Northeast Fisheries Science Center Reference Document 93-26

Summarized Results of Two Necropsy Sessions of Harbor Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* Incidentally Taken During Commercial Fishing Operations in the Gulf of Maine

by

John R. Nicolas

NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service Northeast Fisheries Science Center Conservation and Utilization Division Woods Hole, MA 02543-1097

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INTRODUCTION

Twenty-five harbor porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* were necropsied during two sessions at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) in Woods Hole, Massachusetts in two sessions held in 1992 and 1993. The first session was March 10-13, 1992 and the second January 12-15, 1993. Several scientists representing a broad spectrum of research interests, both national and international, took part in these sessions. In addition to samples collected by researchers attending these sessions, many samples were taken to support ongoing research projects.

The subject animals were all incidentally caught during sink gillnet fishing operations in the Gulf of Maine (NEFSC 1992). Most of the animals were taken between October and April of both years. The animals were of excellent specimen quality, thus maximizing sample collection. The goal of the necropsy sessions was to collect biological samples sufficient to support present and future research pursuing a better understanding of the biological parameters of the species. A summary of the biological samples collected, and the research they will support, are reported herein.

SPECIMEN MATERIALS

Harbor porpoise incidentally killed in the sink gillnet fishery in the Gulf of Maine are handled with extreme care to ensure optimum specimen quality. Immediately after an animal is landed it is placed in an insulated, leakproof bag and packed in ice. Once the carcass has reached port it is transported to one of three chest freezers located at or near various key ports. The carcass is then relocated to NEFSC, Woods Hole to await necropsy. Prior to necropsy whole specimens were stored frozen at -20°F.

Samples from each specimen were collected to satisfy at least eight general categories: biochemistry, genetics, histopathology, life history, parasitology, physiology, systematics, and toxicology. Samples collected for these categories were either frozen at -20°F or preserved in alcohol, buffered formalin, or DMSO.

NECROPSY PROTOCOLS

An external inspection of each animal was made to determine sex, general condition, and nutritional state. Following external examination, each animal was photographed, the total weight and blubber weight were recorded, and various body measurements were taken. Internal organs were inspected to document the presence of lesions and/or parasites.

Tissue samples were collected from five major organs: heart, liver, kidney, brain, and gonads. Skin and blubber samples were removed, stomachs frozen, and teeth were extracted. The skulls and the post-cranial complex of mature animals were refrozen and will be archived at the Smithsonian Institution.

Necropsy protocols from the University of Guelph, James Madison University, and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (Appendix) were used during both sessions. In addition, samples were collected to support other researchers' projects.

RESULTS

Twenty-five carcasses from the central Gulf of Maine were necropsied (Table 1). The sex, length, and total weight of the carcasses is shown

Table 1. Locations and tag numbers of necropsy specimens

Tag Number	Latitude	Longitude
0026	42°- 57'	70°- 02'
1617	43°- 07'	70°- 02
0256	42°- 50'	70°- 18'
0325	43°- 29'	69°- 38'
0265	43°- 30'	69°- 38'
0263	43°- 31'	69°- 38'
1614	42°- 53'	70°- 09'
0465	42°- 54'	70°- 23'
0140	*	*
0460	43°- 08'	70°- 03'
0148	42°- 52'	70°- 41'
0211	42°- 40'	67°- 56'
0474	43°- 13'	70°-11'
0478	42°- 25'	70°- 49'
0471	42°- 58'	70°- 22'
0010	42°- 53'	70°- 31'
0048	43°- 01'	70°- 02'
0492	42°- 52'	70°- 29'
0050	43°~ 02'	70°- 23'
0053	43°- 07'	70°- 20'
0367	43°- 00'	70°- 25'
0339	39°- 47'	71°- 53'
0372	43°- 02'	70°- 23'
0047	43°- 04'	70°- 20'
0141	*	*

