

Annual Report 2011-2012

RUGVIN



STICHTING RUGVIN / RUGVIN FOUNDATION

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Annual report

2011- 2012



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Text: Jenny Koch, Nynke Osinga, Bas Beekmans and Frank Zanderink
Photo's: Wouter Jan Strietman, Rob Nicolai and Frank Zanderink
Cover: Arthur Hendriks
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Preface

Please find this biennial report 2011- 2012 of the Rugvin foundation, (Stichting Rugvin). Previously we always managed to issue an annual report every year. But 2011 and 2012 were so full of activities that we decided to give the report a lower priority than our fundamental activities.

We continued, of course, the monitoring on the Stena Line ferries, Hollandica and Britannica. Here, more and more sightings were recorded. This supported the idea that the North Sea porpoise population is heading southward. And we also saw that the white beaked dolphin is still present, though still low in number.

And off course we continued our scans, the acoustic research and a porpoise hot spot determination for the Eastern Scheldt.

Acknowledgements

Rugvin would like to thank WWF Netherlands and National Park Eastern Scheldt for their financial support, Stena Line for their everlasting hospitality at sea. And of course without the enormous help of Peter Koppenaal and his crew of the MS Hammen we would be completely helpless at the Eastern Scheldt. Thank you for sailing and lifting the C-pods out of the water!

And last but not least thanks to all volunteers for their passionate enthusiasm. Without your efforts we wouldn't be able to gain so much recordings of the Dutch cetaceans.

Monitoring cetaceans from Stena Line ferries

Methods

Surveys are carried out on a monthly basis. Each survey consists of two survey days (day 1: Hook of Holland to Harwich, day 2: Harwich to Hook of Holland). The total observing time is approximately six hours per survey day.

