

European Community Directive  
on the Conservation of Natural Habitats  
and of Wild Fauna and Flora  
(92/43/EEC)

**Second Report by the United Kingdom under  
Article 17  
on the implementation of the Directive  
from January 2001 to December 2006**

Conservation status assessment for :  
**S2030: *Grampus griseus* - Risso's dolphin**

Please note that this is a section of the report. For the complete report visit <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/article17>

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## **S2030 *Grampus griseus* Risso's dolphin**

*Audit trail compiled and edited by JNCC and the UK Inter-Agency Marine Mammal Working Group*

This document is an audit of the data and judgements on conservation status in the UK's report on the implementation of the Habitats Directive (January 2001 to December 2006) for this species. Superscript numbers accompanying the headings below, cross-reference to headings in the corresponding Annex B reporting form. This supporting information should be read in conjunction with the UK approach for species (see 'Assessing Conservation Status: UK Approach').

### **1. Range Information<sup>2.3</sup>**

Mainly distributed off western and northern coasts of Britain and Ireland and along the continental shelf (Map 1.1; Reid *et al.* 2003), with a few records from waters immediately over the shelf break. Greatest numbers have been observed from western Scotland with the waters around the Outer Hebrides forming an obvious concentration. There are other clusters of sightings in the southern Irish Sea, in the St George's Channel, off north Wales and the Isle of Man, and off south-west Ireland.

There seems to be some seasonality in patterns of occurrence, with more sightings near the continental shelf edge in winter (October to May) and more inshore in August and September.

#### **1.1 Surface area of range<sup>2.3.1</sup>**

##### **Unknown**

*Grampus griseus* is known to use only a portion of UK waters (see Map 1.1), and this is highly variable both seasonally and inter-annually. Because of the migratory nature of this species, it would be difficult to estimate UK surface area with any degree of accuracy or certainty. For this reason, range area has been reported as unknown.

Range is a difficult parameter to define for marine mammals since they are highly mobile and their distribution can vary considerably in time and space across Member States. While understanding the distribution of marine mammal species might be helpful in assessing their conservation status and while range can be subjected to qualitative assessment, the data do not enable a quantitative estimate of surface area at present.

#### **1.2 Date of range determination<sup>2.3.2</sup>**

##### **Not applicable**

#### **1.3 Quality of range data<sup>2.3.3</sup>**

##### **Moderate**

A national sightings database is run by the SeaWatch Foundation. This includes opportunistic sightings at sea by a large number of, mainly amateur, observers, together with some effort related data. Although such a large dataset is useful for showing distributional range, coverage varies between areas and time of the year. The effort related sightings data to 1998 was incorporated along with other datasets (SCANS and European Seabirds at Sea (ESAS) records) to produce the *Atlas of Cetacean Distribution in North-West European Waters* (Reid *et al.* 2003; Map 1.1).

An area estimate for this species is not presented here. For this species in particular there is limited data due to the small numbers and sporadic distribution in UK waters. This could be done by modelling the area of occupancy using the data available, but it is considered that the effort involved in the modelling exercise would not justify the outcome (please see section six, complementary information regarding the range parameter for marine species).

