

Belgian marine mammals data portal

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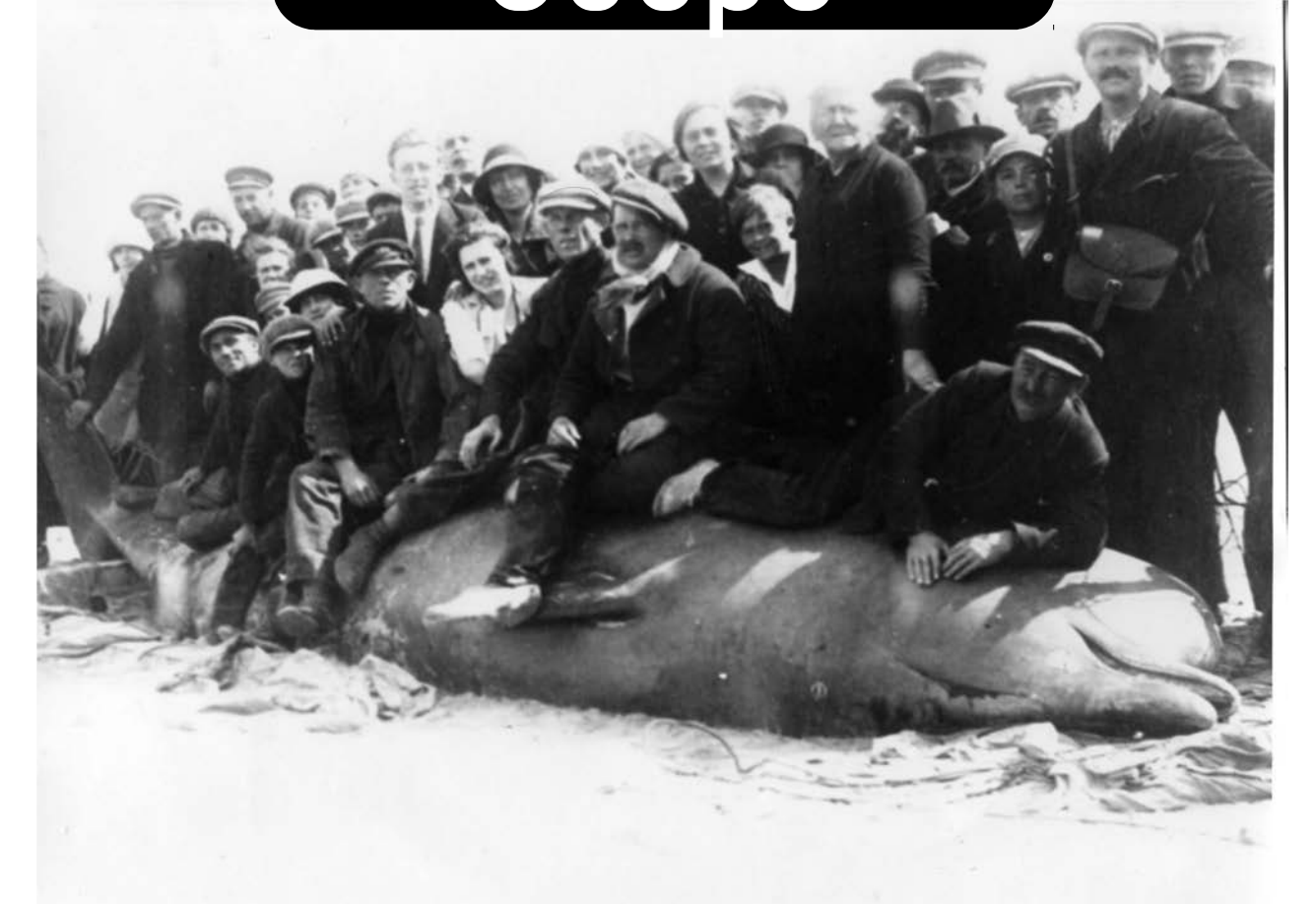
Exposing Belgian stranding data

The marine mammals website is the result of a long-standing collaboration between the **Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences (RBINS)** and the **University of Liège (ULg)** and provides access to data from 50 years of marine mammal observations in Belgium. The site consists of two main parts, namely **observations and the tissue bank (Biobank)**. While observations can be publicly consulted, the biobank is focused on scientific users, who can obtain a login account to lend samples. The public part of the site is intended for the general public and policy-makers. The site contains the source data for the yearly report the Institute has to produce.

Overall, the website aids in collecting data on **strandings, necropsies, ad hoc observations and dedicated surveys** of any marine mammal (cetacean or pinniped) occurring in Belgian waters. Strandings from Northern France are also recorded as they are necropsied in Liège.

The site allows ad hoc stranding and observational data to be entered in a **standardised** way, which is done by RBINS staff. The system allows to **track** multiple stranding events of individual animals. In order to support and **refine the cause of death as assessed on the beach**, necropsies and resulting samples are recorded as well. The system keeps track of all the marine mammal **tissue samples** stored in the vaults of the Department of Morphology and Pathology of the ULg, which contain over 20000 samples.

Scope



Historical strandings



Real-time strandings



Tissue samples



Necropsies

Stranding vocabulary

Together with specialists, a classification of interventions was designed. The database is centered around the concept 'event', to which either an 'observation' or a 'necropsy event' can be bound. An observation is a physical observation in a non-clinical setting. **Observations** can have the following **types**:

Found dead inland; Found alive inland; Bycatch; Caught at sea; Caught inland; Died during transport/rehab; Found dead at sea; Released from captivity/rehab; Sighted; Found dead on beach; Found dead in harbour; Found alive on beach/harbour.

In order to adequately document the **circumstances of the observation**, 'parameters' (key-value pairs) can be added. Some keys can only have a preset value. The following keys and possible values are available to document the circumstances of the observation:

Before intervention:

alive; died at sea; died on beach; killed on beach; died, circumstances unknown; animal back to sea on its own.

During intervention:

intervention unknown; no intervention; escaped while trying to catch; released alive; died during intervention/rehab same day; taken to rehab; euthanized.

Collection:

live animal sampled; nothing collected; fully collected for necropsy; sampled, then released for destruction; sampled, then left at location; necropsy at location; released for destruction; carcass disappeared.

Atlantic grey seal - *Halichoerus grypus*
ad hoc observation

Date: 10/08/2015 10:00

Number: 1 Found dead on beach - decomp. code: 2

Before intervention: died, circumstances unknown

Intervention: no intervention

Collection: fully collected for necropsy

RBINS tag: BE414

Location: Beach of Knokke
51.344905 3.240792

Event 3689

Atlantic grey seal - *Halichoerus grypus*
ad hoc observation

Date: 12/04/2015 15:44

Number: 1 Released from captivity - decomp. code: 1

Before intervention: alive

Intervention: released alive

Collection: nothing collected

RBINS tag: BE414

Location: Beach of Blankenberge
No precise coordinate was given for this observation, only a location with a general coordinate.
Coordinate of approximate location: 51.317202 3.1245

Event 3041

Atlantic grey seal - *Halichoerus grypus*
ad hoc observation

Date: 29/03/2015 15:41

Number: 1 Found alive on beach/harbour - decomp. code: 1

Before intervention: alive

Intervention: taken to rehab

Source: Sealife Blankenberge

Collection: live animal sampled

RBINS tag: BE414

Location: Beach of Blankenberge
No precise coordinate was given for this observation, only a location with a general coordinate.
Coordinate of approximate location: 51.317202 3.1245

Event 2965



The database is designed to follow the life history of a marine mammal