* No field data available

Tag Number	Sex	Total Length (cm)	Total Weight (kg)
0026	М	121	34.3
1617	F	122	35.3
0256	Μ	142	42.3
0325	Μ	144	45.7
0265	М	119	33.2
0263	F	152	64.7
1614	F	146	56.7
0465	Μ	138	43.6
*0140	F	163	82.0
0460	М	137	53.0
0148	F	150	64.9
0211	F	126	31.75
0474	F	128	32.97
0478	F	119	29.9
*0471	F	158	64.8
*0010	F	150	55.0
0048	\mathbf{M}	124	37.3
*0492	F	156	66.8
0050	F	154	59.5
0053	М	151	47.2
*0367	F	140	51.4
0339	F	113	28.0
0372	М	141	44.4
0047	М	126	35.2
0141	М	142	50.5

Table 2.Sex, total length, and weight of necropsy
specimens by tag number

in Table 2. Fifty-six percent (n=14) were female. Females ranged in length from 113 to 163 cm, with an average length of 141.2 cm (sd=16.40). The weight of the females ranged from 28.0 to 82.0 kg, with average weight of 51.7 kg (sd=17.12). Males were somewhat smaller and lighter. The lengths ranged from 119 to 151 cm, with average length of 135.0 cm (sd=10.66); and weights ranged from 33.2 to 53.0 kg, with an average weight of 42.4 kg (sd=6.67).

Fourteen animals had been incidentally killed in 1992, and eleven in 1993. From those specimens, approximately 600 soft tissues, 82 hard parts, 25 stomachs, and three fetuses were collected. Specific tissues taken from each specimen are listed in Tables 3 and 4.

Samples from harbor porpoise were collected for twelve research groups in the United States, five in Canada, and one each in England and Sweden (Table 5). A standard reference of both hard and soft tissues is archived at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in Woods Hole, Massachusetts.

DISCUSSION

Sampling the bycatch of cetaceans taken during commercial fishing operations provides an opportunity to obtain unique biological specimens that are important in several areas of pure and applied research. Access to samples has been facilitated by the presence of sea-going technicians aboard domestic fishing vessels. The cooperation of fishermen working with these technicians has allowed a large fraction of the harbor porpoise observed killed to be sampled. The accumulation of large numbers of specimens for individual necropsy sessions has encouraged researchers with a wide range of research skills to work together to make optimal use of the available material. The samples collected are contributing to advances in the understanding of the biology of harbor porpoises in New England waters, and of the species more generally.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to the session participants, Dr.Ramona Haebler (USEPA, Narragansett R.I.) Dr. Darlene Ketten (Harvard Medical School, Boston Mass.), Ms. Heather Koopman and Andrew Westgate (University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada), Mr. William McLellen (James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Vir.), Mr. Charles Potter and Dr. Sentiel Rommel (National Museum of Natural History, Washington D.C.), Mr. David Potter (NOAA/NEFSC Woods Hole, Mass.), and Dr. Andrew Read (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, Mass.). In addition to the session participants, I wish to offer thanks to all of the sea-going observers for the collection of the specimens used during the sessions and to the captains and crews of the many fishing vessels for their generous assistance. Also a special thanks to Janeen Cox of the NEFSC for her Word Perfect wizardry, and Todd McConchie for his assistance with data entry.

LITERATURE CITED

NEFSC [Northeast Fisheries Science Center]. 1992. Harbor porpoise in North America: status and research needs. Woods Hole, Mass: NOAA/NMFS/NEFSC. *Center Ref. Doc.* 92-06. Available from: NEFSC, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA 02543.

Tag#1	Photo ²	Morphs/ ³ Measure	Blub⁴ Mass	Blub⁵	Musc ⁶ Froz	Musc ⁷ DMSO	Teeth	Gonads	Stom ⁸	Skuli	Post ⁹ Cran	Dorsal Fin	Heart	Liver	Brain	Kidney	Other
0211	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	DAP
0474	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
0478	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
0471	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	DAP
0010	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
0048	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
0492	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	DAP
0050	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
0053	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	DAP
0367	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
0339	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
0372	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	DAP
0047	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
0141	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

.