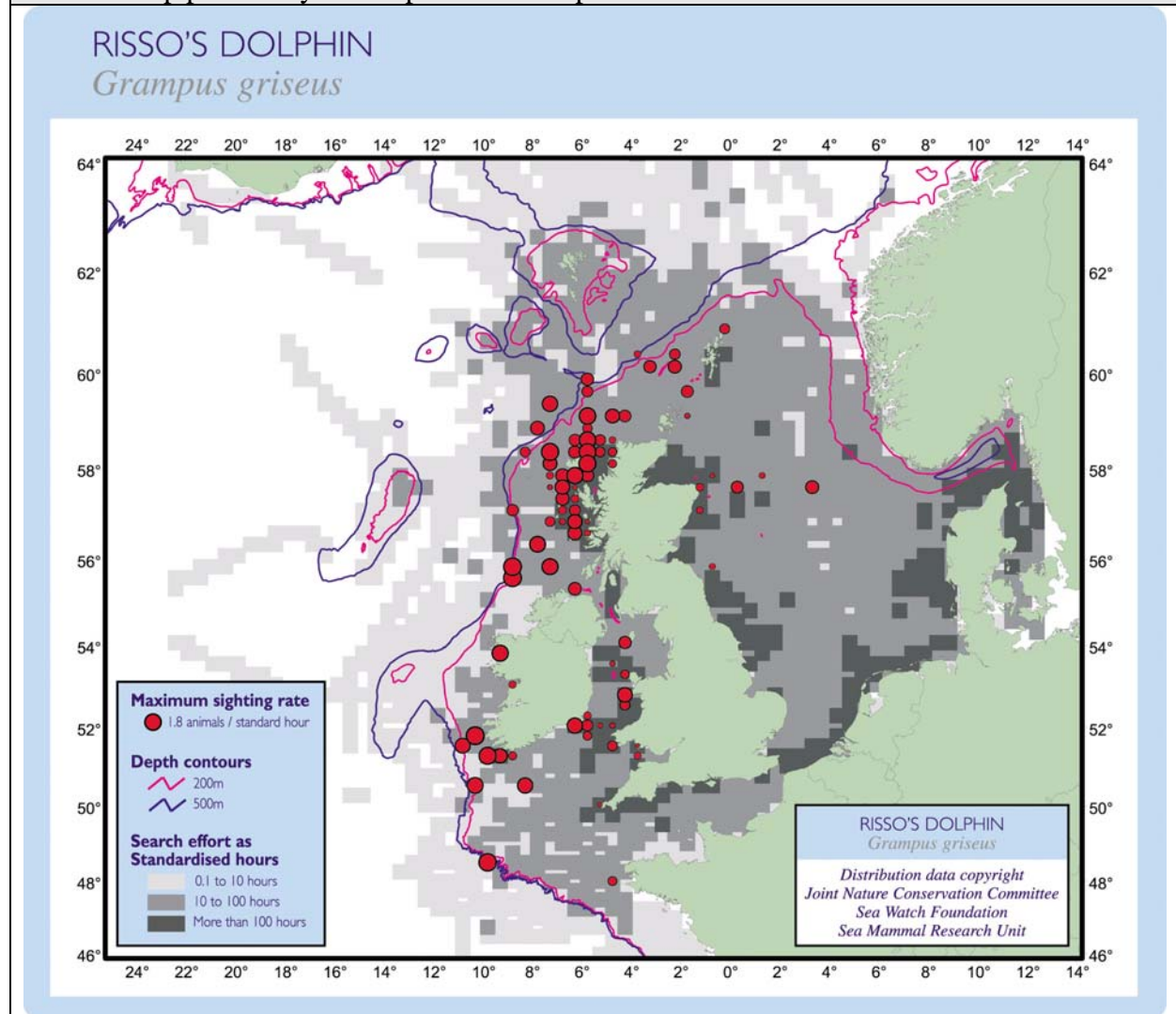
#### 1.4 Range trend<sup>2.3.4</sup> & Range trend magnitude<sup>2.3.5</sup>

##### Stable

There has been no evidence of decline in range during recent years, or historically.

Marine mammals are wide-ranging, with large spatio-temporal variations in distribution and therefore, it is very difficult to detect trends in range, or to know if apparent changes are long-term changes in range or in distribution within their range.

**Map 1.1** Distribution of *Grampus griseus* in the north-east Atlantic. Please note that this map potentially hides spatial and temporal variation. *From Reid et al. 2003*



#### 1.5 Range trend period<sup>2.3.6</sup>

1994 – 1998

The reported trend has been informed by the cetacean Atlas (Reid *et al.* 2003) which encompass data from 1979 to 1998.

## **1.6 Reasons for reported trend in range<sup>2.3.7</sup>**

**Not applicable**

## **1.7 Favourable reference range<sup>2.7.1</sup>**

**Unknown**

Although a quantitative area estimate cannot be provided, based on best expert judgement, current range has all significant ecological variations of the species included for a given biogeographical region, and is sufficiently large to be considered suitable for the survival of the species for the foreseeable future.

## **1.8 Range conclusion<sup>2.8</sup>**

**Favourable**

There has been no evidence of decline in range, and the current range (although not quantified in km<sup>2</sup>) is considered equivalent to the favourable reference range based on best available information and expert judgement. Therefore, the conclusion for this parameter is Favourable.

## **2. Population of the species<sup>2.4</sup>**

### **2.1 Population estimate<sup>2.4.1</sup>**

**Unknown**

There are no population estimates for this species. Status listed by World Conservation Union (IUCN) as data deficient. Atkinson *et al.* (1999) identified at least 142 individuals over two summers in the north-western Minch off western Scotland.

### **2.2 Date of population estimate<sup>2.4.2</sup>**

**Not applicable**

### **2.3 Method of population estimate<sup>2.4.3</sup>**

**Not applicable**

### **2.4 Quality of population data<sup>2.4.4</sup>**

**Poor**

In the absence of a population estimate, data quality can only be reported as poor.

