December 2009

HUMPBACK WHALE (*Megaptera novaeangliae*): Gulf of Maine Stock

STOCK DEFINITION AND GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

In the western North Atlantic, humpback whales feed during spring, summer and fall over a geographic range encompassing the eastern coast of the United States (including the Gulf of Maine), the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Newfoundland/Labrador, and western Greenland (Katona and Beard 1990). Other North Atlantic feeding grounds occur off Iceland and northern Norway, including off Bear Island and Jan Mayen (Christensen *et al.* 1992; Palsbøll *et al.* 1997). These six regions represent relatively discrete subpopulations, fidelity to which is determined matrilineally (Clapham and Mayo 1987). Genetic analysis of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) has indicated that this fidelity has persisted over an evolutionary timescale in at least the Icelandic and Norwegian feeding grounds (Palsbøll *et al.* 1995; Larsen *et al.* 1996). Previously, the North Atlantic humpback whale population was treated as a single stock for management purposes (Waring *et al.* 1999). Indeed, earlier genetic analyses (Palsbøll *et al.* 1995), based upon relatively small sample sizes, had failed to discriminate among the four western North Atlantic feeding areas. However, genetic analyses often reflect a timescale of thousands of years, well beyond those commonly used by managers. Accordingly, the decision was made to reclassify the Gulf of Maine as a separate feeding stock (Waring *et al.* 2000); this was based upon the strong fidelity by individual whales to this region, and the attendant assumption that, were this subpopulation wiped out, repopulation by immigration from adjacent areas would not occur on any reasonable management timescale. This reclassification has subsequently been supported by new genetic analyses based upon a much larger collection of samples than those utilized by Palsbøll *et al.* (1995). These analyses have found significant differences in mtDNA haplotype frequencies among whales sampled in four western feeding areas, including the Gulf of Maine (Palsbøll *et al.* 2001). During the 2002 Comprehensive Assessment of North Atlantic humpback whales, the International Whaling Commission acknowledged the evidence for treating the Gulf of Maine as a separate management unit (IWC 2002).

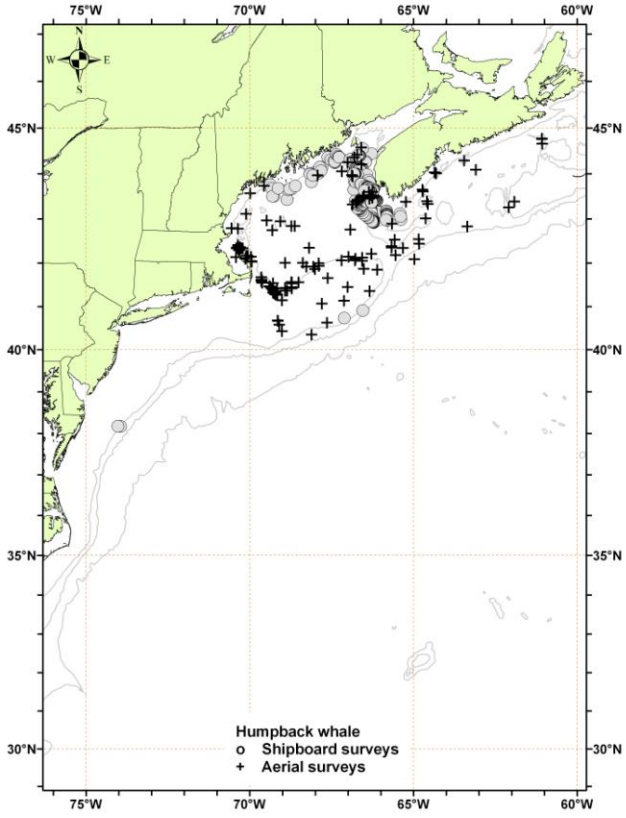

Figure 1. *Distribution of humpback whale sightings from NEFSC and SEFSC shipboard and aerial surveys during the summers of 1998, 1999, 2002, 2004 2006, and 2007. Isobaths are the 100-m, 1000-m and 4000-m depth contours.*

During the summers of 1998 and 1999, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center conducted surveys for humpback whales on the Scotian Shelf to establish the occurrence and population identity of the animals found in this region, which lies between the well-studied populations of the Gulf of Maine and Newfoundland. Photographs from both surveys have now been compared to both the overall North Atlantic Humpback Whale Catalogue and a large regional catalogue from the Gulf of Maine (maintained by the College of the Atlantic and the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies, respectively); this work is summarized in Clapham *et al.* (2003). The match rate between the Scotian Shelf and the Gulf of Maine was 27% (14 of 52 Scotian Shelf individuals from both years). Comparable rates of exchange were obtained from the southern (28%, n=10 of 36 whales) and northern (27%, *n*=4 of 15 whales)

ends of the Scotian Shelf, despite the additional distance of nearly 100 nautical miles (one whale was observed in both areas). In contrast, all (of the 36) humpback whales identified by the same NMFS surveys elsewhere in the Gulf of Maine (including Georges Bank, southwestern Nova Scotia and the Bay of Fundy) had been previously observed in the Gulf of Maine region. The sighting histories of the 14 Scotian Shelf whales matched to the Gulf of Maine suggested that many of them were transient through the latter area. There were no matches between the Scotian Shelf and any other North Atlantic feeding ground, except the Gulf of Maine; however, instructive comparisons are compromised by the often low sampling effort in other regions in recent years. Overall, it appears that the northern range of many members of the Gulf of Maine stock does not extend onto the Scotian Shelf.

