

**FAROE ISLANDS
PROGRESS REPORT ON MARINE MAMMALS 2018**

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report summarises research on cetaceans and pinnipeds conducted in the Faroe Islands in 2018, by the Museum of Natural History and the Environment Agency.

II. RESEARCH BY SPECIES 2018

II.a Species/Stocks studied

- Grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) – abundance, hunting statistics
- Pilot whale (*Globicephala melas*) – landed animals, tagged animals
- Northern bottlenose whale (*Hyperoodon ampullatus*) – stranded animals

II.b Field work

In 2018, biological samples, for age, reproduction and diet studies, were collected from a total of 115 **pilot whales**, by the Natural History Museum – from the drives in Borðoyarvík on 1 July (26 samples), Tórshavn on 24 July (51) and Tórshavn on 30 July (38). Also, tissue samples from the same animals were stored for genetic and contaminant studies. In addition, flipper pairs were collected from 120 animals, for a study on calcification and diversity of bone structures.

In 2018, the Environment Agency took samples of **pilot whales** in connection with grinds in Gøtu 22 May, Tórshavn 24 July and 30 July. In all, 78 individual samples of muscle and blubber, and liver and kidney tissue samples were taken. In addition, muscle, blubber, liver and kidney were taken from 4 fetuses from the grind in Gøtu, and gall samples were taken from 6 individuals in the July 30th grind.

On September 5, the Museum tagged four **pilot whales** with satellite transmitters. A small pod counting fifteen whales, spotted north of the island Vágoy, was driven to the bay of Bakar. The pod was lead gently towards the shore, where most animals partly stranded. Satellite transmitters were attached to the dorsal fin of four whales, during the one-hour tagging operation, thereafter, the pod swam to sea again. This is the sixth tagging event in a dedicated tracking programme, with the objective to determine the management unit of pilot whales recruiting to the harem in the Faroe Islands.

A programme for estimating the abundance of **grey seals** started in 2018. During summer, the shoreline of the archipelago was surveyed from boat and all seals hauling-out and in the water were counted. Each island was visited from one to three times, except the southernmost island Suðuroy with no visit. In high-density areas, footages captured from a drone were used for the