



Sustainable whaling and sealing in the North Atlantic: Regular scientific monitoring and close regional collaboration are key

The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission held its 26th Annual Meeting online this week to consider issues related to the conservation, management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic.

Sustainable harvesting of marine mammals for food defines NAMMCO and unites the member countries – the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway – who all share a strong commitment to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 – to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The Governments of Canada, Denmark, Japan, the Russian Federation and the USA were also represented in an observer capacity at the meeting, together with a number of international organizations, all of which follow the work of NAMMCO and share information with the Commission.

• Over 30 years of whale sightings surveys continue with NAS 2024

To provide the best possible scientific basis for sustainable management, NAMMCO and its members have generated a wealth of information on marine mammal distribution, trends in abundance, behaviour and ecology in the North Atlantic over more than 30 years, and will continue to do so in the decades ahead.

NAS – the North Atlantic Sightings Surveys for cetaceans – are a series of internationally coordinated surveys conducted in the North Atlantic since 1967, with follow-up surveys in 1998, 1999, 2005, 2007 and 2015. The next in the series is planned for 2024.

Volume 11 of the NAMMCO Scientific Publications series, "Sightings Surveys in the North Atlantic: 30 years of counting whales", published in 2020, provides up-to-date abundance estimates and 30-year trends in abundance for key whale populations, based on data collected from these surveys. This is fundamental to knowledge about whale stocks in the North Atlantic.

• "Super Tag" for tracking whales to be developed

Through its Scientific Committee, NAMMCO is involved in developing new tools for studying movement patterns, habitat selection and changes in occurrence of whales in the North Atlantic. NAMMCO members will be supporting plans to develop a new satellite tag that allows long-term tracking of fast-moving whale species, and which can be adapted to smaller whales, such as minke whales, for which