### **2.5 Population trend<sup>2.4.5</sup> & Population trend magnitude<sup>2.4.6</sup>**

**Unknown**

No population trend data is available for this species.

### **2.6 Population trend period<sup>2.4.7</sup>**

**1994 – 2006**

### **2.7 Reasons for reported trend in population<sup>2.4.8</sup>**

**Not applicable**

## **2.8 Justification of % thresholds for trends<sup>2.4.9</sup>**

Not applicable

## **2.9 Main pressures<sup>2.4.10</sup>**

**210 Professional fishing**

**313 Exploration and extraction of oil or gas**

**420 Discharges**

**490 Other urbanisation, industrial and similar activities**

**520 Shipping**

**690 Other leisure and tourism impacts not referred to above**

**621 nautical sports**

**701 water pollution**

**710 Noise nuisance**

**990 Other natural processes**

Factors that are most likely to affect this species are bycatch, prey availability and noise disturbance. If these factors are controlled there should be no reason why future prospects are not favourable.

It is unlikely that any one of these pressures could affect this species long-term viability in UK waters, but the combined action of the pressures might possibly affect the species. Often with cetaceans it is difficult to link cause and effect and to distinguish natural from human impacts.

## **2.10 Threats<sup>2.4.11</sup>**

**210 Professional fishing**

**701 water pollution**

**962 Parasitism**

**971 Competition**

**990 Other natural processes**

Bycatch, water pollution, coastal development and increased competition with other top-predators due to changes in prey availability and distribution may continue to affect this species but if controlled it should not threaten the long term viability of the species in UK waters.

## **2.11 Favourable reference population<sup>2.7.2</sup>**

**Unknown**

There is insufficient information to provide a favourable reference population estimate at this time.

## **2.12 Population conclusion<sup>2.8</sup>**

**Unknown**

Trends and favourable reference population are unknown.

## **3. Habitat for the species in the Biogeographic region or sea<sup>2.5</sup>**

Cetacean habitats (e.g. feeding and breeding areas) vary temporally and spatially and are influenced by natural and anthropogenic factors (e.g. Ingram et al., 2007; MacLeod et al., 2007; Weir et al., 2007). It is often difficult to determine what features characterise cetacean habitats and in quantifying their extent.

This species utilises the European continental shelf and continental shelf break and appears to favour certain specific areas. Risso's dolphins have been reported to feed mostly on cephalopods, although small fish are also taken.

### **3.1 Surface area of habitat<sup>2.5.2</sup>**

#### **Unknown**

As with other cetaceans, the surface area of their habitat is difficult to quantify and may vary significantly seasonally and between years.

### **3.2 Date of estimation<sup>2.5.3</sup>**

#### **Not applicable**

### **3.3 Quality of data on habitat area<sup>2.5.4</sup>**

#### **Poor**

No information is available on habitat area.

### **3.4 Habitat trend<sup>2.5.5</sup>**

#### **Unknown**

Habitat trend information is not available.

### **3.5 Habitat trend period<sup>2.5.6</sup>**

1994 – 2006

### **3.6 Reasons for reported trend in habitat<sup>2.5.7</sup>**

#### **Not applicable**

### **3.7 Suitable habitat for the species (in km<sup>2</sup>)<sup>2.73</sup>**

#### **Unknown**

### **3.8 Habitat conclusion<sup>2.8</sup>**

#### **Favourable**

Although there is an acknowledged difficulty associated with defining habitats for cetaceans, the judgement of Favourable was based on the relatively high level of spatial and temporal variability in the behaviour and ecology of all cetaceans. Additionally, where range and/or population is considered to be in a Favourable condition, it has been assumed that habitat must also be considered to be Favourable.

## **4. Future Prospects<sup>2.6</sup>**

#### **Unknown**

There is insufficient information to make a judgement on future prospects at this time.

Since 1994, conservation measures have been undertaken in the UK and adjacent waters, to protect, survey and monitor marine mammal abundance, health and distribution. These are discussed below. However, in the absence of current population numbers and trend data, it is not possible to make a confident judgement regarding their effectiveness in protecting this species, or likely success over the next 12 years. For this reason, despite the measures discussed below, prospects have been reported as unknown for this reporting round.

*Threats, Legislation and Conservation Action*

It is important to stress that many human activities that have the potential to affect the assessed species are already regulated with the conservation of marine mammals and other wildlife in mind. Assuming that these measures are maintained and further measures are taken, should other pressures emerge, then the future prospects for cetacean species in UK waters should be favourable. However the effects of lesser understood impacts are hard to predict. Many cetaceans occurring in UK waters will also use waters of other Member States and those of non-Members, so coordination of conservation measures through, for instance ASCOBANS (Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans in the Baltic and North Seas) is essential to avoid activities in other waters affecting the animals occurring in UK waters.