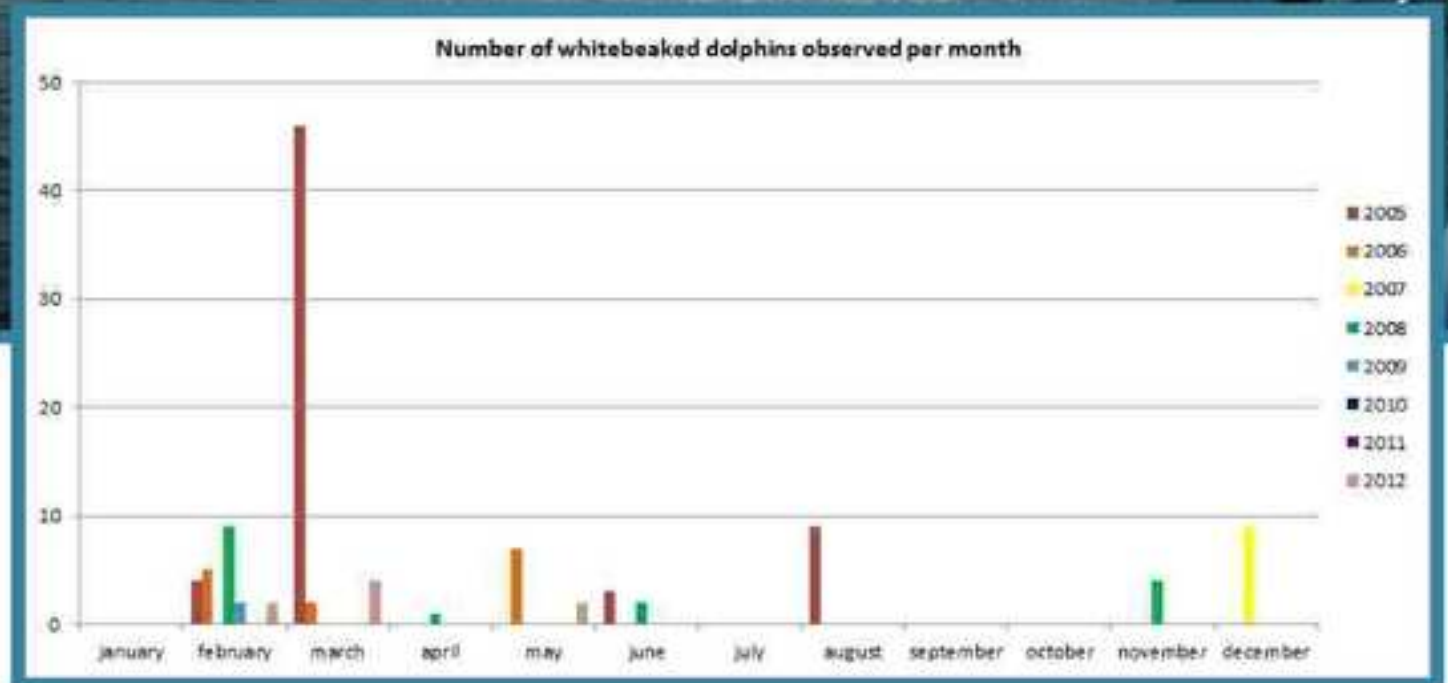
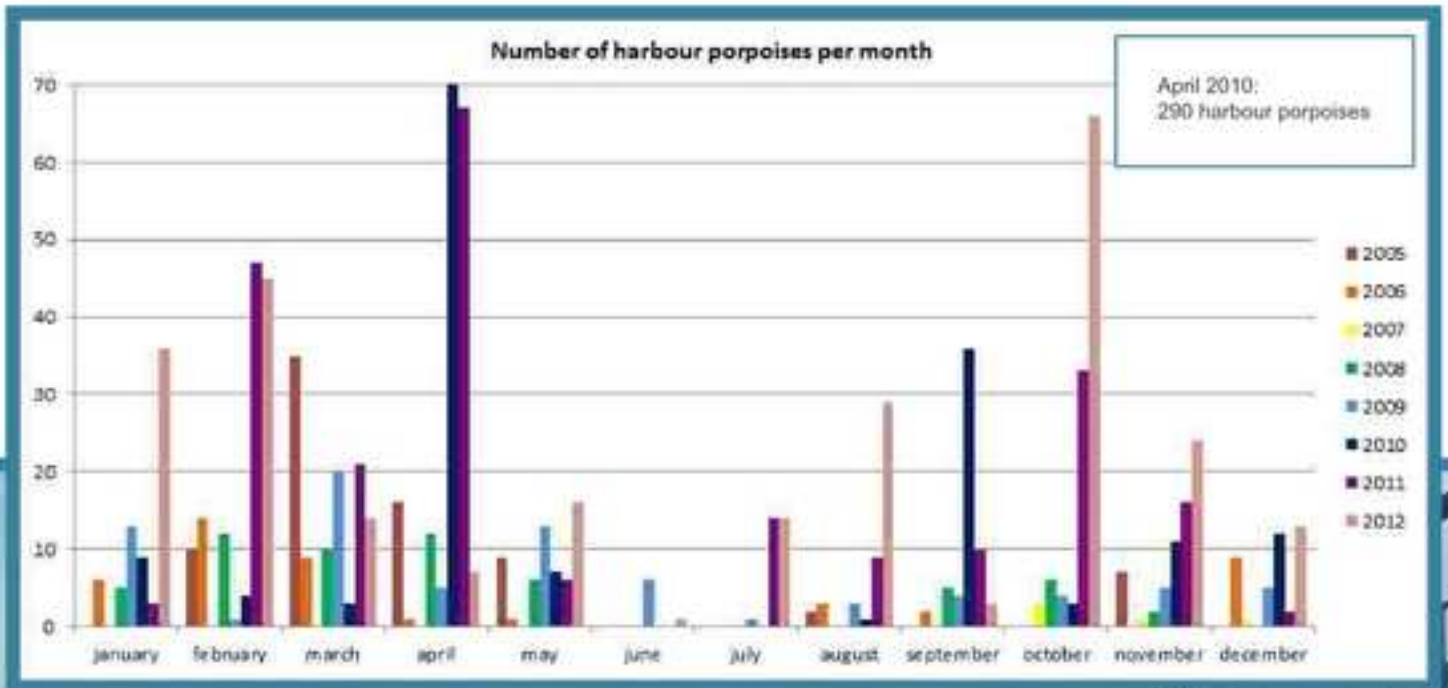
The surveys are carried out by two observers, one on starboard side and one on port side. Each survey coordinator is accompanied by one other observer. We use the ARC (Atlantic Research Coalition) recording forms and methods.

Ferries as monitoring platform

Ferries provide a unique platform for cetacean monitoring. These operate on a regular basis and on fixed transects, allowing the study of seasonal fluctuations as well as the detection of trends over the years. Furthermore the ferries provide an excellent observation point as the bridges are situated high above sea level (35 m). Standardised data collection, as done by the ARC-partners, gives the opportunity to compare different areas and cover a large total area.