During winter, whales from most Atlantic feeding areas (including the Gulf of Maine) mate and calve in the West Indies, where spatial and genetic mixing among subpopulations occurs (Katona and Beard 1990; Clapham *et al.* 1993; Palsbøll *et al.* 1997; Stevick *et al.* 1998). A few whales of unknown northern origin migrate to the Cape Verde Islands (Reiner *et al.* 1996). In the West Indies, the majority of whales are found in the waters of the Dominican Republic, notably on Silver Bank and Navidad Bank, and in Samana Bay (Balcomb and Nichols 1982; Whitehead and Moore 1982; Mattila *et al.* 1989; Mattila *et al.* 1994). Humpback whales are also found at much lower densities throughout the remainder of the Antillean arc, from Puerto Rico to the coast of Venezuela (Winn *et al.* 1975; Levenson and Leapley 1978; Price 1985; Mattila and Clapham 1989).

Not all whales migrate to the West Indies every winter, and significant numbers of animals are found in mid- and high-latitude regions at this time (Clapham *et al.* 1993; Swingle *et al.* 1993). An increased number of sightings of humpback whales in the vicinity of the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays occurred in 1992 (Swingle *et al.* 1993). Wiley *et al.* (1995) reported 38 humpback whale strandings occurred during 1985-1992 in the U.S. mid-Atlantic and southeastern states. Humpback whale strandings increased, particularly along the Virginia and North Carolina coasts, and most stranded animals were sexually immature; in addition, the small size of many of these whales strongly suggested that they had only recently separated from their mothers. Wiley *et al.* (1995) concluded that these areas were becoming an increasingly important habitat for juvenile humpback whales and that anthropogenic factors may negatively impact whales in this area. There have also been a number of wintertime humpback sightings in coastal waters of the southeastern U.S. (NMFS unpublished data; New England Aquarium unpublished data). Whether the increased number of sightings represent a distributional change, or are simply due to an increase in sighting effort and/or whale abundance, is unknown.

A key question with regard to humpback whales off the southeastern and mid-Atlantic states is their population identity. This topic was investigated using fluke photographs of living and dead whales observed in the region (Barco *et al.* 2002). In this study, photographs of 40 whales (alive or dead) were of sufficient quality to be compared to catalogs from the Gulf of Maine (the closest feeding ground) and other areas in the North Atlantic. Of 21 live whales, 9 (42.9%) matched to the Gulf of Maine, 4 (19.0%) to Newfoundland and 1 (4.8%) to the Gulf of St Lawrence. Of 19 dead humpbacks, 6 (31.6%) were known Gulf of Maine whales. Although the population composition of the mid-Atlantic is apparently dominated by Gulf of Maine whales, lack of recent photographic effort in Newfoundland makes it likely that the observed match rates under-represent the true presence of Canadian whales in the region. Barco *et al.* (2002) suggested that the mid-Atlantic region primarily represents a supplemental winter feeding ground used by humpbacks.

In New England waters, feeding is the principal activity of humpback whales, and their distribution in this region has been largely correlated to abundance of prey species, although behavior and bottom topography are factors influencing foraging strategy (Payne *et al.* 1986; 1990). Humpback whales are frequently piscivorous when in New England waters, feeding on herring (*Clupea harengus*), sand lance (*Ammodytes* spp.), and other small fishes. In the northern Gulf of Maine, euphausiids are also frequently taken (Paquet *et al.* 1997). Commercial depletion of herring and mackerel led to an increase in sand lance in the southwestern Gulf of Maine in the mid 1970s with a concurrent decrease in humpback whale abundance in the northern Gulf of Maine. Humpback whales were densest over the sandy shoals in the southwestern Gulf of Maine favored by the sand lance during much of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and humpback distribution appeared to have shifted to this area (Payne *et al.* 1986). An apparent reversal began in the mid 1980s, and herring and mackerel increased as sand lance again decreased (Fogarty *et al.* 1991). Humpback whale abundance in the northern Gulf of Maine increased markedly during 1992-1993, along with a major influx of herring (P. Stevick, pers. comm.). Humpback whales were few in nearshore Massachusetts waters in the 1992-1993 summer seasons. They were more abundant in the offshore waters of Cultivator Shoal and on the Northeast Peak on Georges Bank and on Jeffreys Ledge; these latter areas are traditional locations of herring occurrence. In 1996 and 1997, sand lance and therefore humpback whales were once again abundant in the Stellwagen Bank area. However, unlike previous cycles, when an increase in sand lance corresponded to a decrease in herring, herring remained relatively abundant in the northern Gulf of Maine, and humpbacks correspondingly continued to occupy this portion of the habitat, where they also fed on euphausiids (unpublished data, Provincetown

Center for Coastal Studies and College of the Atlantic).

In early 1992, a major research program known as the Years of the North Atlantic Humpback (YONAH) (Smith *et al.* 1999) was initiated. This was a large-scale, intensive study of humpback whales throughout almost their entire North Atlantic range, from the West Indies to the Arctic. During two primary years of field work, photographs for individual identification and biopsy samples for genetic analysis were collected from summer feeding areas and from the breeding grounds in the West Indies. Additional samples were collected from certain areas in other years. Results pertaining to the estimation of abundance and to genetic population structure are summarized below.

