

## **Catch statistics for harbour porpoises in West Greenland including correction for unreported catches**

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### **Abstract**

This paper summarizes available catch statistics for harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) hunted in Greenland from 1900 to 2012. From 1900 – 1990 the catches are reported by year (Ministry of Greenland) however catches in some years are missing from the time series. More complete reporting is available from 1993 – September 2012 (Pituaq, Government of Greenland) where catches are reported by month. Most catches were taken in central West Greenland during summer months, however, the town of Maniitsoq and its adjacent settlements were responsible for 40 % of all catches. To validate the reported catches in 2012 a questionnaire survey of 28 hunters was conducted in Maniitsoq, West Greenland, in 2013. From the interviews it was found that 113 (470-357) animals were not reported in 2012, however, the official catch statistics (Pituaq) for October – December 2012 are not yet compiled (expected 2014). Adjusting the catches for the missing months revealed that the catches reported in the interviews were in agreement with the expected catches for January – December 2012. The interview study furthermore revealed that 15 hunters did not report any of their 2012 catches of harbour porpoises to Pituaq and this underreporting corresponds to 45 % of the porpoise catches obtained through the interviews. Thus the correction factor for underreporting of harbour porpoise catches in Maniitsoq equals 1.8. Despite the uncertainties it is recommended that this correction factor is applied to catch reports from Pituaq (after 1993) in order to derive a realistic time series useful for assessment purposes of harbour porpoises in Greenland.

### **Introduction**

Information on catches of harbour porpoises dates back to 1900 and provides a minimum estimate of the history of exploitation and provides the only quantitative information on harbour porpoise population history in Greenland (Teilmann and Dietz 1998). Between 1900 and 1992 catch reporting was based on the Hunters List of Game (Ministry of Greenland) where list keepers in each settlement kept a record of the catches of birds and mammals. Catch statistics after 1992 are based on a reporting system, where everybody who hunt (both full-time and part-time) are required to report their monthly catches once a year (Pituaq, Government of Greenland).