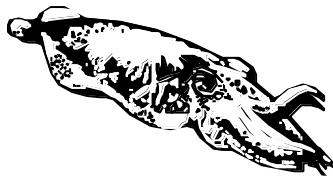
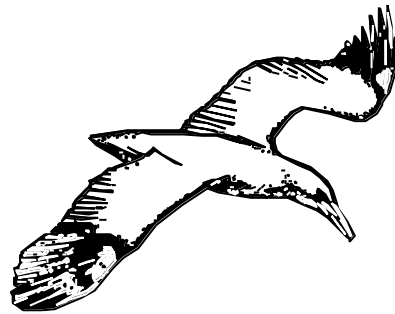


WWF calls upon Ministers of the Environment and the Member of the European Commission to give a strong commitment to the protection of marine wildlife and habitats through the designation and management of a network of marine protected areas within the North-East Atlantic.

WWF believes that the adoption by the Environment Ministers of North-East Atlantic States and the Member of the European Commission, in Sintra, Portugal in July 1998, of a new Annex to the OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic offers a new opportunity to provide the necessary protection for important deeper water or offshore habitats and for species, such as whales and dolphins, sharks, deepwater fish and marine invertebrates, for which little or no protection currently exists. This proactive step will begin to fulfil the commitments given at the 1995 Esbjerg North Sea Ministerial Conference to provide further protection for marine species and habitats in coastal and offshore areas and within the Convention on Biological Diversity.

**WWF's Essentials
for OSPAR MMC
1998
- Ecosystems and
Biological Diversity -**

For information, contact:
Stephan Lutter
WWF North-East Atlantic Programme
Am Güthpol 11 · D-28757 Bremen · Germany
Tel: +49 421 65846-22 · Fax: +49 421 65846-12
E-mail: lutter@wwf.de



from regulations and measures under the new Annex. WWF has particular concerns that there are no strategic risk assessment techniques for fisheries. Appropriate risk assessment is required to inform the competent authorities on fisheries that action is needed. It is clearly important to recognise the competency of other relevant bodies, however the identification of the need for action to protect marine wildlife and habitats within the North-East Atlantic Maritime Area from the full range of human activities should be within the responsibilities of the OSPAR Commission.

WWF recognises that the establishment of Natura 2000 - a network of protected areas across the whole of the European Community - will be a major achievement for the protection of wildlife and habitats in Europe. Marine wildlife and habitats, however, receive too little attention under the relevant EC Directives. In particular, the list of marine species and habitats to which protection should be afforded is extremely limited. The identification of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive has currently been restricted to sites within the 12nm territorial waters. Furthermore, only sites of European importance can be encompassed by Natura 2000.

WWF urges further protection for marine wildlife in North-East Atlantic waters through an expanded network of coastal and marine sites. This network would encompass sites of both European and national importance, sites in deep water beyond territorial waters and sites within the 12nm territorial waters limit.



A tremendous range of diversity and productivity exists in the offshore environment. There is a need to protect the most important sites as well as to reduce the increasing threats to habitats and wildlife which were once considered to be too remote to be affected by human activity. Deepwater fisheries and exploitation of mineral resources are increasing.

Serious consideration needs to be given to ways of overcoming legal, administrative and practical difficulties of management and enforcement, however while the debate has lagged behind in Europe, countries such as the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Canada have moved ahead. In this context, WWF welcomes the initiative to arrange the first OSPAR Workshop on Marine Protected Areas in 1998 and the respective work on criteria for the selection of species and habitats as undertaken by the OSPAR Working Group on Impacts on the Marine Environment so far.

WWF has identified a number of sites which it is believed would qualify as offshore marine protected areas, including the Dogger Bank in the southern North Sea, the waters west of the German Island Sylt, the Sula Ridge west of mid-Norway, the Western Irish Sea Front, the Rockall Bank and Trough to the west of the British Isles, the Celtic Shelf Break to the south-west of England and Eire and north-west of France.



WWF's Living Planet Campaign has drawn up a list of 200 ecoregions - the Global 200 - that have been identified as being critical to the world's biological diversity. Within the OSPAR Maritime Area the Wadden Sea, the Icelandic and Celtic Marine Ecosystems and the Svalbard/Franz Joseph Land Marine Ecosystems have been identified among these 200 ecoregions. A long-term vision and conservation plans are needed for our common natural heritage.

WWF believes that in providing adequate protection for marine wildlife it is important to also consider the broader measures necessary to provide protection for those animals which range or migrate over large distances and spend some or much of their lives in other parts of the world. In some cases we still do not know where these other places may be, for example, the basking shark is seen in Irish, Norwegian and British waters during the summer months but it is not known where it goes for the rest of the year or where and when it breeds. This is a very real difficulty when effort is needed to protect the second-largest fish in the world as numbers appeared to have declined. There are numerous examples of highly mobile or highly migratory wildlife found throughout the North-East Atlantic for which broader measures across the whole of their range will be necessary.