POPULATION SIZE

North Atlantic Population

The overall North Atlantic population (including the Gulf of Maine), derived from genetic tagging data collected by the YONAH project on the breeding grounds, was estimated to be 4,894 males (95% CI=3,374-7,123) and 2,804 females (95% CI=1,776-4,463) (Palsbøll *et al.* 1997). Because the sex ratio in this population is known to be even (Palsbøll *et al.* 1997), the excess of males is presumed a result of sampling bias, lower rates of migration among females, or sex-specific habitat partitioning in the West Indies; whatever the reason, the combined total is an underestimate of overall population size. Photographic mark-recapture analyses from the YONAH project provided an ocean-basin-wide estimate of 11,570 animals during 1992/1993 (CV=0.068, Stevick *et al.* 2003), and an additional genotype-based analysis yielded a similar but less precise estimate of 10,400 whales (CV=0.138, 95% CI=8,000 to 13,600) (Smith *et al.* 1999). In the northeastern North Atlantic, Øien (2001) estimated from sighting survey data that there were 889 (CV=0.32) humpback whales in the Barents and Norwegian Seas region.

Gulf of Maine stock - earlier estimates

Please see Appendix IV for earlier estimates. As recommended in the GAMMS Workshop Report (Wade and Angliss 1997), estimates older than eight years are deemed unreliable and should not be used for PBR determinations.

Gulf of Maine Stock - Recent surveys and abundance estimates

An abundance estimate of 521 (CV=0.67) humpback whales was obtained from an aerial survey conducted in July and August 2002 which covered 7,465 km of trackline over waters from the 1000 m depth contour on the southern edge of Georges Bank to Maine (Table 1; Palka 2006). The value of *g(0)* used for this estimation was derived from the pooled data of 2002, 2004 and 2006 aerial survey data.

An abundance estimate of 359 (CV=0.75) humpback whales was obtained from a line-transect sighting survey conducted from 12 June to 4 August 2004 by a ship and plane. The 2004 survey covered the smallest portion of the habitat (6,180 km of trackline), from the 100 m depth contour on the southern Georges Bank to the lower Bay of Fundy; while the Scotian shelf south of Nova Scotia was not surveyed.

An abundance estimate of 847 animals (CV=0.55) was derived from a line-transect sighting survey conducted during August 2006 which covered 10,676 km of trackline from the 2000 m depth contour on the southern edge of Georges Bank to the upper Bay of Fundy and to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. (Table 1; Palka pers. comm.) Some evidence exists to support a 25% exchange rate between Scotian shelf animals and with those in the Gulf of Maine (Clapham *et al.* 2003), which suggest that a 25% correction factor be applied to the humpback population estimate from the Scotian shelf stratum. Because the Scotian shelf was surveyed in only 2006, the 25% correction factor (described above) was applied to only the 2006 abundance estimate.

Minimum Population Estimate

The minimum population estimate is the lower limit of the two-tailed 60% confidence interval of the log-normally distributed best abundance estimate. This is equivalent to the 20th percentile of the log-normal distribution as specified by Wade and Angliss (1997). The best estimate of abundance for Gulf of Maine humpback whales is 847 animals (CV=0.55). The minimum population estimate for this stock is 549 animals.

Table 1. Summary of abundance estimates for Gulf of Maine humpback whales.			
Month/Year	**Type**	**N**	**CV**
Aug 2002	S. Gulf of Maine to Maine	521	0.67
Jun-Jul 2004	Gulf of Maine to lower Bay of Fundy	359	0.75
Aug 2006	S. Gulf of Maine to upper Bay of Fundy to Gulf of St. Lawrence	847	0.55

Current Population Trend

As detailed below, current data suggest that the Gulf of Maine humpback whale stock is steadily increasing in size. This is consistent with an estimated average trend of 3.1% (SE=0.005) in the North Atlantic population overall for the period 1979-1993 (Stevick *et al*. 2003), although there are no feeding-area-specific estimates.

CURRENT AND MAXIMUM NET PRODUCTIVITY RATES

Barlow and Clapham (1997) applying an interbirth interval model to photographic mark-recapture data, estimated the population growth rate of the Gulf of Maine humpback whale stock at 6.5% (CV=0.012). Maximum net productivity is unknown for this population, although a theoretical maximum for any humpback population can be calculated using known values for biological parameters (Brandão *et al*. 2000; Clapham *et al.* 2001). For the Gulf of Maine stock, data supplied by Barlow and Clapham (1997) and Clapham *et al.* (1995) give values of 0.96 for survival rate, 6 years as mean age at first parturition, 0.5 as the proportion of females, and 0.42 for annual pregnancy rate. From this, a maximum population growth rate of 0.072 is obtained according to the method described by Brandão *et al*. (2000). This suggests that the observed rate of 6.5% (Barlow and Clapham 1997) is close to the maximum for this stock.

Clapham *et al.* (2003) updated the Barlow and Clapham (1997) analysis using data from the period 1992 to 2000. The population growth estimate was either 0% (for a calf survival rate of 0.51) or 4.0% (for a calf survival rate of 0.875). Although confidence limits were not provided (because maturation parameters could not be estimated), both estimates of population growth rate are outside the 95% confidence intervals of the previous estimate of 6.5% for the period 1979 to 1991 (Barlow and Clapham 1997). It is unclear whether this apparent decline is an artifact resulting from a shift in distribution; indeed, such a shift occurred during exactly the period (1992-1995) in which survival rates declined. It is possible that this shift resulted in calves that were born in those years imprinting on (and thus subsequently returning to) areas other than those in which intensive sampling occurred. If the decline is real, it may be related to known high mortality among young-of-the-year whales in the waters off the U.S. mid-Atlantic states. However, calf survival appears to have increased since 1996, presumably accompanied by an increase in population growth.

In light of the uncertainty accompanying the more recent estimates of population growth rate for the Gulf of Maine stock, the maximum net productivity rate was assumed to be the default value of 0.04 for cetaceans (Barlow *et al.* 1995).

