

Protection of the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise

The harbour porpoise is listed in the EC Habitats Directive as well as in the national red lists of several EU Member States. It is also protected under the UNEP Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS), which has been signed by the majority of Baltic countries. The ASCOBANS Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan) contains recommendations for the protection of the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise, including urgent research needs. A group of experts from around the Baltic Sea, the Jastarnia Group, meets once a year to assess progress in the implementation of the Recovery Plan and give advice to governments.

Project partners

Sweden: Kolmårdens Djurpark (Coordinator), Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, AquaBiota Water Research (subcontracted management)

Finland: Turku University of Applied Sciences, Ministry of Environment, Särkänniemi Adventure Park

Poland: University of Gdańsk, Institute of Meteorology and Water Management, Chief Inspectorate for Environmental Protection

Denmark: National Environment Research Institute, Danish Forest and Nature Agency

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will be included in the project through subcontractors who will deploy and service click detectors in their waters.

Germany will join forces with SAMBAH. The German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation will fund the German part of SAMBAH within the German Porpoise Monitoring Project. The German Oceanographic Museum in Stralsund will host the project.

SAMBAH contact information

Project management

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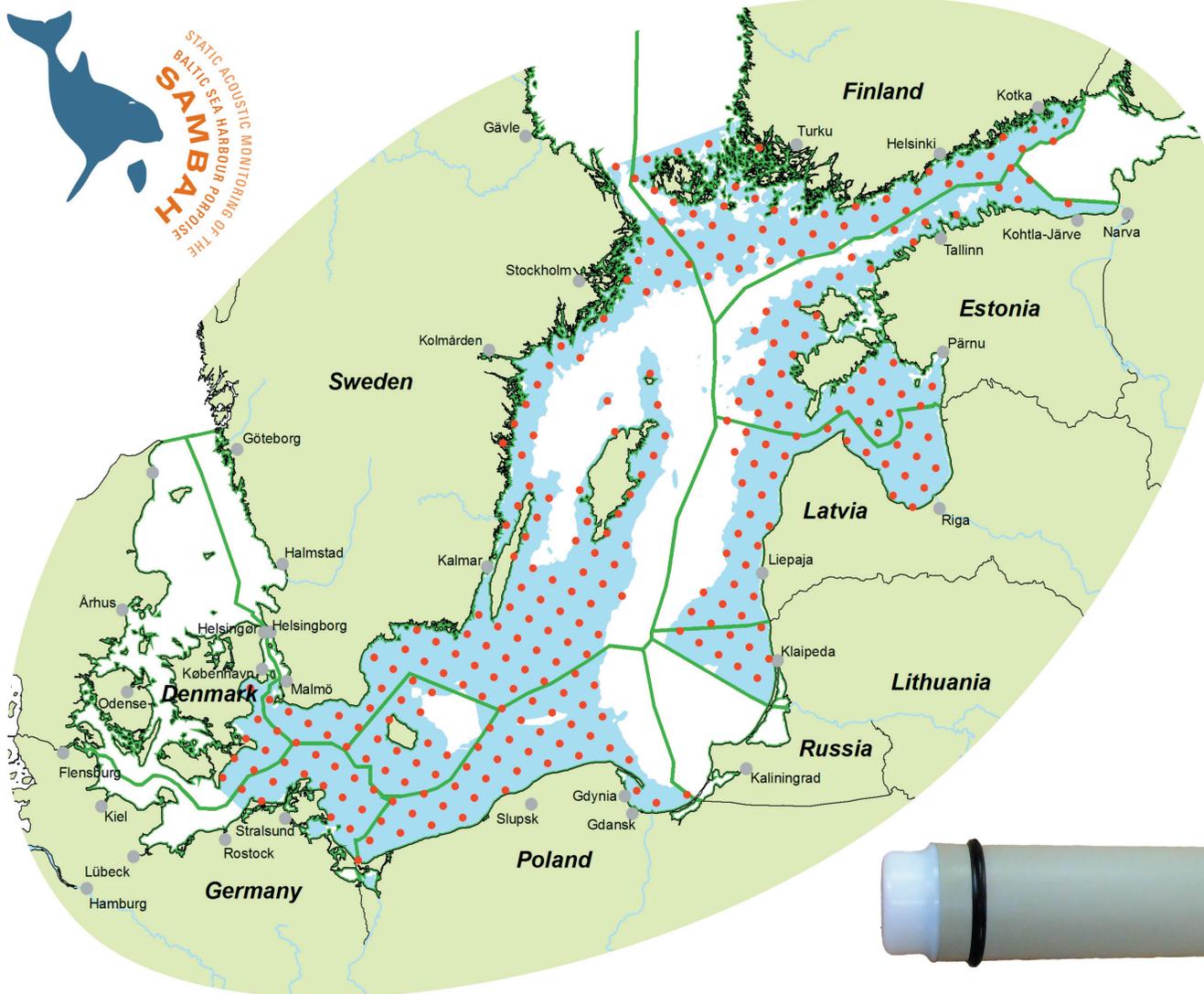
Static Acoustic
Monitoring of the
Baltic Sea
Harbour Porpoise

SAMBAH is an international LIFE+ funded project involving all EU countries around the Baltic Sea, with the ultimate goal of securing the conservation of the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise.

Why?

The Baltic Sea subpopulation of harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) is small and has been drastically reduced during the last decades. It is now seen as critically endangered. Threats and problems are still poorly understood, especially potential cumulative impacts and spatial distribution.

The lack of knowledge on the number of animals and their habitat preferences makes effective conservation difficult. Therefore there is an urgent need for collecting data on the size and range of the population and the fluctuation over time. The objectives of SAMBAH are to estimate population densities, total abundance and to produce distribution maps of harbour porpoises in the study area; to identify possible hotspots, habitat preferences and areas of higher risk of conflict with human activities; to increase the knowledge about the Baltic Sea harbour porpoise among policymakers, managers, stakeholders and the public as well as to implement best practice methods for cost efficient, large-scale surveillance of harbour porpoises in a low density area. This should make it possible to designate protected areas for the species within the Natura 2000 network as well as other relevant conservation measures.



How?

The click detectors, or static acoustic monitoring (SAM) units, that will be used in SAMBAH are called C-pods. The C-pods detect and log porpoise sonar clicks inside a radius of about 100 m. Using data from the 300 C-pods in SAMBAH, the density of porpoises in the study area will be calculated. This data will then be used in habitat modelling and analyses of possible hotspots and habitat preferences.

Where?

The study area stretches from the Darss and Limhamn ridges in the southwest to the northern border of the Åland archipelago in the north. Deployment of click detectors is restricted to depths between 5 and 80 m.

When?

Around 300 porpoise click detectors will be deployed in the study area from January 2011. They will remain in operation until December 2012. Analyses will be carried out mainly during 2013 and 2014, and the project will end in December 2014.



How you can help

300 porpoise click detectors may seem a lot, but in such a large study area, the loss of even one detector can considerably reduce the quality of data. We therefore ask you to watch out for our C-pods! If the pod is safely attached to its moorings, please let it sit. If you find one floating astray or stranded on a beach, please contact us! And please avoid fishing or trawling close to the detectors. You can find contact information on the back of this leaflet.