Results 2005-2012



(Special) Sightings



Four moments of porpoise sightings.



During the monitoring trip of April 2011 four killerwhales were observed by Ilse and Frank. Later on it appeared these had been sighted on the South East coast of England as well.

In 2010 also one killerwhale was sighted in the Wadden Sea. This animal, later called Morgan, was transported to Harderwijk.

In 2012 there were also at least 6 sightings of Humpback whales in the Dutch coastal waters. Some of these were seen by Rugvin volunteers on shore and by the crew of Stena Line.



Acoustic research in the Eastern Scheldt

In addition to the harbour porpoise population in the North Sea, a small resident population seems to be established in the Eastern Scheldt, a semi-closed part of the Dutch Delta Area. The Eastern Scheldt storm surge barrier separates the Eastern Scheldt from the North Sea. In order to investigate if harbour porpoises do swim through the storm surge barrier, acoustic data have been collected by so-called C-PODs.

Methods

Three C-PODs, devices for static acoustic monitoring, were deployed on three locations: one in the North Sea and two in the Eastern Scheldt, near the southern part of the barrier. Migration was assumed to occur when harbour porpoise clicks were recorded in the Eastern Scheldt and in the next ten-minute time-interval in the North Sea or vice versa.

Data between February 2010 and October 2011 have been analysed thus far. Unfortunately, in 2011 some C-PODs were lost due to strong tides and tough weather conditions. Therefore, migration could only be studied by analysing data collected between February 2010 and March 2011.





Results

The presence of harbour porpoise has been observed in the Eastern Scheldt in all months of the year. The tidal currents of the storm surge barrier do have a significant effect: the stronger the currents, the less harbour porpoises occur nearby the barrier. Furthermore, harbour porpoises were more often present when the water was flowing into the Eastern Scheldt, during high tide.

Evidence was found for migration between the Eastern Scheldt and the North Sea in both ways. This means that it is not impossible for porpoises to cross the storm surge barrier, but the results suggest also that this does not happen very frequent! Evidence for migration from the North Sea to the Eastern Schelde was found in March 2010 and January 2011 and evidence for migration back to the North Sea was found in September 2010.

The research was carried out with the financial support from WWF Netherlands and the National Park Oosterschelde (Eastern Scheldt). Rijkswaterstaat (part of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment) kindly provided technical support as well as supervision.

Hotspot determination in the Eastern Scheldt

Methods

This research was carried out by two students (Lotte and Sophie) in order to identify hotspots of harbour porpoises in the Eastern Scheldt. Land observations were carried out around the estuary on ten locations during six-hour time slots, for a total of twenty fieldwork days, during the autumn of 2011. To be classified as a hotspot, more than twenty harbour porpoises needed to be sighted during a six-hour time slot at one location. The location near Zierikzee and its channel came out as the hot spot. Here the water depth is up to 50 meters below NAP and contains the following fish species: gobies (*Pomatoschistus*), black gobies (*Gobius niger*), herring and sprat (*Clupea harengus* and *Sprattus sprattus*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*). These fish species are known to be an important part of the harbour porpoises' main diet.

