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# Harbour porpoise survey in the Oosterschelde estuary



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The Dutch delta comprises several estuaries in the south-western part of the Netherlands. One of the estuaries, National Park the Oosterschelde (370 km<sup>2</sup>), is separated from the North Sea by a storm surge barrier.

Incidental sightings of harbour porpoises were recorded in the Oosterschelde, however, no information was available on the abundance and distribution of these animals."

On September 19<sup>th</sup> 2009 the first research on abundance ever was conducted by the Rugvin foundation and sponsored by WWF Netherlands.

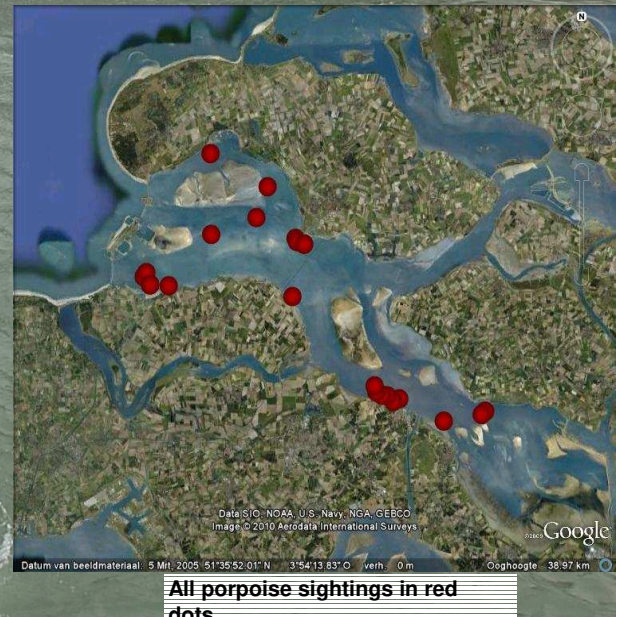
Eight boats sailed in parallel formation from west to east. The speed was 6 knots and the total observation time was up to 6 hours per boat. Observation conditions were optimal (Bft 0-1).

At the end of the day 37 porpoises were counted including five calves.

The outcome of the results was broadcasted on national television, radio, many websites and newspapers.

Apparently, the Oosterschelde storm-surge barrier hasn't prevent migration of harbour porpoises from the North Sea. But what's keeping them behind?

Further research with the use of C-pods on the migration through the barrier is in process now and a second survey is planned for May 2010.



All porpoise sightings in red dots.

