

Location



Introduction

Denmark is a country in the north of Europe at the intersection of the North Sea and the Baltic Sea with 7,314 km of coastline. Denmark is connected by a land border to Germany in the south and connected to Sweden on the east by a bridge. The climate is temperate, humid and overcast with mild winters and cool summers. Denmark consists of the Jutland Peninsula as well as over 400 islands. Zealand is the largest and most populous island in Denmark, where Copenhagen is situated. Many of the larger islands in the archipelago are connected by bridges.

Regional Seas and Biogeography

Baltic Sea (LME)

North Sea (LME)

Habitats

→ Sea Grasses

Are found throughout the Danish waters which include rarer eelgrass beds in the Northeastern waters of Denmark. Particularly found in the Danish Kattegat (more below).

→ Coastal wetlands and salt marshes can be found at different locations around the Danish coast with the largest concentration in the Southwest in the Wadden Sea national Park. However, apart from the salt marshes in this National Park, the habitat type is absent along most of the Jutland west coast.

→ Lagoons and coastal lakes are mostly found in west Jutland in the north of Denmark. They can be important for wintering and migrating birds.

→ Intertidal sand and mud flats can be found around the coast of Denmark with a higher concentration in the Wadden Sea National Park (Southwest).

→ Dune systems can be found throughout the Danish coast, but particularly in the north in Jutland. Dune systems are important habitats for waders, gulls and terns.

Biodiversity Hotspots

→ Ramsar sites

Randers and Mariager Fjords and The Adjacent Sea (also a Natura 2000 Site, SPA and SAC, and wildlife reserve) is in the east of Denmark on Jutland Peninsula. It has a shallow fjord, islets, saltmarshes, and mudflats. It has a significant percentage of the Svalbard population of the brent goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*).

Læsø is an island off the east of Denmark which largely consists of a Natura 2000 site, SAC and SPA, and a scientific reserve. It is the largest tidal saltmarsh in Denmark outside of the Wadden sea and is an important area for wintering, molting and staging waterbirds. It is also a breeding site for the harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*).

Waters between Lolland and Falster including Rødsand, Guldborg sound, and Bøtø Nor in the southeast (location as described in name) are a Natura 2000 site, SPA and SAC, as well as a wildlife reserve. The Rødsand is a breeding area and haul-out for Common Seal (*Phoca vitulina*) and Grey Seal (*Halichoerus grypus*). It is also a very important area for moulting of Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) and also important for staging and wintering waterbirds.

Nakskov Fjord and Inner Fjord is a Natura 2000 site, SPA and SAC, and a wildlife reserve. It consists of sand banks, islands, saltmarshes, reedbeds and sandy beaches. It is an important area for Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) and Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*).

South Funen Archipelago in the southeast is a Natura 2000 site, SPA and SAC, and Wildlife Reserve which

consists of saltmarshes and reedbeds. It is an important area for wintering, staging, breeding and moulting for important waterbirds. For example, the Baltic Dunlin (*Calidris alpina schinzii*) - a Dunlin subspecies - which is threatened in the Baltic Sea, and Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*). It is also an important area for populations of Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) and Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*).

Horsens Fjord and Endelave is a Natura 2000 site, SPA, and SAC in the southeast of Denmark. It consists of a shallow fjord, adjacent sea area with reefs, sand banks, saltmarshes, islets and lagoons. It has breeding populations of great cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Black guillemots (*Cephus grylle*) and is an important area for grey seals (*Phoca vitulina*).

Hirsholmene is in the north of Denmark and is a Scientific Sanctuary, Natura 2000 (SAC, SPA), Nature Conservation Area, and Wildlife Reserve. The site consists of a group of small, rocky, coastal islands and shallow waters but also the surrounding sea territory. The site is important for wintering and staging waterbirds, and particularly important numbers of black-headed gulls (*Larus ridibundus*) and Mew gull (*Larus canus*), the Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*), Black Guillemot (*Cephus grylle*), and Rock Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*).