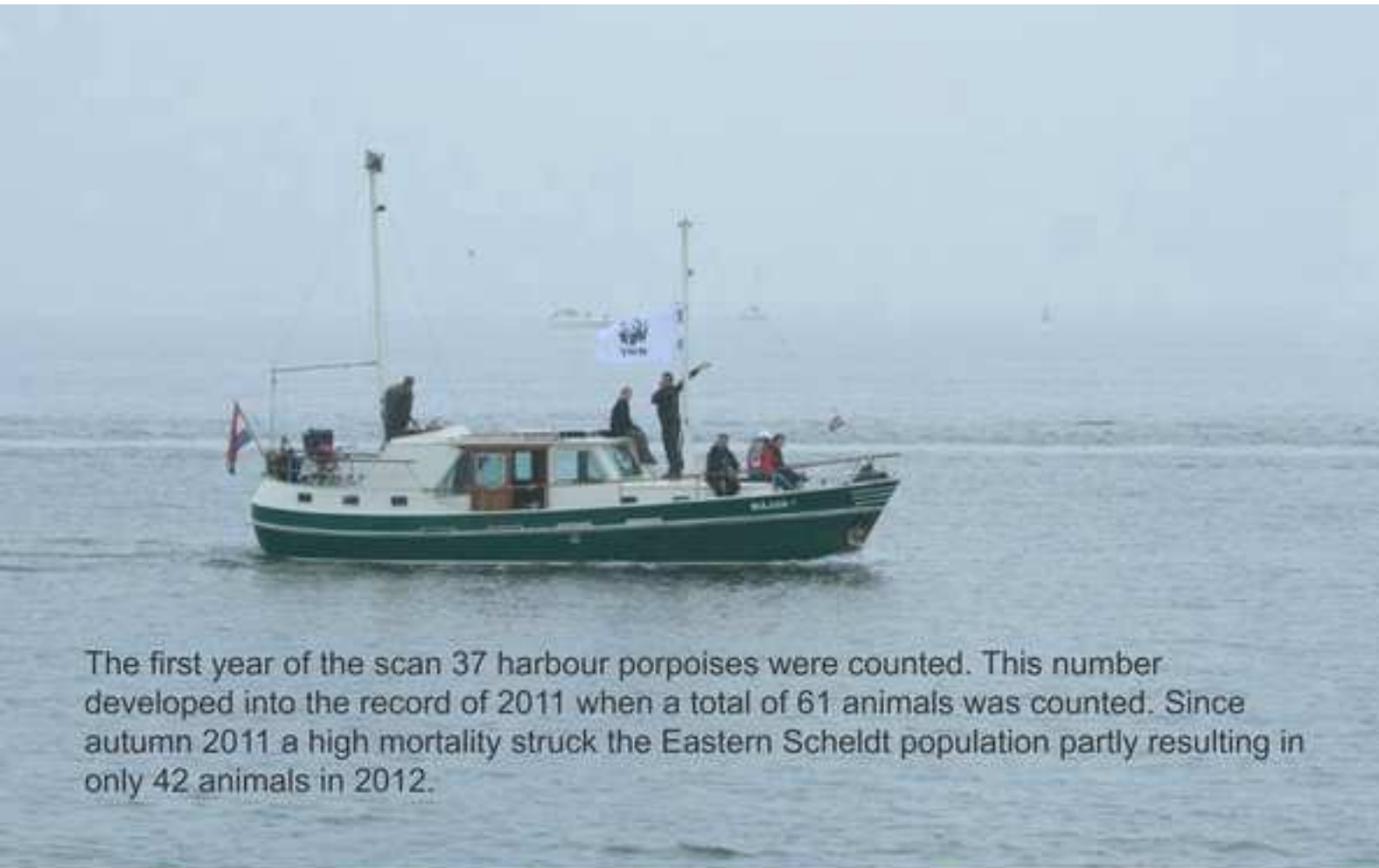


Map of the Eastern Scheldt showing the harbour porpoise hotspot near Zierikzee (green dot) and three potential hotspots (orange dot).

Results

In total, 174 harbour porpoises were sighted, including 14 calves. Out of the ten locations, one hotspot was identified, near the city of Zierikzee (location A3) 58 harbour porpoises were sighted on this location.

