

Preface

The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission is proud to present *Grey Seals in the North Atlantic and the Baltic*, the sixth volume in the series NAMMCO Scientific Publications. This volume is edited by: Tore Haug, Principal Scientist, Institute of Marine Research, Tromsø, Norway; Mike Hammill, Research Scientist at the Maurice Lamontagne Institute, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Mont Joli, Canada; and Droplaug Ólafsdóttir, Research Scientist at the Marine Research Institute, Reykjavík, Iceland.

The NAMMCO Scientific Publications series was established to make available in published, peer-reviewed form, scientific papers that have contributed to the work carried out by the NAMMCO Scientific Committee. The NAMMCO Scientific Committee provides scientific advice on marine mammal species and stocks in the North Atlantic in response to requests forwarded to it by the Council of NAMMCO. Each volume therefore has a theme, reflecting the nature of the original request for advice. Further information on the series can be found on the NAMMCO web site.

The NAMMCO Scientific Committee has reviewed the status of grey seals on 2 occasions, first beginning in 1996 and again in 2003. The first review concentrated on the role of the grey seal as a vector for nematodal infections in fish, and eventually lead to the production of NAMMCO Scientific Publications Vol. 3 on sealworms in the North Atlantic. The 2003 review resulted from a request from the Council of NAMMCO for an assessment of grey seal stocks in all areas, in light of stock declines observed around Iceland and increases seen in some other areas. It is this assessment that provided the impetus for the present volume.

The NAMMCO Scientific Committee sponsored a working group on grey seals that met at the Marine Research Institute, in Reykjavík, Iceland, 9-11 April 2003 to review the information available on the status of all the grey seal populations. The Working Group included expertise from Canada, the USA, the UK, Iceland, the Faroes, Norway, the Russian Federation and the Baltic countries. This volume consists of papers that were presented at the meeting, but also includes other contributions. All contributions have been updated to reflect current findings.

The grey seal has not been a commercially important species in most areas and therefore has not received the attention accorded to some other seals. It is the only boreal species that is unique to the North Atlantic, and is common in all NAMMCO member countries except Greenland. Populations have increased in most areas in recent years, and there are concerns in some areas about direct and competitive interactions with fisheries. Thus it is fitting that this is the first volume of NAMMCO Scientific Publications dedicated to a single species of seal, and the first volume of any kind dedicated exclusively to the grey seal.

I would like to thank the editors, contributing authors and reviewers for making this volume possible. In addition I thank Patricia Lewis for assisting in the technical editing of the volume. Further information on this and other volumes in the NAMMCO Scientific Publications series is available from the NAMMCO Secretariat.

January, 2007

Daniel G. Pike (Series Editor)
North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission
Polar Environmental Centre,
N-9296 Tromsø, Norway
www.nammco.no