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NORWEGIAN WHALE-MARKING IN THE NORTHEASTERN NORTH ATLANTIC
IN 1975

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Introduction

Norwegian marking of small whales started in 1954 from the weather ship "Polarfront" in the Norwegian Sea, position $66^{\circ}\text{N } 2^{\circ}\text{E}$. From this ship one minke whale was marked in 1954 and one in 1964. The first one was recaptured in 1958 at the coast of Norway (Vesterålen). (Jonsgård, pers.com.)

A more systematic marking programme on small whales was carried out in the Lofoten area during the closed season from 1st to 21st July in 1964 and 1965. Altogether 15 minke whales were marked, two of which have been caught later on in the same area. (Jonsgård, 1968.)

In 1968 a marking and research cruise was made to Icelandic waters and the Denmark Strait. On this cruise one minke whale was marked in Isafjord, Iceland. (Jonsgård and Christensen, 1968.)

In 1974 two small-whale catchers were chartered for a marking cruise to the Barents Sea - Svalbard. On this cruise 12 humpbacks and 51 minke whales were marked (Christensen and Øritsland, 1974). In 1974 2 minke whales were also marked north of Shetland (Øynes, 1974).

Marking cruise in 1975

Two small-whale catchers, "Værøyværing" and "Vestfjord", were chartered for the whale marking cruise to the Barents Sea and Svalbard from 10th July to 20th August 1975. The tracks of the ships and the positions of the marked minke whales are plotted in Fig. 1. The ships steamed different tracks during the first part of the cruise in order to cover a larger part of the known whaling areas. However, towards the end of the cruise the ships operated together. The total distance steamed in open sea by each ship was about 3200 nautical miles.

The weather was unfavourable with fog, wind, and low visibility during the greater part of the cruise. Therefore the observations cannot be used to estimate the density of whales in the searched areas. The following whales were sighted:

<u>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</u>	800
<u>Megaptera novaeangliae</u>	6
<u>Physeter catodon</u>	1
<u>Orcinus orca</u>	10-15
<u>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</u>	by hundreds
<u>Phocoena phocoena</u>	20+
Unidentified larger whales	2

Most of sightings and markings were made from 2nd to 16th August near Bear Island. Some of the sighted minke whales may have been recorded twice, either from the same or from both of the ships.

A total of 138 whales, 136 minke whales and 2 humpbacks were marked. All whales were marked with numbered "Discovery" type marks, 12-gauge streamer marks for humpbacks, and .410-bore streamer marks for minke whales.

The geographical distribution of the marked whales was as follows:

Northern Barents Sea (Sentralbanken, Storbanken)	4 minke,	1 humpback
Bear Island	132 "	
Lofoten		1 "
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	136 minke	2 humpback

Behavior studies

All recorded minke whales were classified as approaching or not approaching the ship. This series of observations indicate that 15 to 20 % of the minke whales tend to approach, while the others ignore the ships. These figures are in accordance with observations made during the marking cruise i 1974, (Christensen and Øritsland, 1974), when about 19 % of the sighted minke whales were marked.

Observations of diving and exposure time, confirm our earlier observations that minke whales breath and are exposed to the air for 1.7 to 4.0 seconds and that the duration of the dives varies between 12-13 seconds and 10 minutes or more, (Christensen and Øritsland, 1974).

Recapture

One of the minke whales marked off Bear Island in August 1974 was recaptured about 12 nautical miles north of North Cape, Norway, the 4th of June 1975. The mark was encysted between the blubber and the muscles, and the tissue around the mark was completely healed.

