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Andrzej Ginalski, PhD – WWF Poland, 34th European Cetacean Society Conference, 18-20 April 2023, O Grove, Galicia, Spain

Conservation efforts to protect marine mammals in the southern Baltic Sea

Aims of the project

Protection against anthropogenic threats and pressures (e.g. bycatch, tourist pressure / habitat disturbance), monitoring and research, education and increasing awareness on the marine environment and its conservation

Target species

Marine mammals: **harbour porpoise, grey seal, ringed seal and harbour seal**
Seabirds: ringed plover, little tern, sandwich tern, common tern, oystercatcher

WWF Blue Patrol

- A group of 200 volunteers along the entire Polish coast (around 600 kms) who:
 - patrol the beaches in search of animals that need help
 - investigate Blue Hotline notifications about animals on the coast
 - carry out education in the field (tourists, other beach users, schools) and work with local communities



Testing alternative fishing gear

Cod pots and pontoon trap – analysing ability to use this gear in Polish marine waters, analysing bycatch rate and fishing success



Marine Forum

12 events (off/online):

- a dialogue with fishermen on minimizing their conflict with an increasing population of seals
- webinars on harbour porpoise, seal species, state of the Baltic Sea and its changes, Marine Protected Areas etc.



WWF project 1.04.2020 – 31.10.2023 Protection of marine mammals and seabirds – continuation

A series of WWF marine projects since 2009
Partners: University of Gdańsk, Waterbird Research Group KULING
<https://chronbaltyk.pl/en/o-projekcie/about-the-project/>

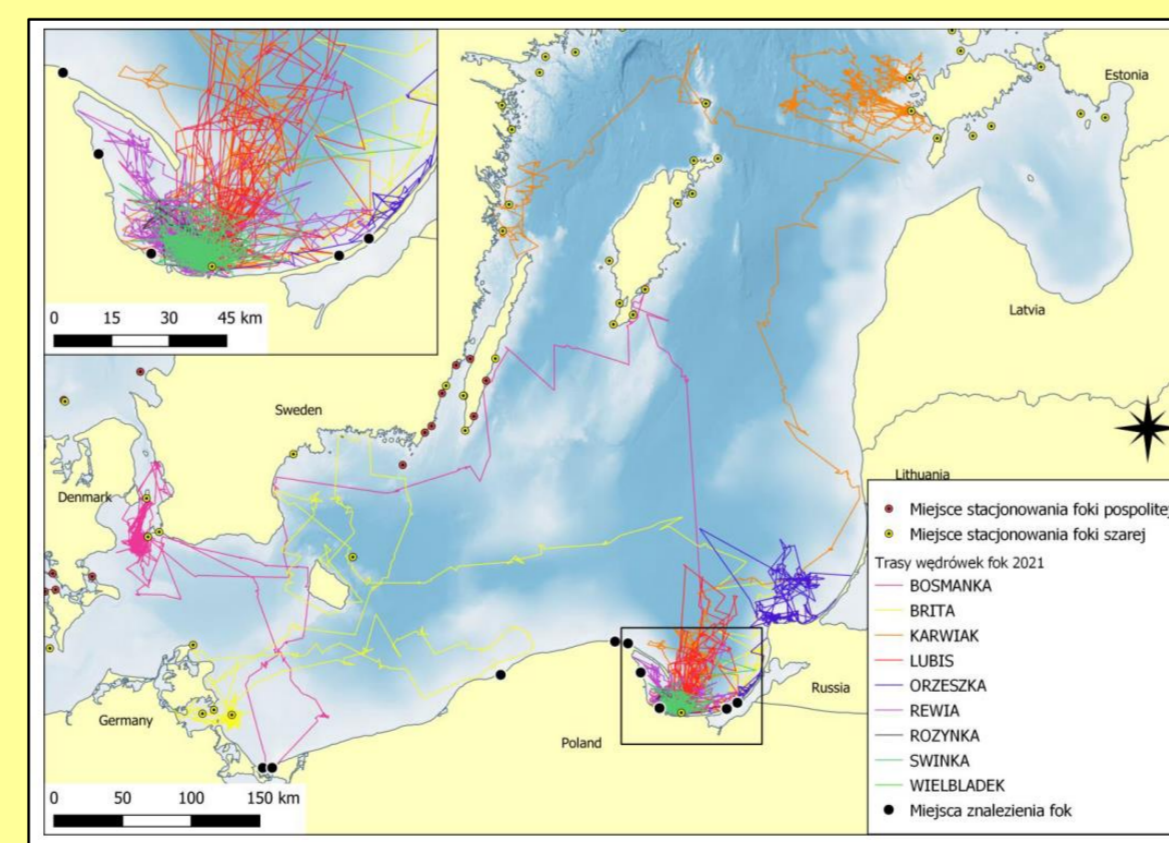
Rehabilitation of weak, ill or wounded animals –