Nissum Bredning with Harboøre and Agger Tange is a Natura 2000 site (SAC, SPA), a Danish National Park and a Wildlife Reserve in the North West of Denmark. The site has diverse habitats ranging from a fjord area, open water, saltmarsh, sand flats, meadows, agricultural land, brackish lagoons and reedbeds. An important area for breeding, wintering and staging various species of waterbirds such as Baltic Dunlin (*Calidris alpina schinzii*) and Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*).

Stadil and Vest Stadil Fjords is a Natura 2000 (SAC, SPA) and Nature Conservation Area in the east of the country which consists of two shallow fjords with four lakes surrounded by extensive reed swamp, meadows, fields and dunes, with adjacent agricultural land.

Ringkøbing Fjord is an IBA, Natura 2000, SPA, and SAC, as well as a Nature Conservation Area and a Scientific Reserves. The Fjord is a shallow inlet of brackish waters surrounded by mudflats, salt and freshwater marshes. The site is an internationally important breeding area for Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*), Baltic Dunlin, Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*), occasionally Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) and Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*).

→ National Parks and ecological reserves

Wadden Sea National Park is a transboundary system of intertidal sand and mud flats that spans from southwest border of Denmark as far down as the Netherlands and is a UNESCO biosphere reserve. Harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*) and occasional grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) can be found in the Danish part of the National Park. The entire Park is an important stop off point for millions of migratory birds along the East Atlantic migration route and is also an important breeding site for species such as Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*), Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), Common Redshank (*Tringa tetanus*), Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*), Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*), and Common Tern (*Sterna Hirundo*).

Råbjerg Mile is a migrating coastal dune in the northern point of Denmark which connects the North sea and the Baltic Sea which is an IBA, Natura 2000 site, SPA, SAC and Site of Community Importance. It is a unique geographic feature which is an important stopover point for migratory birds such as common scoter (*Melanitta nigra*), velvet scoter, Sanderling (*Calidris alba*), long-tailed duck and more.

→ IBAs

Skagerrak-Southwest Norwegian trench is a transboundary pelagic sea IBA between Norway, Denmark and Sweden, with 33% of it within Danish waters. It has high numbers of Northern gannets (*Sula bassana*), Great scua (*Stercorarius skua*), common murre (*Uria aalge*), razorbill (*Alca torda*) and little auk (*Alle alle*)

Lillebaelt IBA, Ramsar Site and Baltic Sea Protected Area (HELCOM), SPA, Site of community importance (SCI)

Northern Kattegat IBA is a large shallow sea area with sandy bays, estuaries and banks found in the northeast of the country. It encompasses 6 Ramsar sites and is also designated as a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) internationally. It is the most important area in North-west Europe for *Somateria mollissima* (>13% of the north-west European population), *Melanitta nigra* (>38% of the north-west European population) and *Alca torda* (>10% of the north-west European population).

→ Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas

Danish Kattegat covers a large area off the Northeast of Denmark that acts as a transition zone between the saline Skagerrak (below) and the Baltic Sea. The area has rare bubbling reefs, as well as boulder and coastal reefs, and eelgrass beds. The harbour porpoise and the harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*) can be found in large numbers, the grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) in smaller numbers. There are also a number of pelagic birds that

can be found in high numbers, particularly, common guillemot (*Uria aalge*) and razorbill (*Alca torda*), but also kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) and northern gannet (*Morus bassanus*).

Danish Skagarræk is in the north of Denmark off Jutland and covers the area that connects the northeastern Atlantic and the Baltic Sea. Shipping traffic is very dense. The area is highly productive and an important area for the harbour porpoise and white-beaked dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*) and minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) can also be found there. The area is also important feeding grounds for pelagic birds such as the fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*), common guillemot (*Uria aalge*) and razorbill (*Alca torda*). It is also an internationally important area for great skuas (*Catharacta skua*).

