a combination of total counts of walrus at terrestrial haul-outs and a systematic line-transect survey between 80° 21' and 81° 24' N in the Northeast Water (NEW) area. During the surveys the walrus were observed on land in five places on the coast between 79° 39' N and 80° 01' N but were absent from these traditionally used haul-outs (Sandten in Young Sund, Port Arthur and Lille Søenæs in Dove Bugt). Females and young walrus were found in the NEW area whereas males were distributed between 77° 00' N and 79° 36' N confirming previous information that walrus are sexually segregated during this time of the year. Data on "haul-out" and "at surface" activity obtained from eight male walrus that were monitored with satellite-linked radio transmitters in the area simultaneous with the aerial surveys were used to correct estimates of abundance for walrus that were not hauled out during the surveys. The corrected estimate of walrus in their prey distribution area in East Greenland in 2009 was 1429 (95% CI: 705-2896). The survey indicates that the East Greenland population probably numbers at least 1500 walrus.