

## ICELAND

### PROGRESS REPORT ON MARINE MAMMALS IN 2024

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The following is a summary of research on marine mammals in Icelandic and adjacent waters in 2024. The studies were conducted by the following research institutes: Marine and Freshwater Research Institute (MFRI), Húsavík Research Centre (HRC), Westman Island Research Centre (WIRC), Húsavík Whale Museum (HWM), Keldur, Institute for Experimental Pathology (KEIP), The National University Hospital of Iceland, The Icelandic Institute of Natural History (PIN), University of Iceland (UI), University of British Columbia in Canada, University of Barcelona in Spain, University of St Andrews in Scotland, The Icelandic Seal Center (ISC), Holar University College, Natural History Museum of Denmark, The Farøese Marine Research Institute, The Institute of Marine Research of Norway, Høia University College of the Atlantic – Allied whale in Maine, University of Aarhus, University of Copenhagen, RIF research center, Northwest Iceland Nature Research Centre, West Iceland Nature Research Centre, Orca Guardians Iceland (OGI), Greenland Institute of Natural Resources and University of Potsdam. Queries for information on research were sent to all offices, individuals and private commercial platforms such as whaling and whale watching companies known to have been involved in marine mammal research or data collection during the period.

## 2 RESEARCH BY SPECIES 2024

### CETACEANS

#### Fin whale

Studies continued at the MFRI on the biology and ecology of fin whales based on data from commercial catches in 2022 and recent years even though no whales were caught in the 2024 season. Fin whale research conducted at the whaling station in Hvalfjörður is wide ranging and includes e.g. studies on age, reproduction, feeding ecology, energetics, pollutants, genetics, hybridization, anatomy and physiology and involves several research institutions including the University of Iceland, the National University Hospital of Iceland, University of British Columbia in Canada, University of Barcelona and Keldur, Institute for Experimental Pathology. In 2024, ear plugs collected from fin whales in Hvalfjörður were the basis for a new study that validated the use of ear plugs for age determination using radiocarbon methods (Campana et al. 2024). One study used chemical methods to infer the feeding ecology of fin whales. Stable isotope analysis on samples from the blubber of fin whales caught off Iceland revealed some climate-driven behavioural shifts in the distribution and feeding ecology of the whales (Rui-Sagüés et al. 2024). The HRC continued work on their fin whale identification in 2024.

#### Common minke whale

Collaboration between the MFRI and the University of Potsdam on common minke whale genetic research continued during 2024. Population genetic analyses across the entire North