

International Council for
the Exploration of the Sea

C.M. 1974/N:10
Marine Mammals Committee

PUBLICATION OF CATCH STATISTICS AND ROUTINE BIOLOGICAL DATA
FOR NORTH ATLANTIC SEALS

By

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Whereas worldwide whaling statistics have been published regularly since the first issue of the International Whaling Statistics in 1930 (Committee for Whaling Statistics, 1930-1973), no attempt had been made to compile sealing statistics until marine mammals were included in the FAO Yearbook of Fishery Statistics for 1972 (FAO, 1973). Before that event only national or regional sealing statistics were published on a regular basis.

National catches of seals in North Atlantic waters have been published by Norway for the years since 1924 (Fiskeridirektøren, 1926-1973) and by Greenland authorities for the years since 1954/55 (Ministeriet for Grønland, no dates). After the establishment of the ICNAF Seal Panel in 1966, sealing statistics for the Northwest Atlantic were reviewed (ICNAF, 1970) and annual statistics are now being published for

Canadian, Greenlandic and Norwegian sealing in the ICNAF area (ICNAF, 1971-1974).

In the 1972 Yearbook (FAO, 1973) available data on seal catches in the years 1965-1972 by Argentine (no catches), Canada, Finland (1972 only), Greenland (no details), Norway, South Africa, UK, Uruguay, USA and USSR (only northern fur seals) were summarized in Table B 6-4. Detailed statistics for 1970-1972 were given under section A - "Nominal catches by countries", for some of these countries. It is obvious, however, that gaps still exist, and for the ICES Marine Mammal Committee it should be of particular interest to note missing data from the Northeast Atlantic:

Seal catches in East Greenland are included in the annual Greenland statistics (Ministeriet for Grønland, no dates). In the years from 1965 to 1969 they averaged one walrus, about 14 000 ringed seals, 200 bearded seals, 100 harp seals and 400 hooded seals per year. Catches in Iceland averaged 6 315 seals per year in the period from 1962 to 1972 (Arnlaugsson, 1973). Soviet sealing in the White Sea - Barents Sea area have continued through a period of reduced catches of harp seals, and amounted to 31 135 harp seals, mostly pups, and 4 571 ringed seals in 1972 (unpublished data reported to the Sealing Commission for the Northeast Atlantic). Finally, the estimated numbers of seals killed by Swedish hunters in the Baltic through the years 1966-1969 average 462 seals per year (Söderberg, 1970).

It appears that catches in Northeast Atlantic waters of 50-60 thousand seals per year are not reported on a regular basis. This figure is of the same order of magnitude as the total catches actually reported for the Northeast Atlantic in the 1972 Yearbook, and would raise the recorded 1972 total figure for this area by about 60 per cent (FAO, 1973).

It therefore seems appropriate that the ICES Marine Mammals Committee should agree to recommend through ICES that all member nations review and publish their seal catches in recent years with as much detail as possible, and that the member nations also report future catches of seals to FAO for publication in the Yearbook of fishery statistics.

Several, if not all commercially exploited stocks of marine mammals are continuously being studied in order to provide scientific advice on permissible catch levels. Such long-term studies yield data which usually are reported to the national authority or the international commission responsible for the management of the exploited stock. Occasionally data are retrieved from the files and analyzed for a more or less comprehensive paper on the biology or population dynamics of a stock or a species. The book by R.Sh. Khuzin on North Atlantic harp seals may be cited as an example of a rather comprehensive treatise partly based on such data (Khuzin, 1972). A more specific analysis of the age composition and mortality of moulting hooded seals sampled in the Denmark Strait through the two last decades is presently being prepared for publication at the Institute of Marine Research, Bergen.

The point to be made here, however, is that routine sampling often is continued, also after the publication of such comprehensive analyses which, by the way, may be published more frequently in the next few years. Most workers are aware that new data with brief comments to relate the new findings to previous results would be of great interest to investigators working in the same or related fields, but some workers may have been reluctant to make their data available to others because they want to keep the right of authorship. It therefore should be pointed out that the ICES Annales Biologiques provides an instrument to publish routine biological data on the stocks of seals and other marine mammals without prejudicing the rights of authors.

The fact that no material on seals or whales has been published in the Annales since the reorganization of the Marine Mammal Committee in 1966 is regrettable, but this should not prevent the future use of this rather unique series for the purposes of the Committee.

