

## 9. MARINE MAMMAL AND SEABIRDS MONITORING

### 9.1 Marine mammals

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In 2014, standard observations of marine mammals were carried out only on Russian R/V "Vilnius". IMR changed the survey plan due to budget cut in June 2014, and no marine mammal observers participated on the Norwegian vessels (see "Background", this report). However, during 15-27 September sea birds observers (onboard the Norwegian R/V "G.O.Sars") also observed and recorded some marine mammals.

During the survey 9 marine mammal species and a total of 499 individuals were recorded on board R/V "Vilnius" and R/V "G.O.Sars". Collected data are presented in Table 9.1.1 and Figures 9.1.1-9.1.3.

As in previous years, white-beaked dolphins (67.8% of all individuals observed) were common and widely distributed in the Barents Sea. Most observations of white-beaked dolphins were recorded in the eastern area, between 70°-76° N, as the western area was not covered by marine mammal observers this year. In this eastern area, also capelin and cod of different densities were observed. However, the seabird observers also observed some dolphins in the area south and east off Spitsbergen archipelago, covered by "G.O.Sars"

Table 9.1.1 Number of marine mammal individuals observed during the survey in 2014, based on records were taken on board R/V "Vilnyus" and R/V "G.O. Sars"

Order /suborder	Name of species (in English)	"Vilnyus"	"G.O.Sars"	Total	%
Cetacea/ Baleen whales	Fin whale	3	17	20	4,0
	Humpback whale	11	52	63	12,6
	Minke whale	18	4	22	4,4
	Unidentified whale	1	6	7	1,4
Cetacea/ Toothed whales	Sperm whale	-	1	1	0,2
	White-beaked dolphin	277	61	338	67,8
	Harbour porpoise	16	-	16	3,2
	Killer whale	1	1	2	0,4
Pinnipedia	Harp seal	24	-	24	4,8
Other	Polar bear	6	-	6	1,2
Total sum		357	142	499	100

Other toothed whales observed included harbour porpoise, killer whale and sperm whales. Small groups of harbour porpoise were observed in southern regions up to 72°18' N. Harbour porpoise overlapped with young herring, capelin and 0-group of capelin and cod aggregations. Two individuals of killer whales were observed in the Great Bank area. A single sperm whale was observed in the western deeper (> 1000 meter) part of the survey area.

Among the baleen whales minke whales and humpback whales were most frequently observed. Minke whales were widely distributed in northern, southern and south-eastern parts of Russian covered area, and most of the minke whales were observed north of 76° N and

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close to capelin aggregations. Number of observations decreased comparing with 2013, and only 45% of that was observed due to lack of marine mammal observers on the Norwegian vessels. In the south eastern Barents Sea minke whales were close to polar cod aggregations. Some minke whales were recorded by Norwegian Sea bird observers near Spitsbergen. Large aggregations of humpback whales were observed, while few fin whales were recorded. Fin whales were observed along the continental shelf north of 74°N, where dense aggregations of 0-group fish were found.