POTENTIAL BIOLOGICAL REMOVAL

Potential Biological Removal (PBR) is the product of minimum population size, one-half the maximum productivity rate, and a "recovery" factor (MMPA Sec. 3. 16 U.S.C. 1362; Wade and Angliss 1997). The minimum population size for the Gulf of Maine stock is 549 whales. The maximum productivity rate is the default value of 0.04. The "recovery" factor, which accounts for endangered, depleted, or threatened stocks, or stocks of unknown status relative to optimum sustainable population (OSP) is assumed to be 0.10 because this stock is listed as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). PBR for the Gulf of Maine humpback whale stock is 1.1 whales.

ANNUAL HUMAN-CAUSED SERIOUS INJURY AND MORTALITY

For the period 2003 through 2007, the minimum annual rate of human-caused mortality and serious injury to the Gulf of Maine humpback whale stock averaged 4.4 animals per year (U.S. waters, 4.0; Canadian waters, 0.4). This value includes incidental fishery interaction records, 2.8 (U.S. waters, 2.4; Canadian waters, 0.4); and records of vessel collisions, 1.6 (U.S. waters, 1.6; Canadian waters, 0) (Glass *et al.* 2009).

In contrast to stock assessment reports before 2007, these averages include humpback mortalities and serious injuries that occurred in the southeastern and mid-Atlantic states that could not be confirmed as involving members of the Gulf of Maine stock. In past reports, only events involving whales confirmed to be members of the Gulf of Maine stock were counted against the PBR. Starting in the 2007 report, we assumed whales were from the Gulf of Maine unless they were identified as members of another stock. At the time of this writing, no whale was identified as a member of another stock. These determinations may change with the availability of new information. Canadian records were incorporated into the mortality and serious injury rates, to reflect the effective range of this stock as described above. For the purposes of this report, discussion is primarily limited to those records considered confirmed human-caused mortalities or serious injuries.

Serious injury was defined in 50 CFR part 229.2 as an injury that is likely to lead to mortality. We therefore limited serious injury designations to only those reports that had substantiated evidence that the injury, whether from entanglement or vessel collision, was likely to lead to the whale's death. Determinations of serious injury were made on a case-by-case basis following recommendations from the workshop conducted in 1997 on differentiating serious and non-serious injuries (Angliss and DeMaster 1998). Injuries that impeded a whale's locomotion or feeding were not considered serious injuries unless they were likely to be fatal in the foreseeable future. There was no forecasting of how the entanglement or injury might increase the whale's susceptibility to further injury, namely from additional entanglements or vessel collisions. For these reasons, the human impacts listed in this report represent a minimum estimate.

To better assess human impacts (both vessel collision and gear entanglement), and considering the number of decomposed and incompletely or unexamined animals in the records, there needs to be greater emphasis on the timely recovery of carcasses and complete necropsies. The literature and review of records described here suggest that there are significant human impacts beyond those recorded in the fishery observer data. For example, a study of entanglement-related scarring on the caudal peduncle of 134 individual humpback whales in the Gulf of Maine suggested that between 48% and 65% had experienced entanglements (Robbins and Mattila 2001). Decomposed and/or unexamined animals (e.g., carcasses reported but not retrieved or no necropsy performed) represent 'lost data' some of which may relate to human impacts.

Background

As with right whales, human impacts (vessel collisions and entanglements) may be slowing recovery of the humpback whale population. Of 20 dead humpback whales (principally in the mid-Atlantic, where decomposition did not preclude examination for human impacts), Wiley *et al.* (1995) reported that six (30%) had major injuries possibly attributable to ship strikes, and five (25%) had injuries consistent with possible entanglement in fishing gear. One whale displayed scars that may have been caused by both ship strike and entanglement. Thus, 60% of the whale carcasses suitable for examination showed signs that anthropogenic factors may have contributed to, or been responsible for, their death. Wiley *et al.* (1995) further reported that all stranded animals were sexually immature, suggesting a winter or migratory segregation and/or that juvenile animals are more susceptible to human impacts.

An updated analysis of humpback whale mortalities from the mid-Atlantic states region was produced by Barco *et al.* (2002). Between 1990 and 2000, there were 52 known humpback whale mortalities in the waters of the U.S. mid-Atlantic states. Inspection of length data from 48 of these whales (18 females, 22 males, and 8 of unknown sex) suggested that 39 (81.2%) were first-year animals, 7 (14.6%) were immature and 2 (4.2%) were adults. However, sighting histories of five of the dead whales indicate that some were small for their age, and histories of live whales further indicate that the proportion of mature whales in the mid-Atlantic may be higher than suggested by the stranded sample.

Robbins and Mattila (2001) reported that males were more likely to be entangled than females. Their scarring data suggested that yearlings were more likely than other age classes to be involved in entanglements. Finally, female humpbacks showing evidence of prior entanglements produced significantly fewer calves, suggesting that entanglement may significantly impact reproductive success.

Humpback whale entanglements also occur in relatively high numbers in Canadian waters. Reports of interactions with fixed fishing gear set for groundfish around Newfoundland averaged 365 annually from 1979 to 1987 (range 174-813). An average of 50 humpback whale entanglements (range 26-66) was reported annually between 1979 and 1988, and 12 of 66 humpback whales entangled in 1988 died (Lien *et al.* 1988). Two humpbacks were reported entangled in fishing gear in Newfoundland and Labrador waters in 2005. One towed away the gear and was not re-sighted, and the other was released alive (Ledwell and Huntington 2006). Eighty-four humpbacks were reported entangled in fishing gear in Newfoundland and Labrador from 2000-2006 (W. Ledwell, pers. comm.). Volgenau *et al.* (1995) reported that in Newfoundland and Labrador, cod traps caused the most entanglements and entanglement mortalities (21%) of humpbacks between 1979 and 1992. They also reported that gillnets were the

primary cause of entanglements and entanglement mortalities (20%) of humpbacks in the Gulf of Maine between 1975 and 1990.