On this background it is suggested that the Marine Mammal Committee consider the Rules and decisions regarding the editorial policy for the Annales Biologiques and Council Resolution 1971/1:5 as cited in ICES Circular Letter E.1/30 (Appendix 1) with the view to reach an agreement on the use of the Annales for publication of future routine data on seals and possibly also on whales. In doing so, the Committee should keep in mind the understanding agreed upon at its 1967 meeting, "that the Committee is concerned with all marine mammals, but primarily with those of the North Atlantic".

This understanding has some bearing on the decision under item 7 in Circular Letter E.1/30 (Appendix 1), that "Material which is reported to ICNAF should not be sent to Annales Biologiques". This decision also is incompatible with the point raised in this paper, that routine data should be made available to fellow workers. Most of the material on seals reported to ICNAF, in particular all routine data, are submitted in "restricted" Research Documents. Therefore the data are not available and cannot be cited freely unless they are incorporated in the proceedings of the ICNAF Standing Committee on Research and Statistics and published in the ICNAF Redbook.

Accordingly it is proposed that the Marine Mammal Committee recommend:

- 1) that the current chapter title "Whales" under "Part III The Fish" in the scheme for Annales Biologiques is changed to "Marine Mammals";

2) that the decision that "Material which is reported to ICNAF should not be sent to Annales Biologiques" is not to be applied to data on marine mammals; and

3) that ICES with reference to C.Res. 1971/1:1 extends a special invitation to member countries to publish future routine data on seals and other marine mammals in Annales Biologiques.

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International Council for the
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HTL/CAT
Ref: E.1/30

Dear Colleague,

1. This is to remind you that it is now time to consider your contribution to Volume 30 of "Annales Biologiques" (for 1973). You are also reminded that the deadline date for manuscripts is:

15 April 1974

2. Your attention is drawn to the Rule governing the editorial policy for "Annales Biologiques", that it shall contain:

"a yearly record of data, arranged by areas in summary tables and/or diagrammes, of the composition of the stocks of fish of commercial importance in relation to the hydrographical and other factors".

What should be reported to "Annales Biologiques" is, therefore, such investigations as make it possible to follow from year to year the development of the stocks in their dependence upon the environment and the exploitation.

3. In this connection, I wish to draw your attention to the following Resolution adopted by the Council in 1971 (C.Res.1971/1:5):

"It was decided that in view of the great interest expressed in the information published in "Annales Biologiques", the series should be continued and even extended, taking into account the continuing expansion of research activities in the member countries. Furthermore, the countries which carry out investigations within the area of research of ICES are encouraged to publish more systematically regular reports of their investigations, also in cases where these take place in regions south of Gibraltar".

4. Authors are also requested to take note of the following decision of the Council (C.Res.1971/1:1(1)) that:

"temperature and salinity anomalies should only be published by ICES when the anomaly base periods and means are given".

5. The material for Volume 30 will be arranged chapterwise as follows, and authors are kindly requested to adjust their contributions in accordance with the scheme:

Part I	Hydrography		
Part IIa	Plankton		
Part IIb	Benthos		
Part III	The Fish:	Gadoid Fish	Anadromous and Catadromous
		Clupeoid Fish	Fish
		Scombriform Fish	Flatfish

Part III (Ct'd): Other Fish (including observations
on rare species)
Shellfish
Whales

Part IV Joint Investigations

6. Some overlapping between "Annales Biologiques" and "Statistical News Letters" can hardly be avoided. In such cases, authors are advised to send their detailed tables for publication in the "Statistical News Letters", and include a general summary in "Annales Biologiques".
7. Material which is reported to ICNAF should not be sent to "Annales Biologiques".
8. Manuscripts should be sent directly to the General Secretary of ICES.


Authors of contributions to the chapters on:

Hydrography, Plankton, Cod, and Herring

are kindly requested to send a second copy of their manuscript and tables, and photocopy of the illustrations, together with the original manuscript, to the General Secretary. This will allow the authors of the Introductions of these four chapters to work on the basis of manuscript copies, and would contribute substantially to reducing the time needed for production of the volume.

9. Contributions to "Annales Biologiques" should be signed with the author's name and the full mailing address of the Institute, where he is working. Unless otherwise requested, the Secretariat will send the proofs to the same address.
10. Reprints of individual contributions are not given, but each author will receive a copy of the chapter in which his contribution is printed.
11. May I again remind you that the deadline date (15 April 1974) is extremely important for a timely issue of the volume. Thank you!

Yours sincerely,


Hans Tambs-Lyche
General Secretary

Enc: Instructions to authors of Contributions
to "Annales Biologiques".