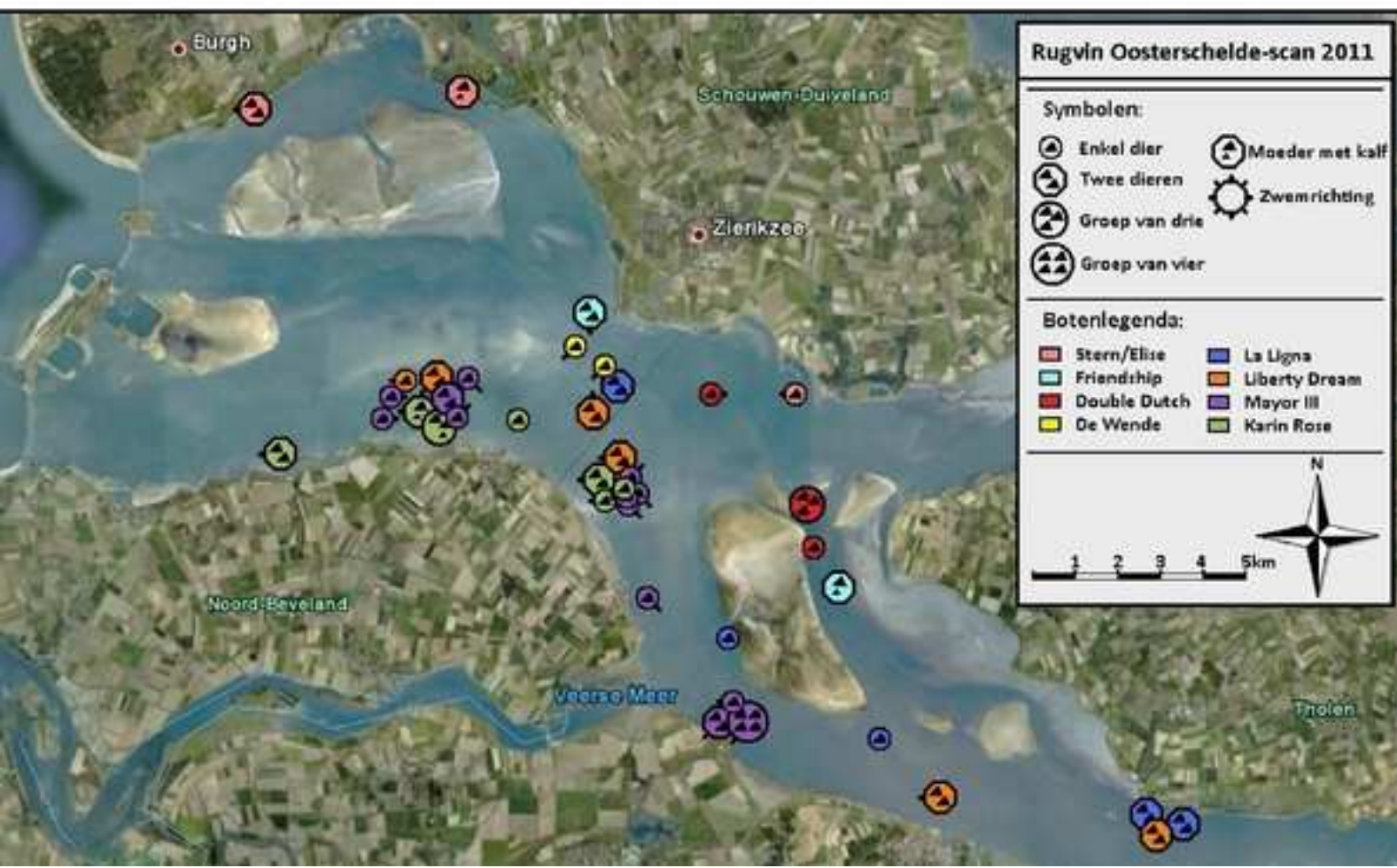
Three other locations (locations A1, A2 and A5) were classified as potential hotspots. Harbour porpoises were more often sighted during falling tide.



The first year of the scan 37 harbour porpoises were counted. This number developed into the record of 2011 when a total of 61 animals was counted. Since autumn 2011 a high mortality struck the Eastern Scheldt population partly resulting in only 42 animals in 2012.

The harbour porpoise counts

Since 2009 Rugvin conducts a so called scan on an annual base. With the help of 8-9 vessels, their skippers and some 30 observers the whole surface of the Eastern Scheldt estuary is scanned from West to East. Slowly the whole fleet sails to all corners of the water by a maximum windspeed of Bft 2.





Since the first scan in the estuary in 2009, we also encountered porpoise calves, being the first ever recorded offspring of harbour porpoises in Dutch waters. Unfortunately the calves and juveniles formed a huge part of the high number of stranded dead porpoises later that year.

Because the Eastern Scheldt forms a relatively "new" habitat for the harbour porpoises there is a lot to discover. Despite the high mortality of the species in the last few years the number per square kilometre is still much higher than in the North Sea. This makes it relatively easy to study these marine mammals in this water. We even started a new project in identifying the animals individually. This is possible due to the nicks and scars on their dorsal fins, (see picture below).



Communication and information by Rugvin

Website

Afer having a basic website for a couple of years, the Rugvin website was restyled in March 2012. Still using the address www.rugvin.nl a lot more visitors were attracted and visited the site. From an average of about 5,000 visitors per annum (2009-2011), the number went up to 12,000 visitors in 2012 (March - December). Not only people from the Netherlands, but also many visitors from Belgium, the UK and USA were recorded amongst others.



