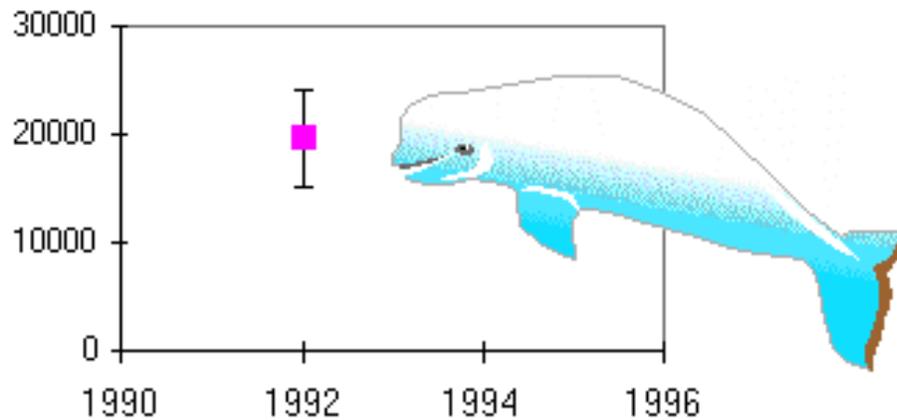


Beluga Whale Numbers



Data Source: Harwood et al. 1996

What is happening?

- The estimate presented here is from a 1992 aerial survey which covered most (but not all) of the range of the Beaufort Sea beluga whale population. There were approximately 20,000 beluga whales (at or near the water surface) estimated within the Mackenzie River estuary, southeast Beaufort Sea and west Amundsen Gulf.
- A second population estimate was developed in 1999 by adding a correction factor for the number of whales that were missed because they were below the surface at the time of the survey. The correction factor simply doubled the number sighted so the population estimate became 39,258 whales.

Why is it happening?

- The numbers counted in the 1992 study are not directly comparable to previous estimates because of the larger area covered in the survey. The survey results support previous work that found beluga whales were widely distributed in both offshore areas as well as in the Mackenzie River estuary.

Why is it important?

- Beluga whales are important to Inuvialuit from many communities for cultural reasons.
- Because beluga whales travel in both offshore and near shore waters, they may be sensitive to changes in the marine environment that could arise from increased development in the Beaufort Sea.

References

- Harwood, Lois A., S. Innes, P. Norton and M.C.S. Kingsley 1996. Distribution and abundance of beluga whales in the Mackenzie estuary, southeast Beaufort Sea and west Amundsen Gulf

during late July 1992. Can. J. Fish. Aquat. Sci. 53: 2262-2273.

- Angliss, R. P., and B. M. Allen 2009. Beluga Whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*): Beaufort Sea Stock. pp 64-67 IN: Alaska Marine Mammal Stock Assessments 2008. NOAA-TM-AFSC-193. The report can be found [here](#).

See also:

- Bowhead Whale Numbers
- Ringed Seal Abundance

Data added: February 1997