

The future of the porpoise

The porpoise is a protected species in Denmark. Danish waters are home to three porpoise populations that we share with our neighbours. The North Sea (approx. 300,000) and inland waters (approx. 40,000) populations are numerically fairly stable. In the Baltic Sea, they are an endangered species, however, numbering just 500. There is some uncertainty about how these populations will fare in the future, as a result of increased human activity, such as noise, shipping traffic, offshore wind farms and fishing.



By-catching and lack of food

By-catching (i.e. when porpoises are caught in fishing nets intended for other species) is a frequent cause of porpoise mortality. From 1987-2001 about 5,600 porpoises a year were drowned in the North Sea alone. Food shortages can also occur as a result of overfishing, climate change and oxygen depletion.

Did you know?



In Denmark, and especially in Mid-delfart, porpoises used to be hunted because their blubber could be used to produce an oil that was widely used in lamps. Porpoise hunting stopped in 1898 but was briefly resumed during the First and Second World Wars, continuing until 1967.



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A noisy sea

Studies with underwater microphones show that man-made noise (ships, for example) can frighten animals, making it harder for porpoises to find their way around and catch prey.

