

9. MARINE MAMMALS AND SEABIRD MONITORING

9.1 Marine mammals

Text by M. Mauritzen and R. Klepikovsky

Figures by M. Mauritzen

In total 1485 individuals of 12 identified species of marine mammals were observed in August-October 2013. A summary of the observations is presented in Table 9.1.1 and Figures 9.1.1-9.1.3. As in previous years, the most often observed species was white-beaked dolphins (about 55% of all registrations). Groups of white-beaked dolphins were observed in the southern Atlantic Water and up to 81°N by Franz Josef Land. Compared to earlier years (e.g. 2003-2007), the dolphin distribution have shifted northwards, with fewer observations in Atlantic Water and more observations north of the polar front. The toothed whales were also represented by killer whales, harbour porpoises and sperm whales. The sperm whales were observed in association with the Bear Island Trough, but also in the shallower south central Barents Sea. Small groups of harbour porpoises were observed in the southern and the eastern Barents Sea up to 73°N. Killer whales were observed in the north, in the southwest and south of Storfjorden, in the Svalbard archipelago.

Among the baleen whales, minke whales, humpback whales and fin whales were most frequently observed (about 38% of all observations). As in 2012, the number of minke whale observations was low, whereas the number of humpback whales observed was relatively high. These whales were predominantly observed in dense concentrations on the banks east of the Svalbard archipelago, while fewer individuals were observed in the central and the south-eastern parts of the Barents Sea compared to previous years. Six blue whales were observed along the northern shelf break and in the Hinlopen straight.

Few seals were observed during the ecosystem survey. Harp seals were recorded around the Svalbard archipelago, and along the northern shelf break at 81°N. Walrus were single animals observed at 80°N, north of west Spitsbergen and between Svalbard and Franz Josef Land. Also the bearded seals were observed along the northern shelf break.

