

Preface

The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission is proud to present *Belugas in the North Atlantic and the Russian Arctic*, the fourth volume in the series NAMMCO Scientific Publications. This volume is edited by Mads Peter Heide-Jørgensen, Senior Scientist with the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources, and Øystein Wiig, Professor in mammology at the Zoological Museum of the University of Oslo.

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. The first 3 volumes have dealt with ringed seals (Vol. 1, 1998), predation by minke whales, harp and hooded seals (Vol. 2, 2000), and the ecology of sealworms (Vol. 3, 2001).

The NAMMCO Scientific Committee establishes working groups, composed of recognised experts in particular fields, to develop advice requested by the Council of NAMMCO. This volume is based mainly on papers submitted to the Working Group on the Population Status of

Narwhal and Beluga in the North Atlantic, over 3 meetings conducted between 1999 and 2001, the last held jointly with the Canada/Greenland Commission on Conservation and Management of Narwhal and Beluga (JCNB). There has been special concern in both NAMMCO and JCNB about the conservation status of beluga that winter off West Greenland, and this is reflected in the subject matter of the compilation. However the volume is gratifyingly broad in scope, covering beluga populations from the St. Lawrence River in southern Canada to the Russian eastern Arctic, as well as the distribution and abundance of narwhal and bowhead whales in some areas.

As Series Editor I am particularly pleased to have contributed to a volume dedicated to the memory of my friend and colleague, Stuart Innes. The efforts of his colleagues in bringing his final works to publication are an apt tribute to his contributions in this field.

Further information on this and other volumes in the NAMMCO Scientific Publications series is available from the NAMMCO Secretariat.

July, 2002

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