Disturbance by whale watching may be an important issue in some areas of the population's range, notably the coastal waters of New England where the density of whale watching traffic is seasonally high. However, no studies have been conducted to address this question.

As reported by Wiley *et al.* (1995), injuries possibly attributable to ship strikes are more common and probably more serious than those from entanglements. In the NMFS records for 2003 through 2007, 11 records had some evidence of a collision with a vessel. Eight of these were mortalities as a result of the collision. No whale involved in the recorded vessel collisions had been identified as a member of a stock other than the Gulf of Maine stock at the time of this writing (Glass *et al.* 2008).

Fishery-Related Serious Injuries and Mortalities

A description of Fisheries is provided in Appendix III. Two mortalities were observed in the pelagic drift gillnet fishery, one in 1993 and the other in 1995. In winter 1993, a juvenile humpback was observed entangled and dead in a pelagic drift gillnet along the 200-m isobath northeast of Cape Hatteras. In early summer 1995, a humpback was entangled and dead in a pelagic drift gillnet on southwestern Georges Bank. Additional reports of mortality and serious injury, as well as description of total human impacts, are contained in records maintained by NMFS. A number of these records (11 entanglements involving lobster pot/trap gear) from the 1990-1994 period were the basis used to reclassify the lobster fishery (62 FR 33, Jan. 2, 1997).

For this report, the records of dead, injured, and/or entangled humpbacks (found either stranded or at sea) for the period 2003 through 2007 were reviewed. Entanglements accounted for four mortalities and ten serious injuries. With no evidence to the contrary, all events were assumed to involve members of the Gulf of Maine stock. While these records are not statistically quantifiable in the same way as observer fishery records, they provide some indication of the frequency of entanglements.

Table 2. Confirmed U.S. and Canadian human-caused mortality and serious injury records of North Atlantic humpback whales, January 2003 - December 2007. All records were assumed to involve members of the Gulf of Maine humpback whale stock unless a whale was confirmed to be a member of another stock. (Glass *et al.* 2009).

Date[a]	Report Type[b]	Age, Sex, ID, Length	Location[a]	Assigned Cause: P=primary, S=secondary		Notes/Observations
				Ship strike	Entang./ Fsh.inter	
06/06/03	mortality	Juvenile Female 8.3m	Chesapeake Bay mouth, VA	P		Major trauma to right side of head; hematoma
07/09/03	serious injury	Calf of Shockwave sex unknown	Bay of Fundy, NS		P	Constricting entanglement on a young whale; no gear recovered
07/12/03	serious injury	age & sex unknown	Oregon Inlet, NC		P	Entangled in substantial amount of gear; no gear recovered
08/15/03	mortality	Calf sex unknown 7.3m (est)	Petit Manan Island, ME		P	Floating offshore wrapped in line; gear recovered consists of a small portion of gillnet

08/16/03	serious injury	age & sex unknown	Cape Cod, MA		P	Poor body condition; line deeply embedded; gear recovered included sink gillnet, vessel anchoring system, surface buoy system and endline
08/18/03	serious injury	age & sex unknown	Cape Cod, MA		P	Extensive entanglement; no gear recovered
07/11/04	serious injury	Juvenile sex unknown "Lucky"	Briar Island, NS		P	Entanglement on a young whale; no gear recovered
10/03/04	mortality	age unknown Male 15m (est)	Georges Bank, US		P	Fresh carcass with entangling line and high flyer; no gear recovered
12/19/04	mortality	Calf Female 8.0m	Bethany Beach, DE	P		Hematoma and skeletal fracturing
01/09/06	mortality	Adult Female #8667 14.0m	off Charleston, SC	P		Extensive muscle hemorrhaging; rib fractures; dislocated flipper on left side of animal
03/17/06	mortality	Juvenile Female 10.0m	Virginia Beach, VA	P		Crushed cranium and fractured mandible; hemorrhaging associated with fractures; ventral lacerations consistent with propeller wounds
03/25/06	serious injury	Juvenile sex unknown 8m (est)	Flagler Beach, FL		P	Heavy cyamid load; emaciated; spinal deformity that may or may not have been caused by the entanglement; gear recovered included line and buoys and was identified as lobster pot gear
08/06/06	serious injury	age & sex unknown	Georges Bank, US		P	Multiple constricting wraps around head; line cutting into upper lip; wraps around both flippers; no gear recovered
08/23/06	serious injury	age & sex unknown 12m (est)	Great South Channel, US		P	Flukes necrotic and nearly severed as a result of entanglement; pale skin and emaciated; gear recovered included heavy line and wire trap
09/06/06	mortality	age & sex unknown	East of Cape Cod, MA		P	Whale entangled through mouth continuing back to multiple wraps around peduncle; no gear recovered