In 2011 and 2012 Rugvin started to give presentations for several groups like nature organisations and schools. We also supported Delta Safari an organisation what conducts safaris for ssea birds, seals and cetaceans in the Dutch waters; many times for a boat full of nature minded tourists.



In 2012 we were able to place information posters for travellers on both Stena Britannica and Stena Hollandica. The posters are telling the passengers about the possibility and how to observe porpoises, dolphins and whales from the vessels.

Rugvin in the media

The activities of Rugvin are often well received by the Dutch national and regional media. Like the Dutch National broadcast company NOS which was present at the time of the harbour porpoise count in 2011. And one other company Vara's Vroege Vogels which was present on the vessel MS Hammen during one of our acoustic trips.

Provincial Newspapers and Radio companies also made news items about our activities. And of course we wrote our own press releases, articles for the Mammal foundation magazine and many others.



De bruinvis is terug in de Oosterschelde

De bruinvis is terug in de Nederlandse Delta en plant zich op eeuwig voort. Dit blijkt uit onderzoek van Stichting Rugvin, dat op verzoek van WNF Nieuwland wordt uitgevoerd. De onderzoekers willen weten hoe het voortbestaan van de bruinvis in de Oosterschelde leeft, of de dieren jaarmarkering zijn, of ze door de Oosterscheldekring terug voorkomen in de delta en of hier ook overleven.



Paul Dommervaele Nieuwland

De persgroep wordt ondersteund door de provincie Zeeland, de gemeente Zeeland en de gemeente Zeeland. De persgroep wordt ondersteund door de provincie Zeeland, de gemeente Zeeland en de gemeente Zeeland. De persgroep wordt ondersteund door de provincie Zeeland, de gemeente Zeeland en de gemeente Zeeland.

Facebook

Rugvin started its own profile on Facebook in 2011. In October 2011 the first few messages were posted after the land based scan around the Eastern Scheldt estuary. In the second half of 2012 we started to think about how we could make better use of our profile and what we wanted to achieve. By writing in an informal way and inviting people to react on our messages we hope to become a platform where knowledge is shared and people are enthused about cetaceans by others. By informing and educating the public we hope to increase the awareness of cetacean presence in Dutch waters and the need for their conservation. Since mid 2012 we posted messages about the results of our monitoring scans on the North Sea and the estuary on a regular basis. By the end of 2012, 82 people like us.

Twitter

When the new website was realised in 2012 it was a small step to start with Twitter as well.

In the first year 65 Tweets were posted and we created a group of about 50 followers.



Organisation

In 2011 and 2012 the board of the Rugvin foundation consisted of Bas Beekmans (member), Nynke Osinga (secretary) and Frank Zanderink (treasurer and chairman). All Rugvin activities are conducted on a voluntary base. Most of the volunteers were active in one or more activity groups such as the Stena Line monitoring group, the acoustic group and the porpoise scan group of the Eastern Scheldt.



Students

Without the help of students who do their internship with Rugvin it would be very difficult to do all the needed analysis. In 2012 we enjoyed the company of Niki Karagkouni and Catalina Angel Yunda who did the second part of the acoustic research and the hotspot couple, Lotte Niemeijer and Sophie Neitzel, who identified the best place for observing porpoises in the Eastern Scheldt.

The Rugvin team 2011 - 2012

Suzanne, Chantal, Bart, Michelle, Birgit, Arthur, Ilse, Jennifer, Els, Yvonne, Marret, Esther, Merel, Rosanne, Karin, Ernst, Marije, Wouter Jan, Catherine, Maurice, Renske, Arjan, Kees, Roger, Susan, Maria, Sophie, Lotte, Catalina, Niki, Bas, Frank & Nynke.