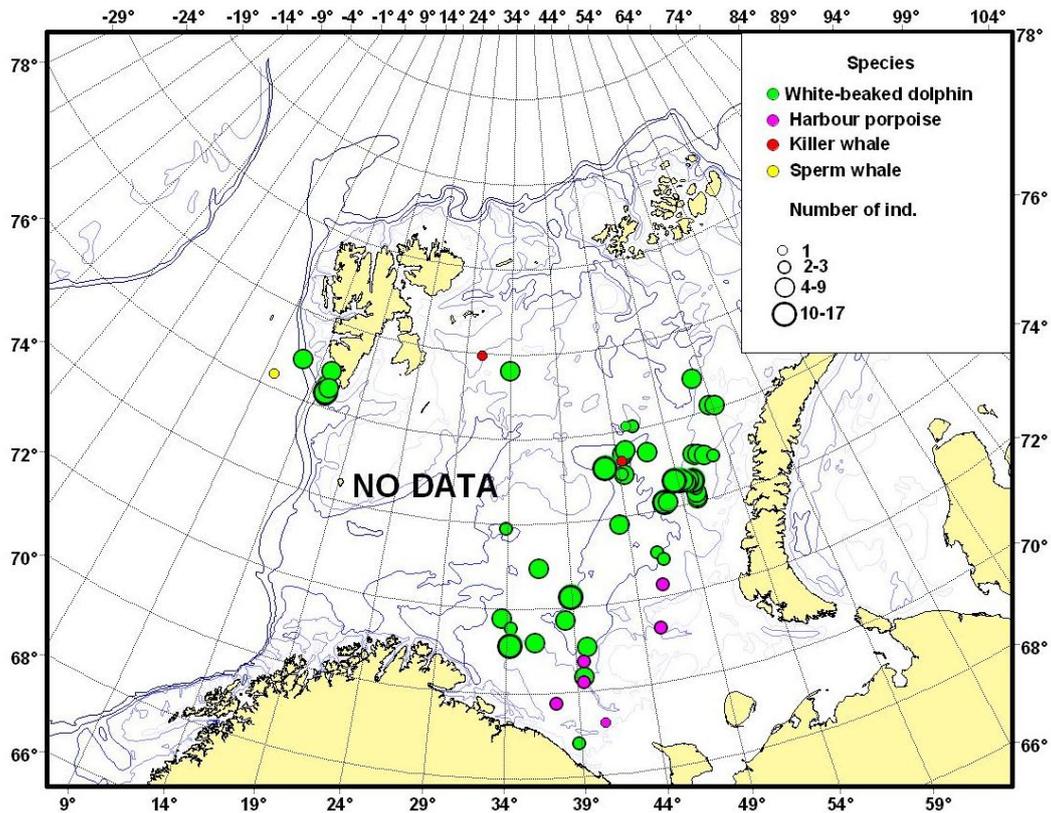


Figure 9.1.1 Distribution of toothed whales in August - September 2014

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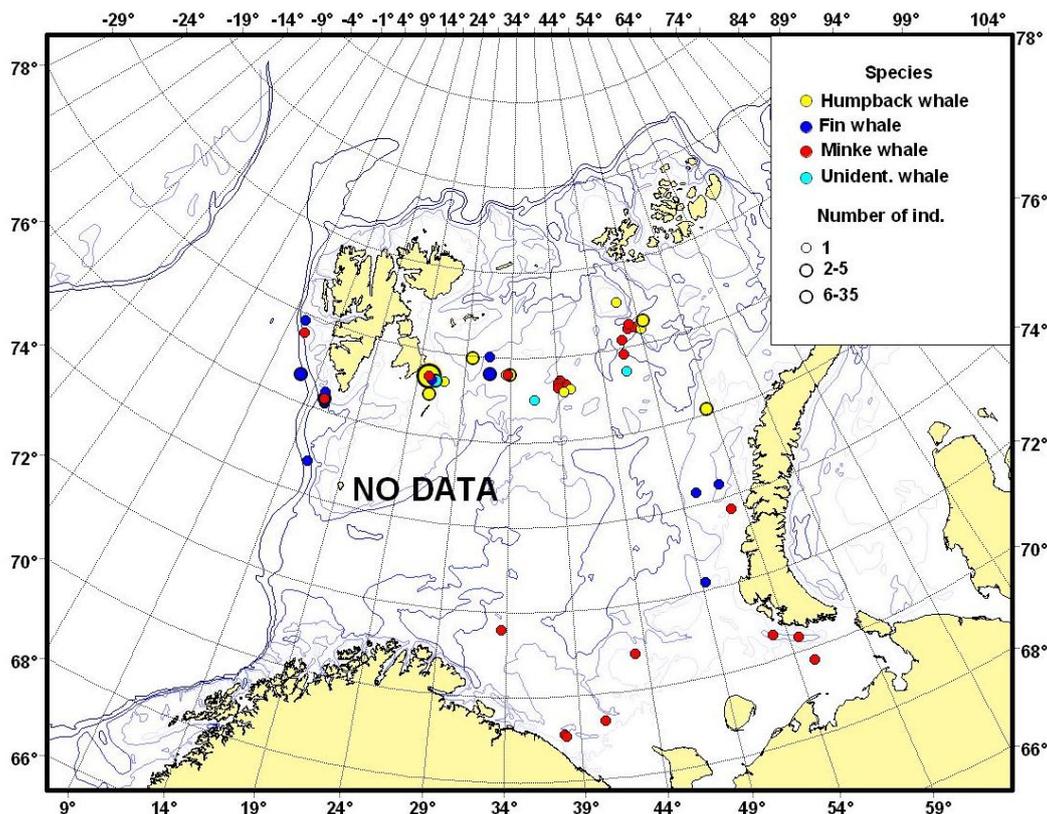


Figure 9.1.2 Distribution of baleen whales in August - September 2014

In 2014, low numbers of humpback whales were observed by R/V "Vilnius", only 25% of the numbers observed in 2013 in same area. Humpback whales were observed mainly as single individuals, but also in small groups (2-5 individuals) in northern areas between 76° N and 79°05 'N, close to the area of capelin aggregations.

Among the pinnipeds harp seal only was observed in the covered area of R/V "Vilnius". This species were observed as single individuals or in small groups of up to 4 individuals in the Great Bank north of 77°N. Animals were typically in areas with 50% ice concentration. Lack of dense summer-autumn concentrations of harp seals was recorded in 2014 as in previous years. Six polar bears were observed north-east of the harp seal area (beyond 78°N). It was in a region with 90% ice concentration with small floes of white ice. Polar bears were not observed by Norwegian seabird observers.