



Press release

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Increased protection for endangered marine life of the North-East Atlantic

OSPAR Commission agrees measures to protect iconic species in the North-East Atlantic

Today the 15 countries which are party to the international OSPAR Convention together with the European Union have taken another step forward in protecting the marine life of the North-East Atlantic Ocean. Agreement has been reached on a series of Recommendations for the protection and conservation of a wide range of marine species and habitats that are considered as at risk in the North-East Atlantic.

The twelve Recommendations have been adopted to protect some iconic species with which we are all familiar – including the majestic blue whale and two species of sea turtle that come to the North-East Atlantic to feed. There are some species that are perhaps less well-known but equally remarkable, like the Ocean Quahog – a deep sea clam that has been known to live for as long as five hundred years. The Recommendations also cover a series of habitats, including littoral chalk communities – one of the best examples of which are the white cliffs of Dover.



The threats that these species and habitats face range widely with the many uses of the sea – from local scale physical damage to their environment, to plastic debris finding its way from land into the sea. Plastic bags and other marine litter can be a significant threat to several of the species, such as the leatherback and loggerhead turtles. The Recommendations cover a range of actions, such as identifying and protecting areas that have particular importance, taking measures to reduce pressures from specific human activities, or conducting scientific research to increase our understanding of these species. The agreement reached today provides the opportunity for the OSPAR Contracting Parties to work together to address these threats in order to improve the status of these species and habitats.

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Note for editors

The [OSPAR Commission](#) was set up by the 1992 OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, which unified and up-dated the 1972 Oslo and 1974 Paris Conventions. It brings together the governments of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, together with the European Union.

[Links to supplementary information](#)

OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (Agreement 2008-6)

Background Document for Littoral chalk communities

Background document on *Sabellaria spinulosa* reefs

Background Document for *Modiolus modiolus* beds

Background document for *Ostrea edulis* and *Ostrea edulis* beds

Background Document for Ocean quahog (*Arctica islandica*)

Background Document for Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

Background Document for Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*)

Background Document for Bowhead whale (*Balaena mysticetus*)

Background Document for Blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*)

Background Document for the Northern right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*)

Background Document for Harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)

Background Document for Steller's Eider (*Polysticta stelleri*)