At risk Wildlife

In this section, some individual wildlife species are mentioned followed by a letter in parentheses. These are species included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species within the top three categories of risk - Vulnerable to extinction (VU), Endangered (EN) or Critically Endangered (CR). A more complete list of IUCN listed species is found in Appendix 1.

→ At risk birds

Denmark and its coastal habitats can host important numbers of birds for the Baltic Sea such as waders, wintering ducks, geese and seabirds which can all be found in their thousands. The Wadden Sea National Park (information in previous section) is a particularly important migratory path that links Arctic breeding areas with wintering areas in Europe with around 10-12 million birds passing through the transboundary area every year. The coastal protected areas (above) around the Danish coast, often have 10s of thousands of species, particularly ducks and other waterbirds, seabirds such as gannets, and waders.

→ At risk reptiles

No at risk marine reptiles in Denmark.

→ At risk mammals

Grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) can be found throughout the Danish coast on sandbanks, islands and rocky shores as haul-out sites. They can be found in the Wadden Sea National Park, but there harbour seals (*Phoca vitulina*) are more commonly found in higher numbers.

The harbour porpoise, which is endangered in the Baltic Sea, is the most common cetacean found in Danish waters where it breeds and resides. The white-beaked dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*) also breeds in Danish waters and could be at risk during an oil spill. The Baltic Sea has a number of other cetaceans species but regarding Denmark, minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) are most common.

Past experience with oil spill and potential risks

The Danish coast can be susceptible to shipping incidents due to its location between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea.

The biggest incident was in 2001, when the *Baltic Carrier* chemical/product tanker collided with the bulk carrier *Tern* in the Baltic Sea which led to around 2,700 tonnes of heavy fuel oil being lost from the *Baltic Carrier*. Due to the wind, the oil reached Danish shores impacting sandy beaches and marshlands. The shoreline cleanup involved 100s of people, from police and soldiers to environmental groups and volunteers. More than 2,000 bird casualties were reported, but no attempt to rehabilitate them as per the Danish policy (see below).

In 2003, the Chinese bulk carrier *Fu Shan Hai* collided with the Cypriot container ship *Gdynia* off Bornholm Island in Denmark. After a few days, oil polluted the shores and cliffs of Christianø Island. An unknown number of oiled birds were found at the island of Bornholm and all live animals were euthanized.

In 2023 a freighter ran aground near Fyns Hoved in the Great Straight. 200 birds were euthanised due to oiling.

International and Regional Treaties and Agreements

→ Oil spill and HNS Response

d CLC Convention 69

CLC Protocol 76

CLC Protocol 92

FUND Protocol 76

- ☒ FUND Protocol 92
- ☒ FUND Protocol 2003
- ☒ LLMC Convention 76
- ☒ LLMC Protocol 96
- ☒ OPRC Convention 90
- ☐ HNS Convention 96
- ☒ HNS PROT 2010
- ☒ OPRC_HNS 2000
- ☒ BUNKERS CONVENTION 01

→ **Marine Biodiversity Protection**

- Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (MOSPA)
- Canada-Denmark Agreement
- Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS)
- Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission – also known as the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)
- Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)
- Bonn Agreement for Cooperation in dealing with pollution of the North Sea by oil and other harmful substances
- Copenhagen Agreement

Oil Spill Response and HNS Spill Response

→ **National Contingency Plan?**

Denmark has a national oil spill contingency plan which is currently under review.

→ **Role of Competent National Authorities**

The responsibility for oil pollution and other harmful substances such as HNS at sea and in coastal waters is with the Royal Danish Navy of the Danish Armed Forces, under the Ministry of Defence. There is a Joint Operations Centre (JOC) for marine pollution incidents which serves as the central command. Within the command, the Maritime Assistance Services (MAS) is the first point of contact for notification from ships in the Danish waters and communicates with coastal states and the stakeholders involved in spill operations. The Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) is responsible for shoreline cleanup with regional or local councils.

The Environment Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for the restoration of coastlines if there is an incident.

