Report on Bycatch of Cetaceans in Norwegian Fisheries, 2006-2008

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Offshore fisheries in Norway are mostly using purse seine for pelagic fish and bottom trawl for demersal fish. These gear types contribute to the majority of Norwegian fish landings. It is anticipated that marine mammal bycatch is low in these gear types. A subset of the offshore fishing fleet was observed in 2006, 2007 and 2008, but no bycatch of cetaceans was observed.

It is anticipated that coastal gill net fisheries do have considerably higher probability of catching marine mammals. Based on a pilot study in 2004 (oral interviews with fishermen) the bottom set gill net fisheries for cod *Gadus morhua*, anglerfish *Lophius piscatorius* and lumpsucker *Cyclopterus lumpus* were identified as fisheries that should be prioritized for bycatch monitoring.

In 2006, 2007 and 2008 the gill net fisheries for cod (stretched mesh of 16-24 cm) and anglerfish (stretched mesh of 36 cm) were monitored. A sub-sample of the fleet (18 vessels less than 15 meters total length) was observed throughout all three years. Catch of target species, all bycatches and detailed information on fishing effort were collected. These data will be utilized to extrapolate from observed fishing operations to entire fisheries. However, extrapolations to entire fisheries (same vessel and gear category) are not yet available. The observed bycatches of cetaceans in 2006, 2007 and 2008 are shown in the table below.

When sufficient data are accumulated to estimate bycatches in gill net fisheries for cod and anglerfish, the monitoring effort will be shifted (or expanded) to also cover gill net fisheries for lumpsucker.

Species	**ICES Area**	**2006**			**2007**			**2008**		
		Obs	Est	Source	Obs	Est	Source	Obs	Est	Source
Harbour porpoise	Ia	1	na	Gill net	0	na	Gill net	0	na	Gill net
Harbour porpoise	IIa	134	na	Gill net	68	na	Gill net	109	na	Gill net
Harbour porpoise	IIIa	10	na	Gill net	1	na	Gill net	7	na	Gill net
Harpour porpoise	IVa	4	na	Gill net	19	na	Gill net	17	na	Gill net
Harbour porpoise	IVb	10	na	Gill net	78	na	Gill net	43	Na	Gill net

A note on bycatch of a humpback whale in 2008

In the early morning (exact time not known) of 19th May 2008 a fisherman found a humpback whale (total length of about 10 m) entangled in his gill nets set for lumpsucker at the coast of North Norway (ICES area IIa). The whale was wrapped with net and end rope in the mouth, around the main body and tail fluke. The fisherman tried for several hours to release the whale without success. At 11:00 he called the police for assistance. The police vessel arrived at 13:30 and assisted in the release operations. Net and rope were removed from the main body but they did not succeed in removing the fishing gear from the mouth and tail fluke. The police consulted research institutions and the management authorities for advice on further steps. At approximately 16:00 it was decided (by the Ministry of Fisheries) to euthanize the whale. The whale had then signs of fatigue and had wounds from fighting the net and ropes. It was first considered to use a grenade harpoon. However, due to the time aspect the decision was made to use a rifle. Therefore, an experienced whaler was brought to the site and he killed the whale at about 17:30 with a high power rifle caliber 4.58 (projectile diameter 11.6 mm). The event received large coverage in news media.