10/15/06	mortality	Juvenile Female 10.1m	off Fenwick Island, DE	P	S	Large laceration, penetrating through the bone, across rostrum with accompanying fractures; no gear, but marks around right flipper consistent with entanglement; subdermal hemorrhaging and bone trauma at entanglement point
01/27/07	serious injury	age & sex unknown	off Beach Haven, NJ		P	Body wrap likely to become constricting; random cyamid patches; thin body condition; probable flipper wraps; no gear recovered
05/10/07	mortality	Adult Female 12.5m	off Wachapreague, VA	P		Cranium shattered, hemorrhaging on left lateral side midway between flippers & fluke
05/13/07	mortality	Juvenile Male 9.3m	Rockport, MA	P		Areas of hemorrhaging indicate major blunt trauma to chest, neck & head
06/23/07	serious injury	age unknown Male "Egg Toss"	Wildcat Knoll, US		P	Body wrap of gear imbedded; no gear recovered
06/24/07	mortality	Juvenile Female "Tofu" 9.9m	Stellwagen Bank, US	P		Subdermal hemorrhaging involving blubber, fascia, & muscle extending from/around the insertion of the right flipper ventrally to the axilla
12/21/07	mortality	age unknown Male 9.4m	Ocean Sands, NC		P	Documented wrapped in gear, gear removed without permission prior to necropsy; external lesions at flukes, flippers, mouth, dorsal fin, dorsal keel & ventral pleats consistent with gillnet entanglement; animal emaciated; no gear recovered

a. The date sighted and location provided in the table are not necessarily when or where the serious injury or mortality occurred; rather, this information indicates when and where the whale was first reported beached, entangled, or injured.

b. National guidelines for determining what constitutes a serious injury have not been finalized. Interim criteria as established by NERO/NMFS (Glass *et al.* 2009) have been used here. Some assignments may change as new information becomes available and/or when national standards are established.

Other Mortality

Between November 1987 and January 1988, at least 14 humpback whales died after consuming Atlantic mackerel containing a dinoflagellate saxitoxin (Geraci *et al.* 1989). The whales subsequently stranded or were recovered in the vicinity of Cape Cod Bay and Nantucket Sound, and it is highly likely that other unrecorded mortalities occurred during this event. During the first six months of 1990, seven dead juvenile (7.6 to 9.1 m long) humpback whales stranded between North Carolina and New Jersey. The significance of these strandings is unknown.

In July 2003, an Unusual Mortality Event (UME) was invoked in offshore waters when an estimated minimum of 12-15 humpback whales died in the vicinity of the Northeast Peak of Georges Bank. Preliminary tests of samples taken from some of these whales were positive for domoic acid at low levels, but it is currently unknown what levels

would affect the whales and therefore no definitive conclusions can yet be drawn regarding the cause of this event or its effect on the status of the Gulf of Maine humpback whale population. Seven humpback whales were considered part of a large whale UME in New England in 2005. Twenty-one dead humpback whales found between 10 July and 31 December 2006 triggered a humpback whale UME declaration, still considered ongoing at the end of 2007. Causes of these UME events have not been determined.

STATUS OF STOCK

The status of the North Atlantic humpback whale population was the topic of an International Whaling Commission Comprehensive Assessment in June 2001, and again in May 2002. These meetings conducted a detailed review of all aspects of the population and made recommendations for further research (IWC 2002). Although recent estimates of abundance indicate continued population growth, the size of the humpback whale stock may be below OSP in the U.S. Atlantic EEZ. This is a strategic stock because the humpback whale is listed as an endangered species under the ESA. A Recovery Plan was published and is in effect (NMFS 1991). There are insufficient data to reliably determine current population trends for humpback whales in the North Atlantic overall. The average annual rate of population increase was estimated at 3.1% (SE=0.005, Stevick *et al.* 2003). An analysis of demographic parameters for the Gulf of Maine (Clapham *et al.* 2003) suggested a lower rate of increase than the 6.5% reported by Barlow and Clapham (1997), but results may have been confounded by distribution shifts. The total level of U.S. fishery-caused mortality and serious injury is unknown, but reported levels are more than 10% of the calculated PBR and, therefore, cannot be considered to be insignificant or approaching zero mortality and serious injury rate. This is a strategic stock because the average annual human-related mortality and serious injury exceeds PBR, and because the North Atlantic humpback whale is an endangered species.

As part of a large-scale assessment called More of North Atlantic Humpbacks (MoNAH) project, extensive sampling was conducted on humpbacks in the Gulf of Maine/Scotian Shelf region and the primary wintering ground on Silver Bank during 2004-2005. These data are being analyzed along with additional data from the U.S. mid-Atlantic to estimate abundance and refine knowledge of the North Atlantic humpback whales' population structure. The work is intended to update the YONAH population assessment in preparation for a status review under the ESA.

REFERENCES CITED

Angliss, R.P. and D.P. DeMaster 1998. Differentiating serious and non-serious injury of marine mammals taken incidental to commercial fishing operations: Report of the serious injury workshop, 1-2 April 1997, Silver Spring MD. NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-OPR-13. 48 pp.

Balcomb, K.C. and G. Nichols 1982. Humpback whale censuses in the West Indies. Rep. Int. Whal. Comm. 32: 401-406.

Barco, S.G., W.A. McLellan, J.M. Allen, R.A. Asmutis-Silvia, R. Mallon-Day, E.M. Meagher, D.A. Pabst, J. Robbins, R.E. Seton, W.M. Swingle, M.T. Weinrich and P.J. Clapham 2002. Population identity of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in the waters of the U.S. mid-Atlantic states. J. Cetacean Res. Manage. 4(2): 135-141.

Barlow, J. and P.J. Clapham 1997. A new birth-interval approach to estimating demographic parameters of humpback whales. Ecology 78: 535-546.

Barlow, J., S.L. Swartz, T.C. Eagle and P.R. Wade 1995. U.S. marine mammal stock assessments: Guidelines for preparation, background, and a summary of the 1995 assessments. NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-OPR-6. 73 pp.

