

8. Marine mammal and seabird monitoring

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To investigate marine and seabird mammal distributions and spatial associations with potential prey species, marine mammal and seabird observations (species and numbers observed) are routinely recorded onboard the Norwegian and Russian vessels. Onboard the Norwegian vessels visual observations were made by three observers from the vessel bridges; one dedicated sea bird observer and two dedicated marine mammal observers. The marine mammal observers cover the front 90° sector (45° each) and the sea bird observer covering one 90° sector 300 m wide along the ship side. While most species were recorded continuously along the cruise transects when steaming between stations, the ship-following seabird species (northern fulmars and gulls) were counted every hour. Onboard the Russian research vessel observations of marine mammals and sea birds were carried out by one observer covering a 45° sector from roof of the bridge. Both seabirds and marine mammals were recorded along transects between stations. Observer activity and observer conditions (Beaufort Sea State, visibility and weather) were recorded continuously. Observer activity was limited by weather conditions. When the weather conditions were not sufficiently good for observations observation effort was stopped. For the marine mammal observations, both direction (angle relative to ship course) and distance from ship to the marine mammal were recorded, as well as species, number of individuals and presence/absence of calves. For seabirds, species and number of individuals were recorded, the numbers of juveniles and adults, and whether they were on water or flying.