

Blue Whale

DESCRIPTION

Blue whales are the largest of all the whales. They are endangered as a result of historical whaling, where Scottish and Irish catches in the early twentieth century heavily depleted this population. As a result, they are rare in north-east Atlantic waters. However the waters to the north and west of Scotland remain important habitat, particularly the Faroes-Shetland Channel and Rockall Trough. Although a southerly migration to breed is apparent, some individuals are found in our waters all year round. Blue whales are listed as a priority species on the Scottish Biodiversity List. However, despite being endangered, Blue whales are not listed as a nationally important Priority Marine Feature.

THREATS

In the deep offshore waters to the north and west of Scotland, noise pollution is a considerable concern, including from seismic surveys for oil and gas and increasing shipping noise from shipping lanes as well as military activities (west coast exercise area). Collisions with ships occur from time to time.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

1. Designation of offshore MPAs and inclusion of blue whale protection in management plans
2. Progress management decisions to fully consider European Protected Species, including blue whales
3. Improve collection of offshore field data to inform wider management decisions and conservation efforts



FURTHER READING

Clark, J., Dolman, S.J. and Hoyt, E. 2010. Towards Marine Protected Areas for Cetaceans in Scotland, England and Wales: A scientific review identifying critical habitat with key recommendations. Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, Chippenham, UK, 178pp

WDC Species Guide:

http://www2.wdcs.org/species/species.php?sp=Balaenoptera_musculus

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