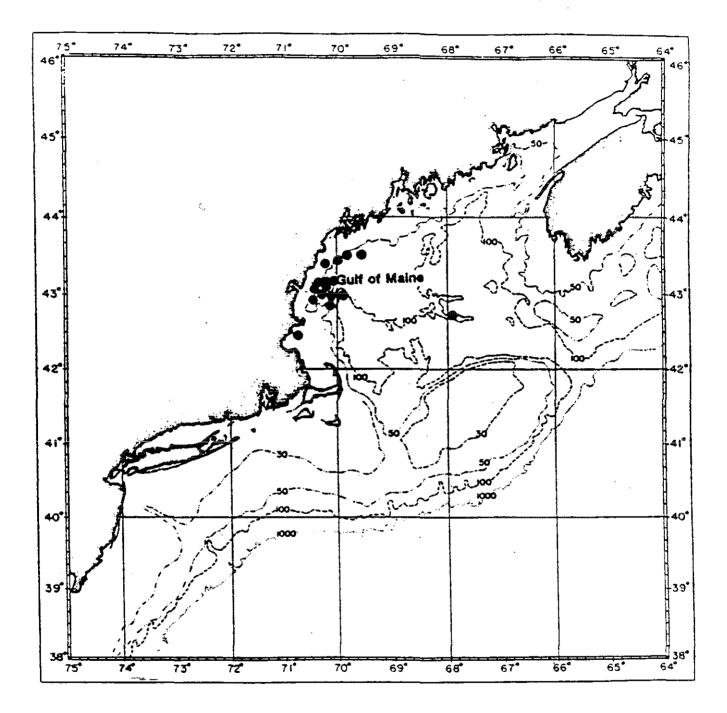
1	Tag #	=	Tail tag number
2	Photo	=	Photograph
3	Morphs/measure	=	Morphometric measurements
4	Blub Mass	=	Blubber mass (kg)
5	Blub	=	Blubber sample
6	Musc Froz	=	Muscle frozen
7	Musc DMSO	=	Muscle DMSO preserved
8	Stom	=	Stomach
9	Post cran	=	Post cranial

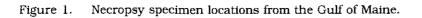
Tag#1	Photo ²	Morphs/ ³ Measure	Blub ⁴ Mass	Blub⁵	Musc ⁶ Froz	Musc ⁷ DMSO	Teeth	Gonads	Stom ⁸	Skull	Post ⁹ Cran	Dorsal Fin	Heart	Liver	Brain	Kidney	Other
0026	Vee	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Melon ¹⁰
	Yes								1								
1617	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Melon
0256	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Melon
0325	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SI	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Melon
0265	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SI	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Melon
0263	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SI	SI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	DAP ¹²
1614	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SI	SI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	DAP
0465	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SI	SI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	DAP
0140	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SI	SI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Fetus
0460	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	SI	SI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Fetus
0148	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	None

¹ Tag #	=	Tail tag number
² Photo	=	Photograph
³ Morphs/measure	-	Morphometric measurements
4 Blub Mass		Blubber mass (kg)
⁵ Blub	=	Blubber sample
⁶ Musc Froz	=	Muscle frozen
7 Musc DMSO		Muscle DMSO preserved
⁸ Stom	=	Stomach
⁹ Post cran	=	Post cranial
¹⁰ Melon	=	Melon bones
¹¹ SI	. =	Smithsonian Institution
¹² DAP	=	D. Ann Pabst

Researcher	Institution	Research Project
Joseph Adelstein	Cape Cod Research, Falmouth, MA	Hydrodynamic properties of skin and blubber
Per Berggren	University of Stockholm, Sweden	Organic chlorine in blubber
John Jahoda	Bridgewater State College, Bridgewater, MA	Skull for display
Andrew Dizon	Southwest Fisheries Science Center, La Jolla, CA	Tissue Banking
David Johnston	University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada	Heavy Metal Analysis
Ramona Haebler	EPA, Narragansett, RI	Contaminant loading of internal organs
Usha Varanasi	National Marine Mammal Laboratory, Seattle, WA	Chemical contaminants in tissues
Darlene R. Ketten	Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA	Physiology of the inner ear
Heather Koopman	University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada	Biochemical composition and structure of blubber
Jon Lien	Memorial University of St. John's, Newfoundland	Stable isotopes
Christina Lockyer	Sea Mammal Research Unit, Cambridge, UK	Age comparison of Northwest and Northeast Atlantic <i>Phocoena</i>
John Nicolas	NMFS/NEFSC/Woods Hole, MA	Sample archival
Ann Pabst, Bill McLellen	James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA	Dorsal fin anatomy and temperature regulation/uscle development
Charley Potter	Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.	Archival of <i>Phocoena</i> skeletons/ systematics
Andrew Read	WHOI, Woods Hole, MA	Life history analysis of Phocoena in the Northwest Atlantic
Sentiel Rommel	Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC	Thermal regulation
John Wang	University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada	Genetic analysis
Andrew Westgate	University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada	Organic contaminant levels in blubber
Stephen Wise	NIST, Washington, D.C.	Tissue banking