Brandão, A., D.S. Butterworth and M.R. Brown 2000. Maximum possible humpback whale increase rates as a function of biological parameter values. J. Cetacean Res. Manage. 2 (suppl.): 192-193.

Christensen, I., T. Haug and N. Øien 1992. Seasonal distribution, exploitation and present abundance of stocks of large baleen whales (Mysticeti) and sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*) in Norwegian and adjacent waters. ICES J. Mar. Sci. 49: 341-355.

Clapham, P.J., L.S. Baraff, C.A. Carlson, M.A. Christian, D.K. Mattila, C.A. Mayo, M.A. Murphy and S. Pittman 1993. Seasonal occurrence and annual return of humpback whales, *Megaptera novaeangliae*, in the southern Gulf of Maine. Can. J. Zool. 71: 440-443.

Clapham, P.J., J. Barlow, M. Bessinger, T. Cole, D. Mattila, R. Pace, D. Palka, J. Robbins and R. Seton 2003. Abundance and demographic parameters of humpback whales from the Gulf of Maine, and stock definition relative to the Scotian Shelf. J. Cetacean Res. Manage. 5(1): 13-22.

Clapham, P.J., M.C. Bérubé and D.K. Mattila 1995. Sex ratio of the Gulf of Maine humpback whale population. Mar. Mamm. Sci. 11: 227-231.

Clapham, P.J. and C.A. Mayo 1987. Reproduction and recruitment of individually identified humpback whales, *Megaptera novaeangliae*, observed in Massachusetts Bay, 1979-1985. Can. J. Zool. 65: 2853-2863.

Clapham, P.J., J. Robbins, M. Brown, P. Wade and K. Findlay 2001. A note on plausible rates of population growth for humpback whales. J. Cetacean Res. Manage. 3 (suppl.): 196-197

Fogarty, M.J., E.B. Cohen, W.L. Michaels and W.W. Morse 1991. Predation and the regulation of sand lance populations: An exploratory analysis. ICES [Int. Counc. Explor. Sea] Mar. Sci. Symp. 193: 120-124.

Geraci, J.R., D.M. Anderson, R.J. Timperi, D.J.S. Aubin, G.A. Early, J.H. Prescott and C.A. Mayo 1989. Humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) fatally poisoned by dinoflagellate toxins. Can. J. Fish. Aquat. Sci 46: 1895-1898.

Glass, A.H., T.V.N. Cole and M. Garron 2009. Mortality and serious injury determinations for baleen whale stocks along the United States eastern seaboard and adjacent Canadian Maritimes, 2003-2007. Northeast Fish Sci Cent Ref Doc. 09-04. 19 pp.

Glass, A.H., T.V.N. Cole, M. Garron, R.L. Merrick and R.M. Pace, III 2008. Mortality and serious injury determinations for baleen whale stocks along the United States Eastern Seaboard and adjacent Canadian Maritimes, 2002-2006. Northeast Fish. Sci. Cent. Ref. Doc. 08-04. 18 pp.

IWC [International Whaling Committee] 2002. Report of the Scientific Committee. Annex H: Report of the Sub-committee on the Comprehensive Assessment of North Atlantic humpback whales. J. Cetacean Res. Manage. 4 (suppl.): 230-260.

Katona, S.K. and J.A. Beard 1990. Population size, migrations, and feeding aggregations of the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in the western North Atlantic ocean. Rep. Int. Whal. Comm. (Special Issue) 12: (295-306).

Larsen, A.H., J. Sigurjónsson, N. Øien, G. Vikingsson and P.J. Palsbøll 1996. Population genetic analysis of mitochondrial and nuclear genetic loci in skin biopsies collected from central and northeastern North Atlantic humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*): population identity and migratory destinations. Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, B 263: 1611-1618.

Ledwell, W. and J. Huntington 2006. Whale, leatherback sea turtles and basking shark entrapments in fishing gear in Newfoundland and Labrador and a summary of the Whale Release and Strandings Program during 2005. Report to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada 18 pp.

Levenson, C. and W.T. Leapley 1978. Distribution of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in the Caribbean determined by a rapid acoustic method. J. Fish. Res. Board Can 35: 1150-1152.

Lien, J., W. Ledwell and J. Naven 1988. Incidental entrapment in inshore fishing gear during 1988: A preliminary report to the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Fisheries and Oceans. 15 pp.

Mattila, D.K. and P.J. Clapham 1989. Humpback whales and other cetaceans on Virgin Bank and in the northern Leeward Islands, 1985 and 1986. Can. J. Zool. 67: 2201-2211.

Mattila, D.K., P.J. Clapham, S.K. Katona and G.S. Stone 1989. Population composition of humpback whales on Silver Bank. Can. J. Zool. 67: 281-285.

Mattila, D.K., P.J. Clapham, O. Vásquez and R. Bowman 1994. Occurrence, population composition and habitat use of humpback whales in Samana Bay, Dominican Republic. Can. J. Zool. 72: 1898-1907.

NMFS {National Marine Fisheries Service] 1991. Recovery plan for the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). National Marine Fisheries Service, Silver Spring, Maryland, 105 pp.

Øien, N. 2001. Humpback whales in the Barents and Norwegian Seas. International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee, IWC, 135 Station Road, Impington, Cambridge, UK. SC/53/NAH21.