Oiled Wildlife Preparedness and Response

→ **Formal guidelines?**

The Agency for Green Transition and Aquatic Environment has responsibility for planning and strategy of the oiled wildlife response. The Danish Nature Agency has the responsibility for oiled wildlife response and field management. Birdlife Denmark can rehabilitate species of concern, such as endangered on IUCN Red List or HELCOM Red List (more below), but this would be an ad hoc decision.

Euthanasia is the primary response strategy for oiled birds found on beaches in Denmark, but Birdlife Denmark may be able to rehabilitate Species of Concern, such as those on the IUCN Red List or HELCOM Red List. A decision on this will be taken at the time of the incident.

→ **Response objectives and strategy**

The Agency for Green Transition and Aquatic Environment is responsible for the strategy of an oiled wildlife response. As mentioned above, birds will likely be euthanised unless a decision is taken ad hoc to rehabilitated endangered species. The Danish Nature Agency and local hunter groups can carry out the euthanasia.

→ **Euthanasia or rehabilitation?**

Euthanasia is considered the main tool for responding to oiled wildlife incident for birds, with the possibility for exceptions for endangered species.

→ **Impact assessment**

The Danish Nature Agency would likely coordinate an oiled wildlife impact assessment, possibly with the help of

other organisations such as Dansk Ornitologisk Forening (Danish Birdlife Partner).

→ Notification and early response

The Maritime Assistance Services (MAS) is the first point of contact for notification who would then notify the other relevant stakeholders.

→ Wildlife responders

There is a network of wildlife rehabilitation centres affiliated with the Dyrenes Beskyttelse (Animal Welfare Denmark), all of which work on a voluntary basis. Present level of experience and capacity to care for oiled wildlife is not known. Dansk Ornitologisk Forening (Danish Birdlife Partner) may also be able to provide responders for a response but also not known for certain. Hunting groups have been involved in the euthanasia during past incidents and can provide skilled people to the response.

→ Cooperation between stakeholders

It is expected that The Nature Agency and hunters work together for euthanasia but not clear if a formal agreement is in place.

All main stakeholders should be aware of the contingency plan and the recommendation of euthanasia of oiled animals.

Denmark is a signatory to the Helsinki Convention (HELCOM) and the Copenhagen Agreement of the Seas with Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

→ Permanent facilities

The network of wildlife rehabilitation centres Dyrenes Beskyttelse which deals with injured wildlife, but it is not clear what their capacity might be if there were oiled animals arriving or their experience with such incidents. Hunters would be provided with ammunition for guns for euthanasia.

→ Current processes

The overarching contingency plan is currently being reviewed. There is no specific training in the contingency plan for oiled wildlife euthanasia. It will however be carried out by The Nature Agency and experienced hunters. Dedicated training is not part of the planning.

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Appendix 1

→ At risk birds

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

Horned grebe / *Podiceps auratus* / VU / Migratory winter / non breeding

Baltic Dunlin / *Calidris alpina schinzii* / EN on Helcom list / Resident / Breeding May to July

Atlantic Puffin / *Fratercula arctica* / VU / Occasional in Denmark. Resident Faroe Islands Danish territory / Non breeding

Velvet scoter / *Melanitta fusca* / VU / migratory winter / Non breeding

Long-tailed duck / *Clangula hyemalis* / VU / migratory winter / non breeding

Black-legged Kittiwake / *Rissa tridactyla* / VU / Resident / Breeding Spring summer

Steller's eider / *Polysticta stelleri* / VU / Rare passage in summer / non breeding

→ At risk reptiles

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

→ At risk mammals

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

Harbour porpoise / *Phocoena phocoena* / Baltic subpopulation CR (HELCOM RedList) / Resident / Breeding

Fin whale / *Balaenoptera physalus* / VU / Rare visitor /

Sperm whale / *Physeter macrocephalus* / VU / Occasional visitor / Visitor but mass strandings have happened between Spring - Autumn