The Habitats Directive is being implemented by identifying and protecting appropriate sites and monitoring bycatch. To further implement the directive, a surveillance strategy for cetaceans is being developed linking to a proposed Joint Cetacean (data handling) Protocol that hopes to get contributors from different countries in Europe in order to enable transboundary approaches to evaluating the conservation status of cetaceans. It is expected that an update of the *Atlas of cetacean distribution in north-west European waters*, published by Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) in 2003, will result from this project. In 2005, the UK was a major supporter of the EU LIFE Nature project SCANS-II project which completed a survey for cetaceans in the European Atlantic continental shelf and will make recommendations for monitoring cetacean populations. A new project, CODA 2007 (Cetacean Offshore Distribution and Abundance) aims to estimate abundance of cetaceans, and investigate their habitat preferences in European Atlantic waters off the continental shelf to the north of Portugal.

The UK is implementing the European Council Regulation EC 812/2004, which lays down measures concerning incidental catches of cetaceans in fisheries, and more generally the bycatch obligations within the Habitats Directive. The *UK small cetacean bycatch response strategy* was published in 2003 and is being implemented through research and monitoring into the extent of bycatch and mitigation measures.

Legislation has been reviewed in order to provide these species with extra protection from disturbance. In addition, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) recently produced the *Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code*, designed to protect and promote enjoyment and to raise awareness about how best to watch marine wildlife with minimal disturbance.

JNCC has developed guidelines aimed at minimising the risk of acoustic disturbance to marine mammals from seismic surveys that are being implemented by the Department of Trade and Industry. Further guidance will be developed in 2007-2008 on other activities that disturb cetaceans. The UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) has undertaken a number of measures during 2005 to address the potential impact of military sonar and noise in the marine environment.

The UK government funds a national strandings scheme which aims to provide a coordinated approach to the investigation of cetacean strandings in order to assess the number and trends of stranded cetaceans, and potential causes of death.

As a response to the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity the UK has developed biodiversity action plans (BAP) for all cetacean species. The long term goal of these plans is to increase the range and number of cetaceans in UK waters, ultimately via reducing anthropogenic mortalities and impacts. The UK has been committed to supporting several international agreements and conventions on the conservation of marine mammals and the marine environment in general (e.g. ASCOBANS, The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR)).

The UK's position within the International Whaling Commission (IWC) has been, amongst others, to support the moratorium on commercial whaling, to work towards placing the issue of environmental threats to cetaceans permanently on the IWC agenda and to ensure that international trade in whale products is prohibited.

#### 4.1 Future prospects conclusion<sup>2,8</sup>

Unknown

### 5. Overall Conclusion<sup>2,8</sup>

Unknown

Range and Habitat have been assessed as Favourable. However, due to insufficient information on Population and Future Prospects, the overall conclusion is Unknown.

**Table 5.1.** Summary of conclusions

Parameter	Judgement	Grounds for Judgement (in accordance with Annex C)	Reliability*
Range	Favourable	Current range not smaller than the favourable reference range	2
Population	Unknown	No or insufficient reliable information available	N/A
Habitat	Favourable	Area of habitat is sufficiently large, and habitat quality is suitable for, the long term survival of the species	2
Future Prospects	Unknown	No or insufficient reliable information available	N/A
Overall Assessment	Unknown	Two or more Unknown combined with Favourable	N/A

\*1=High, 2=Moderate, 3=Low

High – Expert opinion is that the concluding judgement accurately reflects the current situation based on a professional understanding of the species. For range, population, and habitat, quality of data used to establish the current estimate has been identified as “good”; data used to inform trends is comprehensive and up to date.

Moderate – A greater understanding of the feature, or the factors affecting it, is required before a confident concluding judgement can be made by experts. For range, population, and habitat, the current estimate and/or trend are based on recent, but incomplete or limited survey data; or alternately, a comprehensive, but outdated (pre-1994) review.

Low – Judgements, and comprising estimates, are based predominately on expert opinion.

N/A – Assessment conclusion is “unknown”, on the basis of insufficient reliable information.

## 6. Other relevant information<sup>2.7.4</sup>

Range is a difficult parameter to define for marine mammals since they are highly mobile and their distribution can vary considerably in time and space across Member States. While understanding the distribution of marine mammal species might be helpful in assessing their conservation status and while range can be subjected to qualitative assessment, the data do not enable a quantitative estimate of surface area at present.

## 7. References

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