

## Book Review

GREY SEALS IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC AND THE BALTIC. Editors: Tore Haug, Mike Hammill, and Droplaug Ólafsdóttir. NAMNCO Scientific Publications, Volume 6, 2007. ISBN 978-82-91578-19-4, 227 pp.

The origin of this book was a workshop in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 2003, when seal scientists met to discuss the status of the different grey seal populations. Since much of the information that was discussed was unpublished or published in governmental reports only, it was decided that the papers presented at the workshop should be compiled into this book.

The book consists of 17 scientific papers on grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) in the species total range: the Atlantic (Northwestern and Northeastern populations) and the Baltic. Information on grey seals from Norway, the Baltic, Britain, Faroese waters, Canada, Sable Island, Gulf of St Lawrence, Northeastern United States, Newfoundland, Russia, Iceland, and mainland Europe from the Southwestern Baltic to France is provided. Also, some historic data is presented as well as diet studies from Sable Island, Gulf of St Lawrence, Faroese waters, Newfoundland, and the Baltic. One paper deals with the catch losses in the herring gillnet fisheries in the Baltic, induced by grey seals.

The book provides a good collective set of information on the status of all three of the distinctly separated populations of grey seals in the world, including data from areas from which we do not often hear. It is important information, and it is good to have an update on all three populations in the same publication. In some areas, a decline in population size is documented—for example, in Iceland; whereas in other areas, the population of grey seals has increased such as in Norway, the Baltic, the UK, and Canada. Number of pups and/or population sizes are presented and are the focus in most papers. Growth and reproductive rate are given only from Iceland. One very interesting paper explores the status of the grey seal a bit further, and discusses population assessment and extinction risk in the Baltic; the authors even give recommendations. They show how the age composition of the hunted animals influences the impact of the hunt, and they recommend that hunting should be kept to a minimum, carefully documented, and accompanied by

population monitoring. The situation along the coast in Murman is presented as well as the high mortality rate among pups. A probable cause for the high mortality rate is bad weather conditions during the breeding season. In this area, the population of grey seals has presumably always been rather small. Another paper from the Murman coast reports on recoveries of grey seals tagged with yellow so-called rototags—612 grey seal pups were tagged and 31 were recovered, mostly as bycatches in fishing gear. The recovered grey seals were found up to more than 1,000 km from the site they were tagged. Four of the papers discuss the grey seal's diet, and two papers delve into the conflict with the fisheries in the Baltic.

This is not a book about the biology and life history of the grey seal. It does not cover all fields on grey seal studies that are performed and, for example, behavior studies, genetics, hunt, satellite tagging, contaminant research, and pathology are not included here. It focuses mainly on the number of grey seals or pups. Threats to the grey seal are not really discussed. It would have been more interesting, and balanced, if more aspects of the grey seal were included, but the problem is most likely that the book would have been too voluminous. Besides, the status update in so many different areas is indeed valuable information in itself.

Anna Roos  
Department of Contaminant Research  
Swedish Museum of Natural History  
PO Box 50007  
SE-104 05 Stockholm, Sweden