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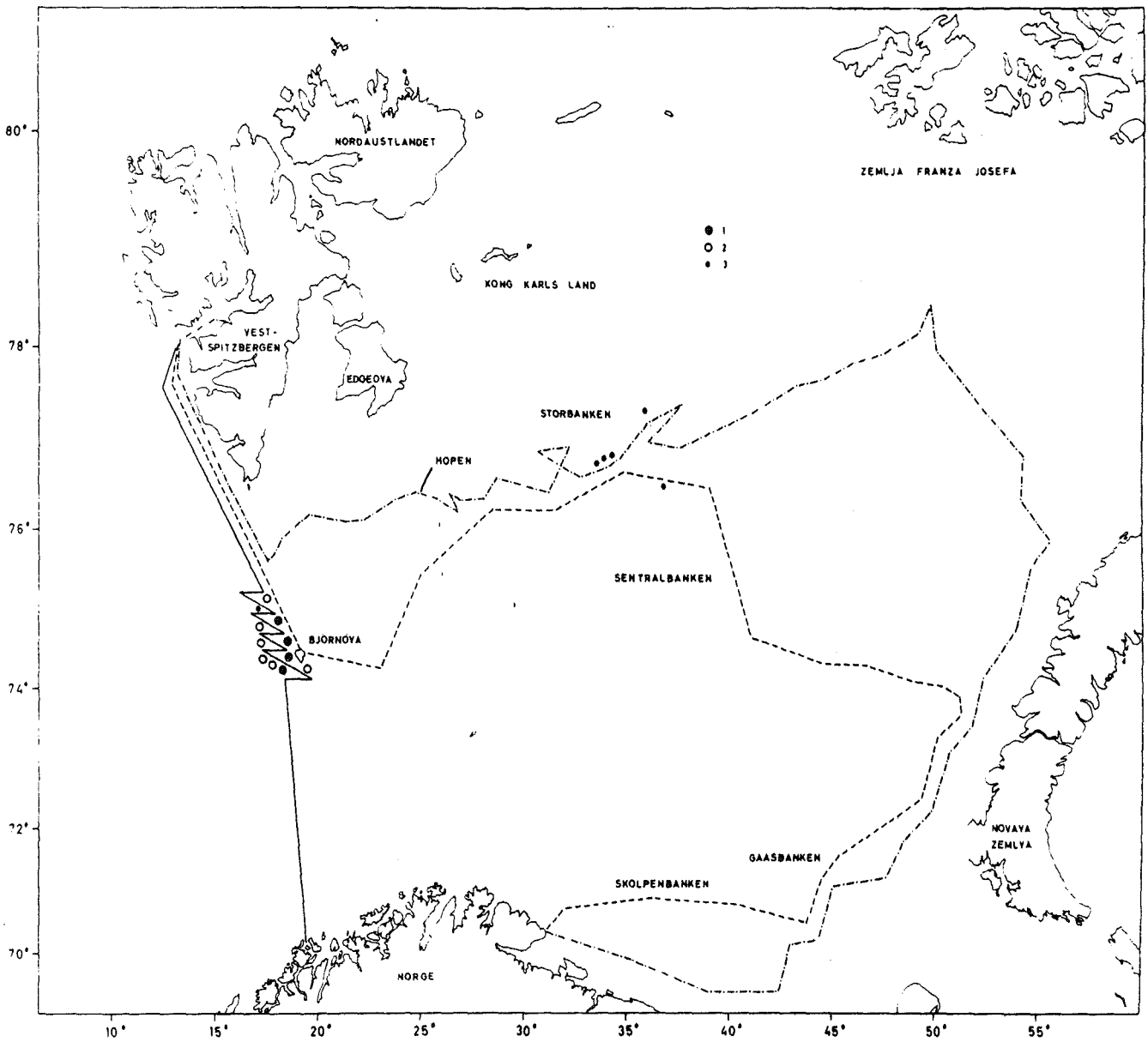


Figure 1. Cruise tracks and marked minke whales during the whale marking cruise with "Værøyværing" and "Vestfjord" 10 July - 20 August 1975. Broken lines represent the tracks of one ship alone, full lines represent tracks by both ships together. 1) 25 minke whales marked, 2) 5 minke whales, 3) 1 minke whale marked.