Table 5. Collaborating researchers, institutions, and research projects where data collected will be used





APPENDIX

NECROPSY PROTOCOLS

James Madison University - Mr. William McLellen University of Guelph - Ms. Heather Koopman Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution - Dr. Andrew Read

MR. WILLIAM MCLELLEN James Madison University

NECROPSY PROTOCOL

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PHOCOENA MASS DISSECTION

Fleid Number	Total Length
Total Weight	Sex & Age estimate
Laft Flipper	Right Flipper
Fluke lobes	Dorsal Fin
Left Blubber	Right Blubber
Left Panniculus	Right Panniculus
Left Illiocostalis	Right Illiocostalis
Left Epaxial	Right Epaxial
Left Mammary	Right Mammary
Left Scalenes	Right Scalenes
Left Sternomastold	Right Sternomastoid
Left Sternohyold	Right Sternohyoid
Left Sternothyroid	Right Sternothyroid
Left Shoulder (comp)	Right Shoulder (comp)
Left Shouider muscle	Right Shoulder muscle
Left Scapula	Right Scapula
Left Ribs w/ muscle	Right Ribs w/ muscle
Left Intercostais	Right Intercostals
Left Ribs	Right Ribs
Left Rectus abdominus	Right Rectus abdominus
Left Ischlocaudalis	Right ishlocaudalis
Left Hypaxial	Right Hypaxial

-

PHOCOENA MASS DISSECTION

Left Kidney	Right Kidney
Left Adrenal	Right Adrenal
Left Ovary	Right Ovary
Left Testis	Right Testis
Left Gonad dimensions	Right Gonad dimensions
Left Epididymus	Right Epididymus
Sperm present?	Bladder full/empty
Male repro-tract	Uterus
Left Lung	Right Lung
Heart	Thymus
Intestine	Thyrold
Liver	Dorsal Aorta & Rete
Liver Diaphragm	Dorsal Aorta & Rete
Dianhraom	Dorsal Aorta & Rete
Diaphragm	Dorsal Aorta & Rete
Diaphragm Pancreas Mesenteric hymob-node	Dorsal Aorta & Rete
Diaphragm Pancreas Mesenteric lymph-node	Dorsal Aorta & Rete
Diaphragm Pancreas Mesenteric lymph-node Spleen	Dorsal Aorta & Rete
Diaphragm Pancreas Mesenteric lymph-node Spleen Esophagus	
Diaphragm Pancreas Mesenteric lymph-node Spleen Esophagus Stomach full	Stomach empty
Diaphragm Pancreas Mesenteric lymph-node Spleen Esophagus Stomach full Fore Stomach	Stomach empty Main Stomach

PHOCOENA MASS DISSECTION

Head Intact							•									
Ventral Blubber							Dor	sal B	ilubb	91						
Ventral Misc.							. Dor	sai M	lisc.							
Brain	÷						Tra	chea								
Skull weight							_ Hyc	ids						<u></u>	,	<u></u>
Vertebral Column							Pet	vics								
Sternum							RIE	s #D	ouble	∍/#Si	ngle					
Vertebral count		cervi	ical		thor	aic			lur	nbar			<u>cau</u>	dal		
PARASITES																
Crassicauda:																
Monorhygma:																
Phyllobothrium: Anterior												Post	erior			
<u> </u>	1	1	<u> </u>	1	ł	1	1		1	1	_1	1	1	I	1	<u> </u>
Campulla:																
Stenurus:																
Nasitrema:																
Lung worm:																
COMMENTS:	-															

MS. HEATHER KOOPMAN University of Guelph

NECROPSY PROTOCOL

Protocol for Analysis of Harbour Porpoise (<u>Phocoena phocoena</u>) Blubber

Heather Koopman, Dept. of Zoology, University of Guelph

The objective of this project is to examine the distribution and chemical composition of lipid in the harbour porpoise.