mainly grey seals, mostly pups
2020: 59 grey seals, 3 harbour seals
2021: 34 grey seals, 1 ringed seal
2022: 66 grey seals
rehabilitated and released
by Hel Marine Station Rehabilitation Center



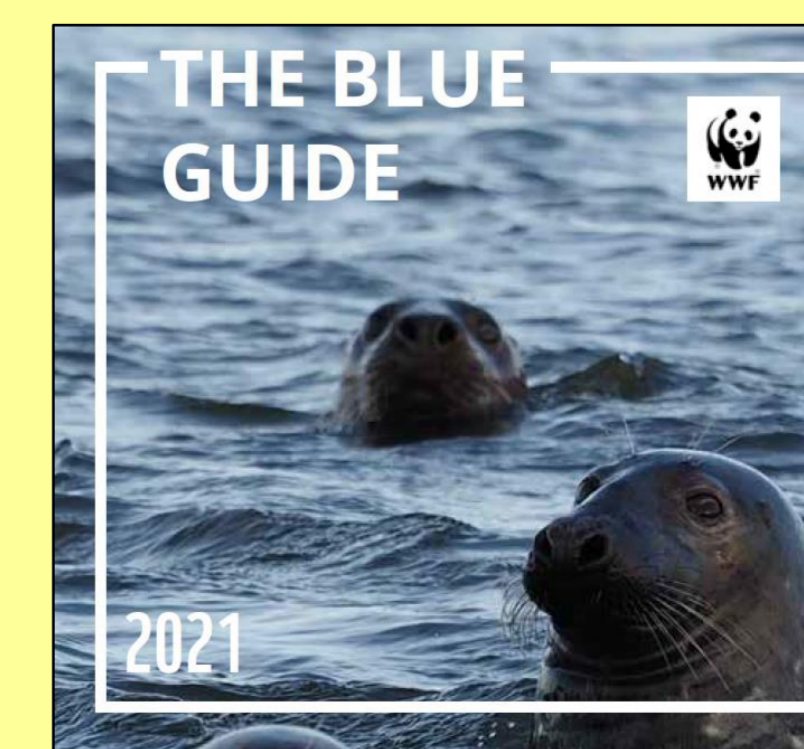
Collecting scientific data on marine mammals

- monitoring of seal migration routes (satellite transmitters)
 - database on sightings, stranded animals
 - acoustic monitoring of harbour porpoise
 - information about health of animals
 - causes of death



Outreach and education

- Internet posts and campaigns
- paper publications, including The Blue Guide
- guidelines: Good practices for tourist boats in the Vistula Mouth MPA, Mitigating the investments' impact on marine mammals



PORPOISE ON THE SHORE
While on the beach, you can encounter a porpoise. It would most likely be dead, but you may happen to find a live animal stuck on the shore. Unlike seals, porpoises live only in water. Their presence on land is a sign of trouble. No matter the state the found animal is in, make a call to:
the WWF Blue Patrol +48 795 536 009
or Hel Marine Station +48 601 883 940
Your information will help us protect the porpoise population in the Baltic.

Remember! If you find a live porpoise stranded on the beach, don't let any onlookers or animals come near it. Make sure it's not disturbed.

Don't push it back into the water! Pour water over its body, but be very careful to avoid its blowhole, which is located at the top of its head!