Palka, D.L. 2006. Summer abundance estimates of cetaceans in US North Atlantic Navy Operating Areas. Northeast Fish. Sci. Cent. Ref. Doc. 06-03. 41 pp. http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/nefsc/publications/crd/crd0603/crd0603.pdf

Palsbøll, P.J., J. Allen, T.H. Anderson, M. Bérubé, P.J. Clapham, T.P. Feddersen, N. Friday, P. Hammond, H. Jørgensen, S.K. Katona, A.H. Larsen, F. Larsen, J. Lien, D.K. Mattila, F.B. Nygaard, J. Robbins, R. Sponer, R. Sears, J. Sigurjónsson, T.D. Smith, P.T. Stevick, G. Vikingsson and N. Øien 2001. Stock structure and composition of the North Atlantic humpback whale, *Megaptera novaeangliae*. International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee, IWC, 135 Station Road, Impington, Cambridge, UK. SC/53/NAH11.

Palsbøll, P.J., J. Allen, M. Berube, P. Clapham, T. Feddersen, P. Hammond, R. Hudson, H. Jorgensen, S. Katona, A.H. Larsen, F. Larsen, J. Lien, D. Mattila, J. Sigurjonsson, R. Sears, T. Smith, R. Sponer, P. Stevick and N. Oien 1997. Genetic tagging of humpback whales. Nature 388: 767-769.

Palsbøll, P.J., P.J. Clapham, D.K. Mattila, F. Larsen, R. Sears, H.R. Siegismund, J. Sigurjónsson, O. Vásquez and P. Arctander 1995. Distribution of mtDNA haplotypes in North Atlantic humpback whales: the influence of behavior on population structure. Mar. Ecol. Prog. Ser. 116: 1-10.

Paquet, D., C. Haycock and H. Whitehead 1997. Numbers and seasonal occurrence of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) off Brier Island, Nova Scotia. Can. Field-Nat. 111: 548-552.

Payne, P.M., J.R. Nicholas, L. O'Brien and K.D. Powers 1986. The distribution of the humpback whale, *Megaptera novaeangliae*, on Georges Bank and in the Gulf of Maine in relation to densities of the sand eel, *Ammodytes americanus*. Fish. Bull. 84: 271-277.

Payne, P.M., D.N. Wiley, S.B. Young, S. Pittman, P.J. Clapham and J.W. Jossi 1990. Recent fluctuations in the abundance of baleen whales in the southern Gulf of Maine in relation to changes in selected prey. Fish. Bull. 88: 687-696.

Price, W.S. 1985. Whaling in the Caribbean: historical perspective and update. Rep. Int. Whal. Comm. 35: 413-420.

Reiner, F., M.E.D. Santos and F.W. Wenzel 1996. Cetaceans of the Cape Verde archipelago. Mar. Mamm. Sci. 12: 434-443.

Robbins, J. and D.K. Mattila 2001. Monitoring entanglements of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in the Gulf of Maine on the basis of caudal peduncle scarring. International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee, IWC, 135 Station Road, Impington, Cambridge, UK. SC/53/NAH25.

Smith, T.D., J. Allen, P.J. Clapham, P.S. Hammond, S. Katona, F. Larsen, J. Lien, D. Mattila, P.J. Palsboll, J. Sigurjonsson, P.T. Stevick and N. Oien 1999. An ocean-basin-wide mark-recapture study of the North Atlantic humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). Mar. Mamm. Sci. 15(1): 1-32.

Stevick, P., N. Øien and D.K. Mattila 1998. Migration of a humpback whale between Norway and the West Indies. Mar. Mamm. Sci. 14: 162-166.

Stevick, P.T., J. Allen, P.J. Clapham, N. Friday, S.K. Katona, F. Larsen, J. Lien, D.K. Mattila, P.J. Palsbøll, J. Sigurjónsson, T.D. Smith, N. Øien and P.S. Hammond 2003. North Atlantic humpback whale abundance and rate of increase four decades after protection from whaling. Mar. Ecol. Prog. Ser. 258: 263-273.

Swingle, W.M., S.G. Barco, T.D. Pitchford, W.A. McLellan and D.A. Pabst 1993. Appearance of juvenile humpback whales feeding in the nearshore waters of Virginia. Mar. Mamm. Sci. 9: 309-315.

Volgenau, L., S.D. Kraus and J. Lien 1995. The impact of entanglements on two substocks of the western North Atlantic humpback whale, *Megaptera novaeangliae*. Can. J. Zool. 73: 1689-1698.

Wade, P.R. and R.P. Angliss 1997. Guidelines for assessing marine mammal stocks: Report of the GAMMS Workshop April 3-5, 1996, Seattle, Washington. NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-OPR-12. 93 pp.

Waring, G.T., D.L. Palka, P.J. Clapham, S. Swartz, M.C. Rossman, T.V.N. Cole, K.D. Bisack and L.J. Hansen, eds. 1999. U.S. Atlantic marine mammal stock assessments - 1998. NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-NE-116. 182 pp.

Waring, G.T., J.M. Quintal and S.L. Swartz, eds. 2000. U.S. Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico marine mammal stock assessments - 2000. NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-NE-162. ix +197p. +3 app. pp.

Whitehead, H. and M.J. Moore 1982. Distribution and movements of West Indian humpback whales in winter. Can. J. Zool. 60: 2203-2211.

Wiley, D.N., R.A. Asmutis, T.D. Pitchford and D.P. Gannon 1995. Stranding and mortality of humpback whales, *Megaptera novaeangliae*, in the mid-Atlantic and southeast United States, 1985-1992. Fish. Bull. 93: 196-205.

Winn, H.E., R.K. Edel and A.G. Taruski 1975. Population estimate of the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in the West Indies by visual and acoustic techniques. J. Fish. Res. Board Can 32: 499-506.