Blubber Thickness

*This is the most important part of the protocol, and also the most time-consuming. Blubber thickness is measured in mm in situ, excluding skin, in 49 locations on one side of the body (preferably the right). First, a cut is made on the dorsal midline of the animal from the blowhole to the flukes. A ventral midline cut is then made from the posterior edge of the jaw to the flukes. All cuts made on the animal should go through the skin, blubber and nuchal (sub dermal) fat, but not the underlying musculature.

The total length of the animal is then divided by 8 (= x cm). Seven half-girth cuts (dorsal to ventral) are then made on the right side of the animal every x cm.

Each of these dorso-ventral cuts (i.e. half-girths) must then be divided to make seven measurements. Each cut is measured and divided by 6 (= y cm). Take blubber measurements at the following places on each cut: at the top (on the dorsal ridge), at y cm, at 2y cm, at 3y cm, at 4y cm, at 5y cm and at the bottom (ventral midline). The diagram (Fig. 1) makes this a lot easier to visualize.

* make all cuts before measuring to ensure even strain/shrinkage on the tissue.

* please note any damage on the animal that would affect the thickness measurements. Additional blubber thicknesses

(These are also important. If time is limited, however, do only these measurements instead of the above)

Haif girth cuts are made on one side of the animal at (I) the posterior insertion of the flipper, (II) just anterior to the dorsal fin, and (III) at the anus. Blubber thickness is measured in mm, excluding skin at three points on each cut: dorsal, lateral and ventral. The ventral (III) measurement is usually not taken.

Again, see diagram (Fig. 2).

Blubber Samples (10)

These are taken at precise locations along cuts made for blubber thickness. Blubber samples should include skin (still attached) and be about 10×10 cm. The blubber should be placed in a plastic bag clearly labelled with i) animal number and ii) position of sample on body, and frozen at - 20 °C.

Samples are taken at the eight sites of blubber thickness measurement described in "additional blubber thicknesses" (see Fig. 2), just posterior to the first half-girth cut (on the head) and just anterior to the last half-girth cut (on the caudal peduncle) described in the main blubber thickness measurement section (Fig. 1). A visual representation of all ten sampling locations is given in Fig. 3.

Other Tissue Samples

If possible, the following tissues (in order of importance) can also be collected, stored in appropriately labelled bags and frozen:

- nuchal fat - the soft fat layer beneath the blubber layer, generally found around the head and ribs, can be gently separated from the underlying connective tissue and muscle with a scalpel. The fat can be completely removed from one side of the animal above the rib line, weighed, and maximum thickness measured.

- fat surrounding the organs - this can be removed from the organs and frozen.

- foetus - the foetus can be removed from the uterus its membranes and frozen whole.

- epaxial muscle, liver, heart, kidney - these tissues can be sampled (pieces of about $10 \ge 6 \le 6$ cm are best) and frozen.

- bones (4) - the fifth rib, scapula, one lumbar vertebra and one caudal vertebra. These can be frozen.

Please ship tissues (frozen) to:

Heather Koopman 272B Axelrod Building Department of Zoology University of Guelph Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1

Please contact me prior to shipping: Phone 1-519-824-4120 ext. 8386

Fax 1-519-767-1656

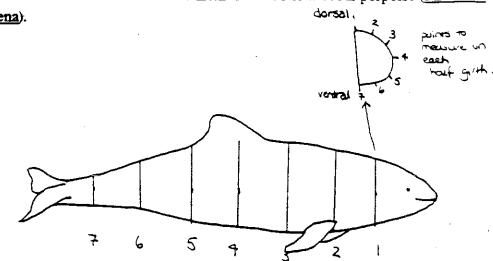
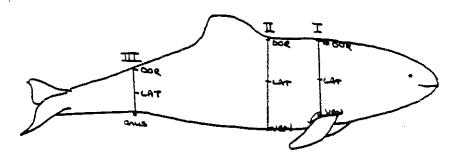


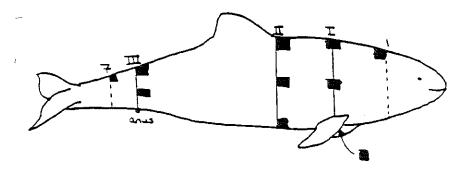
Figure 1. Cuts for blubber thickness measurements of harbour porpoise (Phocoena phocoena).