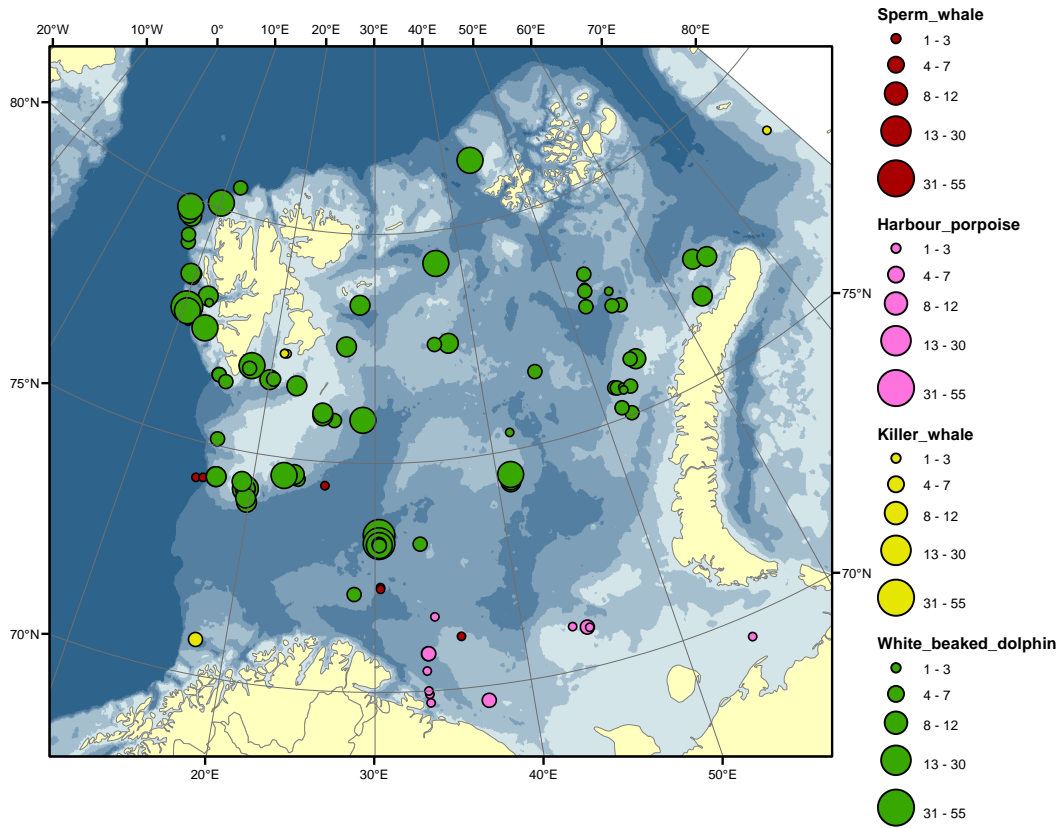


Figure 9.1.1. Distribution of toothed whales observed in August-October 2013

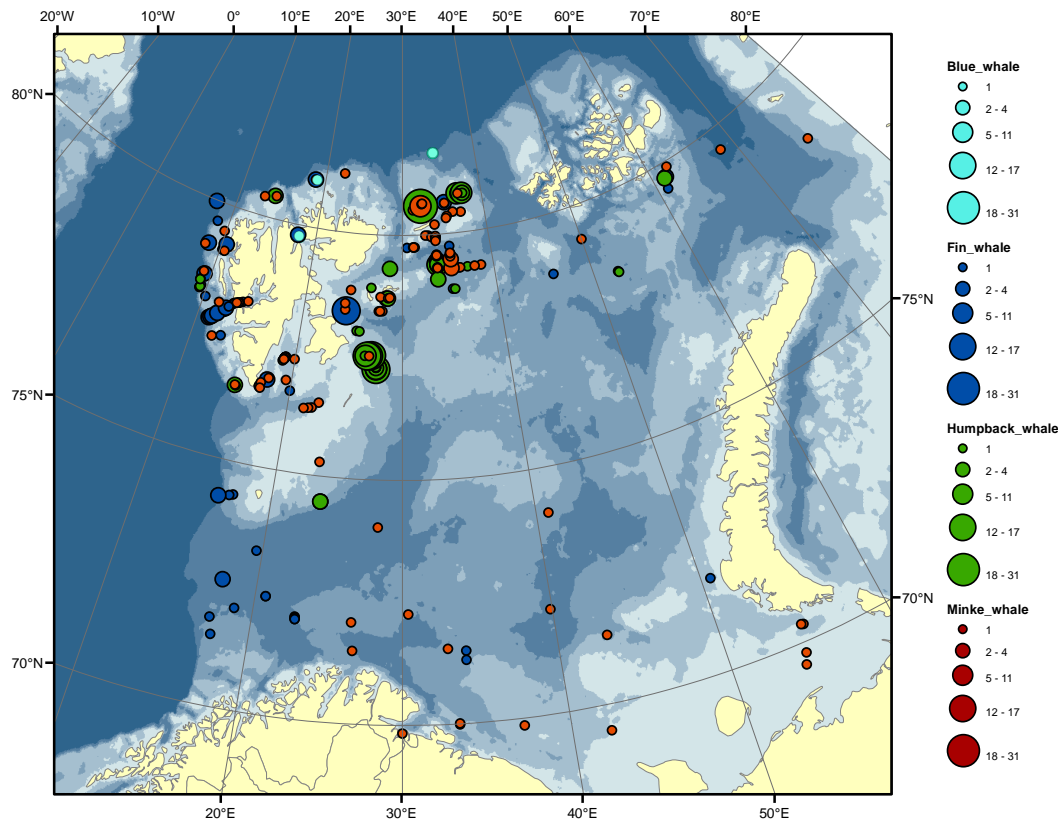


Figure 9.1.2. Distribution of baleen whales observed in August-October 2013

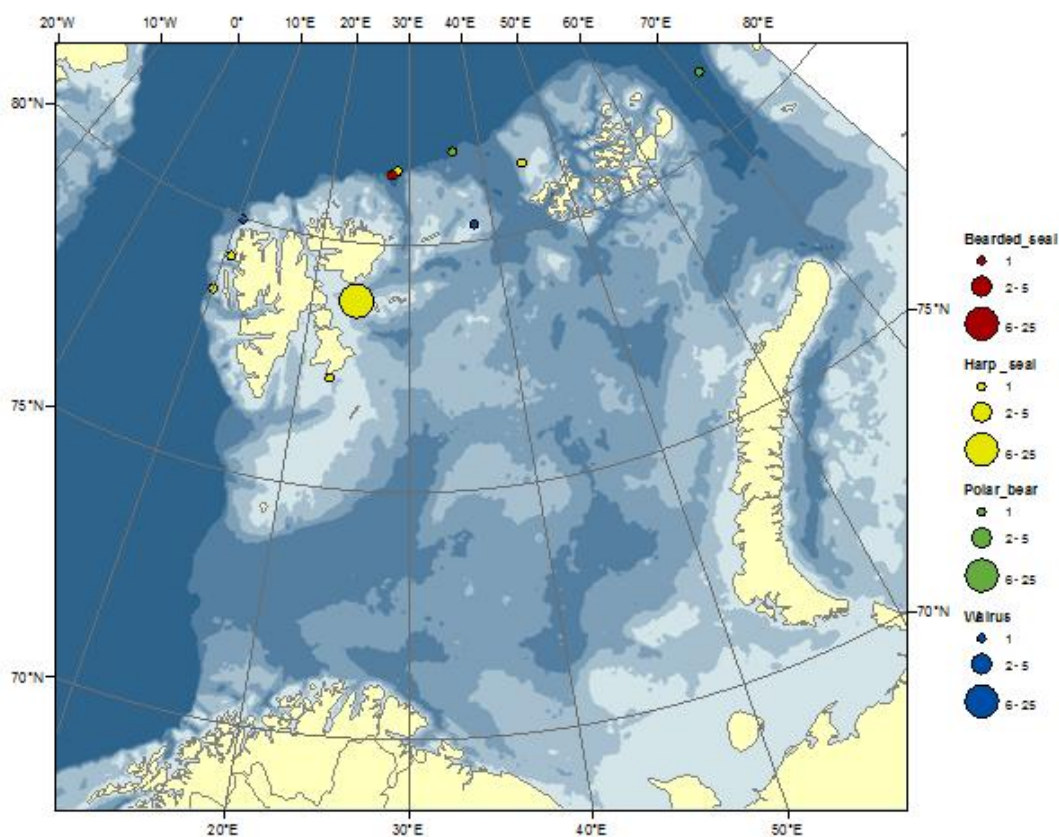


Figure 9.1.3 Distribution of pinnipeds and polar bears observed in August-October 2013

Table 9.1.1. Number of marine mammal individuals observed from the research vessels “Johan Hjort”, “Helmer Hanssen”, “G.O. Sars”, and “Vilnyus” during the ecosystem survey 2013.

Order / suborder	Name of species (English)	Johan Hjort	Helmer Hanssen	G.O. Sars	Vilnyus	Total	%
Cetacea/ Baleen whales	Blue whale	-	6	-	-	6	0.40
	Fin whale	65	26	19	17	127	8.55
	Humpback whale	275	6	2	40	323	21.75
	Minke whale	74	9	5	33	121	8.15
	Unidentified whale	-	2	-	-	2	0.13
Cetacea/ Toothed whales	Sperm whale	1	-	5	1	7	0.47
	Killer whale	6	-	6	1	13	0.88
	Harbour porpoise	-	-	-	31	31	2.09
	White-beaked dolphin	241	112	291	170	814	54.81
Pinnipedia	Harp seal	26	4	-	6	36	2.42
	Bearded seal	-	1	-	-	1	0.07
	Walrus	1	-	-	1	2	0.13
Other	Polar bear	-	-	-	2	2	0.13
Total sum		689	166	328	302	1485	100