Finances

Finances 2011

Revenue 2011

Projects	10,923.79
Donations	667.00
Lectures	75.00
Other	11.23 +
Total revenue	€ 11,677.02

Expenses 2011

Projects	€ 9,590.84
Project reservations	1,828.90
Office costs	257.28 +
Total expenses	€ 11,677.02

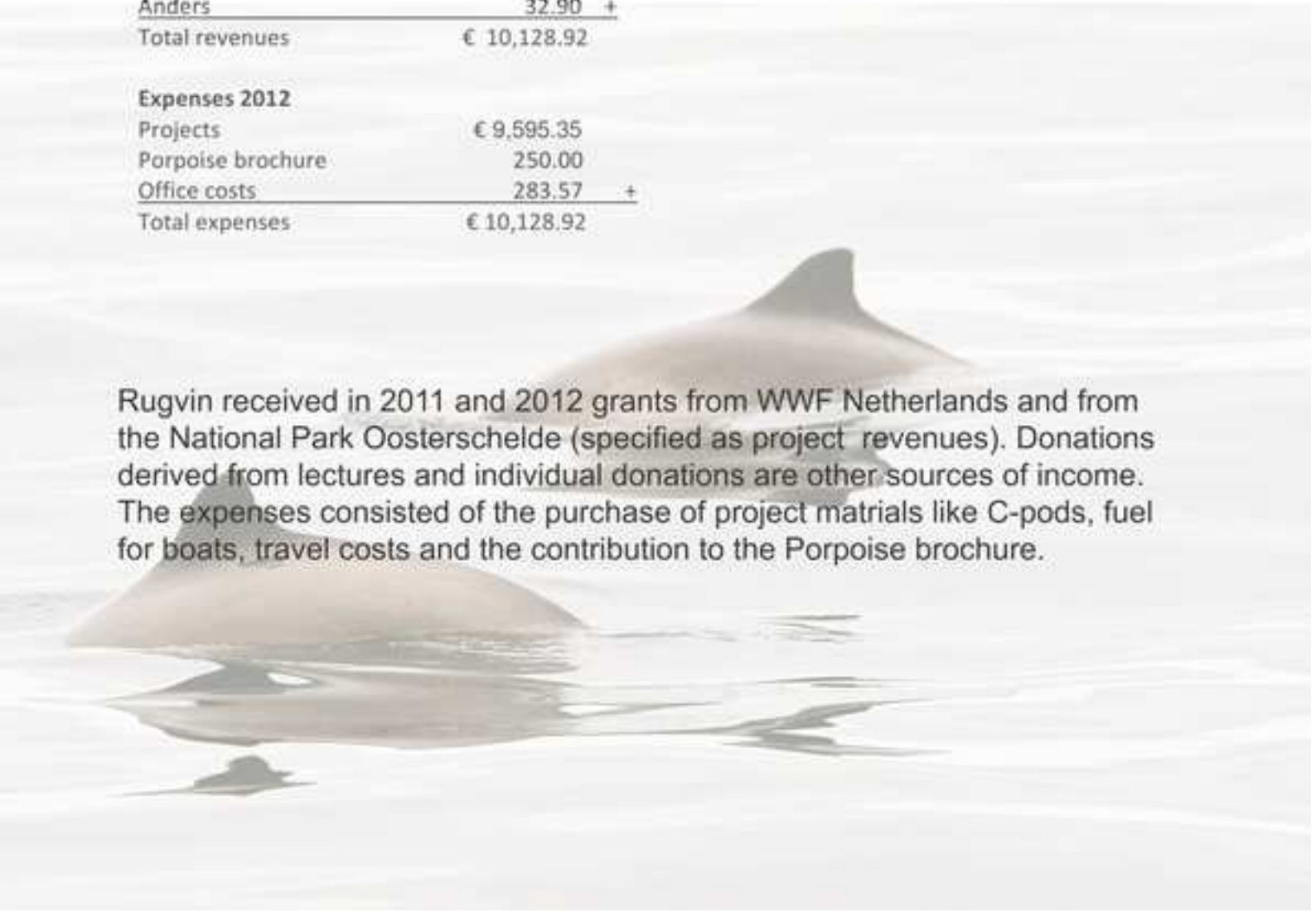
Finances 2012

Revenues 2012

Projects	€ 8,200.00
Project reservations	1,796.02
Donations	50.00
lectures	50.00
Anders	32.90 +
Total revenues	€ 10,128.92

Expenses 2012

Projects	€ 9,595.35
Porpoise brochure	250.00
Office costs	283.57 +
Total expenses	€ 10,128.92



Rugvin received in 2011 and 2012 grants from WWF Netherlands and from the National Park Oosterschelde (specified as project revenues). Donations derived from lectures and individual donations are other sources of income. The expenses consisted of the purchase of project materials like C-pods, fuel for boats, travel costs and the contribution to the Porpoise brochure.



www.rugvin.nl
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