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Harbour Porpoise

Phocoena phocoena

The smallest and most common cetacean in Northern Europe. They have robust bodies, small beakless heads, and a distinctive, small, triangular dorsal fin. Around the British Isles, most sightings are made between June and September.

Habitat

Temperate and subarctic seas, mainly over continental shelf at depths of 20 - 200 m - rarely off the edge of the shelf in deeper waters. Commonly found in tidal channels, coastal bays and estuaries.

Behaviour

Usually solitary or in small loose groups of 2 - 10 (usually 2 or 3) segregated by age and sex. Rarely approaches vessels and does not bow-ride.

Diet & Feeding

Small fish and cephalopods. High metabolic rate, requires around 10% of body weight in food per day. Will switch prey if preferred prey declines, but may not switch back if stocks recover.

Reproduction

Young are born mainly between May - August with a peak in June. Mating season April - September.

Conservation & Threats

Historically hunted throughout range. Currently hunted in Greenland and Faroes. Primary threat is from fishing gear, primarily gillnets (around 4,600 per year die as bycatch in the North Sea) Other threats include endocrine disruption and immune suppression from chemical pollutants, vessel traffic, noise, overfishing of prey.

Quick facts

Order Cetartiodactyla

Conservation status

Global *Least concern*



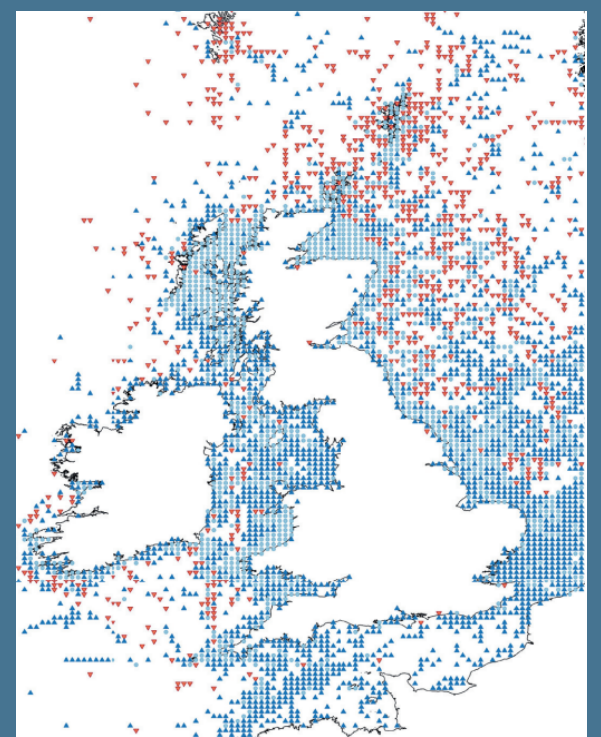
Global trend *Unknown*

Size 1.45 - 1.89 m

Weight 50 - 81 kg

Life span 12 years (up to 24)

Range



- ▼ 1980-1999
- 1980-1999 & 2000-2016
- ▲ 2000-2016