Figure 2. Cuts for additional blubber thickness measurements of harbour porpoise.



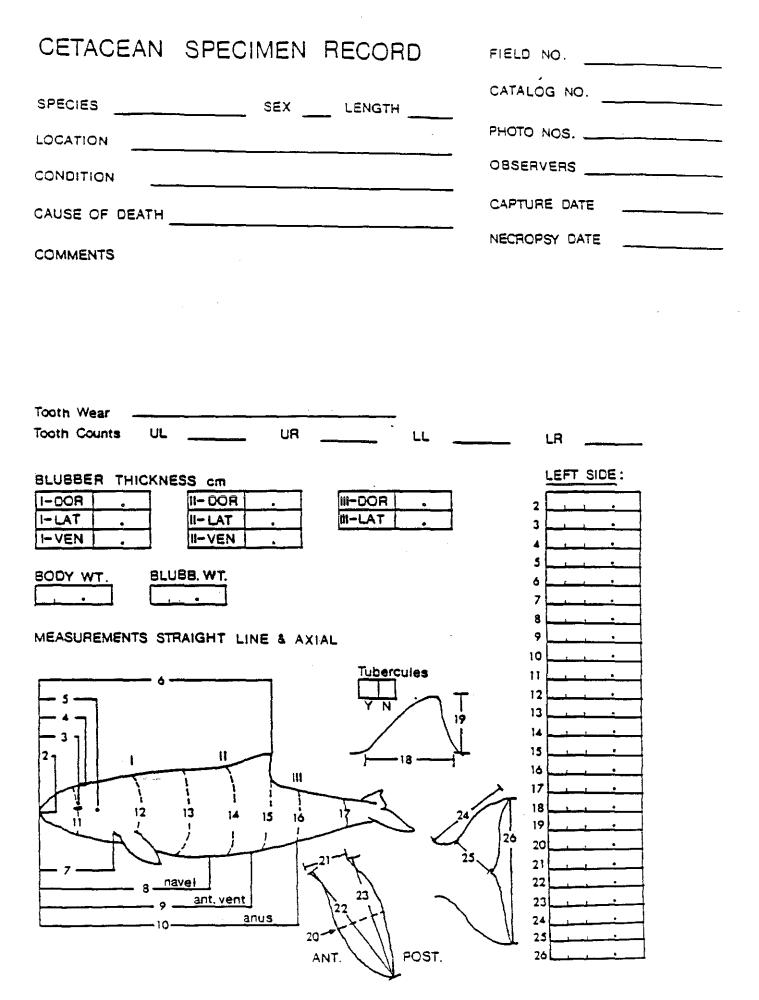
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Figure 3. Sites of blubber sampling on harbour porpoise.



DR. ANDREW READ Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

NECROPSY PROTOCOL



Skull

Mammary

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Liver

~ . .

REPRODUCTIVE 1	TISSUES			۶	FIELD NO
Gonad Dimensions	Mammary C	Sland Colour		_ LXWXD	
Pregnant	Foetus Lei	ngth	Weight		Sex
C. Lutea	(C. Albicantia		Uterine Diam. L	8
Sperm in Epididyir	ius			Testis Wt. L	R
Comments					
STOMACH CONTE	INTS				
	Full Wt.	Empty Wt.	Contents		
FORE			·		
MAIN					
PYLORIC					
Comments					
ORGAN WEIGHTS	(g)				
Heart		L. Kidney		_ Stomach:	5 .
L. Lung		R. Kidney			
R. Lung		Pancreas	·····	_ Brain	
Liver		L. Adrenal		Intestines	3
Spleen		R.Adrenal		Muscle	
PARASITES & PA	THOLOGY				
Stomach		<u> </u>			·
intestine	<u></u>				
Kidney		<u></u>			
Pancreas					
Mammary					
Liver	·				
Lungs					
Heart					
Brain			· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		
Sinuses				<u> </u>	
Other					
SPECIMEN CHE		·			
Gregimen Chev	CKLIST		Parasites	1	Brain
Teeth	Gonad	ls	Blubber	······································	Stom. Cont.

Muscle