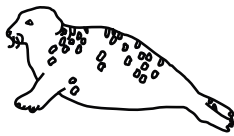


Save Baltic Sea Marine Life

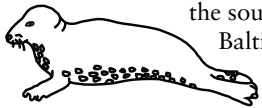
Ringed seal

Today, there are approximately 6-7000 ringed seals in the Baltic Sea. Most of them live in the Bothnian Bay, but there are also small populations in the Gulf of Riga (about 600 seals) and in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland (about 150 seals). There were probably around 220 000 ringed seals in the Baltic in the beginning of the 20th century. The decline is the result of both hunting and reduced health status and reproductive capacity, most likely caused by persistent organic pollutants (POPs). The Bothnian Bay population is now increasing, but the situation of the two smaller populations is alarming. The increased risks of accidents with sub-standard oil tankers threaten the ringed seals in the Gulf of Finland.



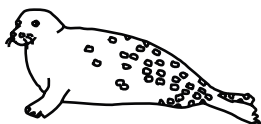
Grey seal

Today there are about 15 000 Baltic grey seals distributed all over the Baltic Sea, from the Bothnian Bay to the south-west waters of the Baltic. In the beginning of the 20th century there were around 100 000 Baltic grey seals. Intensive hunting and infertility caused by persistent organic pollutants have reduced this population. Grey seals damage coastal fishing gears and eat the fish trapped in nets, which creates conflicts with the fishermen. Sweden and Finland allow hunting of about 700 grey seals every year, an obvious violation of HELCOM international recommendations.



Common seal

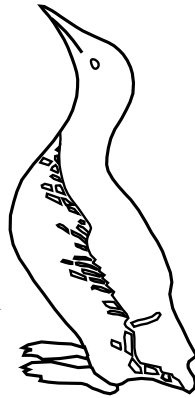
This seal is also called harbour seal. At present, there are 600-1600 common seals in the south-western part of the Baltic Sea (Kattegatt not included). In the beginning of the 20th century there were approximately 5 000 common seals in the Baltic distributed both along the western and eastern coasts of the



Baltic proper. Common seals have been subject to virus outbreaks, which in 2002 led to the death of 25% of the population in Kattegatt. However, the population in Baltic Proper was not affected and is now increasing slowly.

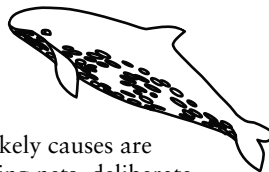
Guillemot

There are 45,000 guillemots in the Baltic Sea area. Two-thirds of them breed on two small cliff islands off the Swedish coast, close to the island of Gotland. Many guillemots get caught in salmon driftnets and cod gillnets. The impact of fishing gear is an even bigger threat to these birds than oil pollution. Guillemots are sensitive to environmental disturbances and are used for monitoring of persistent organic pollutants, such as PCB and DDT. Levels of these pollutants in guillemots have declined significantly since the 1960s. Dioxin levels in guillemot eggs decreased until the mid 1980's but have remained constant high since then.



Harbour porpoise

There are approximately 600 – 800 porpoises in the Baltic Sea and the number has declined dramatically. Harbour porpoises used to inhabit wide areas of the Baltic Sea, but today they are only found in the south-western regions, off the coast of Germany, Denmark, and sometimes Sweden and Poland. It is not known precisely why this decline has occurred, but likely causes are by-catch in fishing nets, deliberate hunting, persistent organic pollutants and kills during winter when the Baltic freezes over. By-catch in fishing nets (driftnets and coastal gillnets) will cause further reductions.



Baltic cod

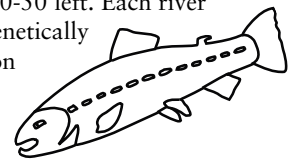
There are two cod stocks in the Baltic Sea, one west of Bornholm and one east of Bornholm. The eastern stock has the greatest economic potential of all Baltic fish populations and at the same time it plays an ecological key



role, since it is the major fish-eating predator in the Baltic. Due mainly to intensive fishing, the size of this stock is now about one third of what scientists consider sustainable and they have recommended a total closure of the fishery since 2002. However, Baltic cod fisheries continue to kill about half of the cod population each year.

Wild Baltic salmon

Once, there were 100 Baltic rivers with wild salmon production, but now there are only 40-50 left. Each river population is genetically unique. Pollution and damming of rivers for hydroelectric power have reduced stocks substantially, and artificial re-stocking has made 80-90% of the Baltic salmon hatchery-reared. A Salmon Action Plan has been adopted in order to protect the wild Baltic salmon, but 2/3 of the wild river populations are still threatened. Since the genetic variability means that each population is important for Baltic Sea biodiversity, the action plan must include measures to safeguard all wild salmon river populations and maximise wild salmon production.



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