



Now more than ever,  
we need to protect  
& conserve our rich  
marine biodiversity  
and manage our  
natural resources  
in harmony with  
their surrounding  
ecosystems

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The ObSERVE Programme is a  
Government of Ireland funded initiative,  
established by the Department of  
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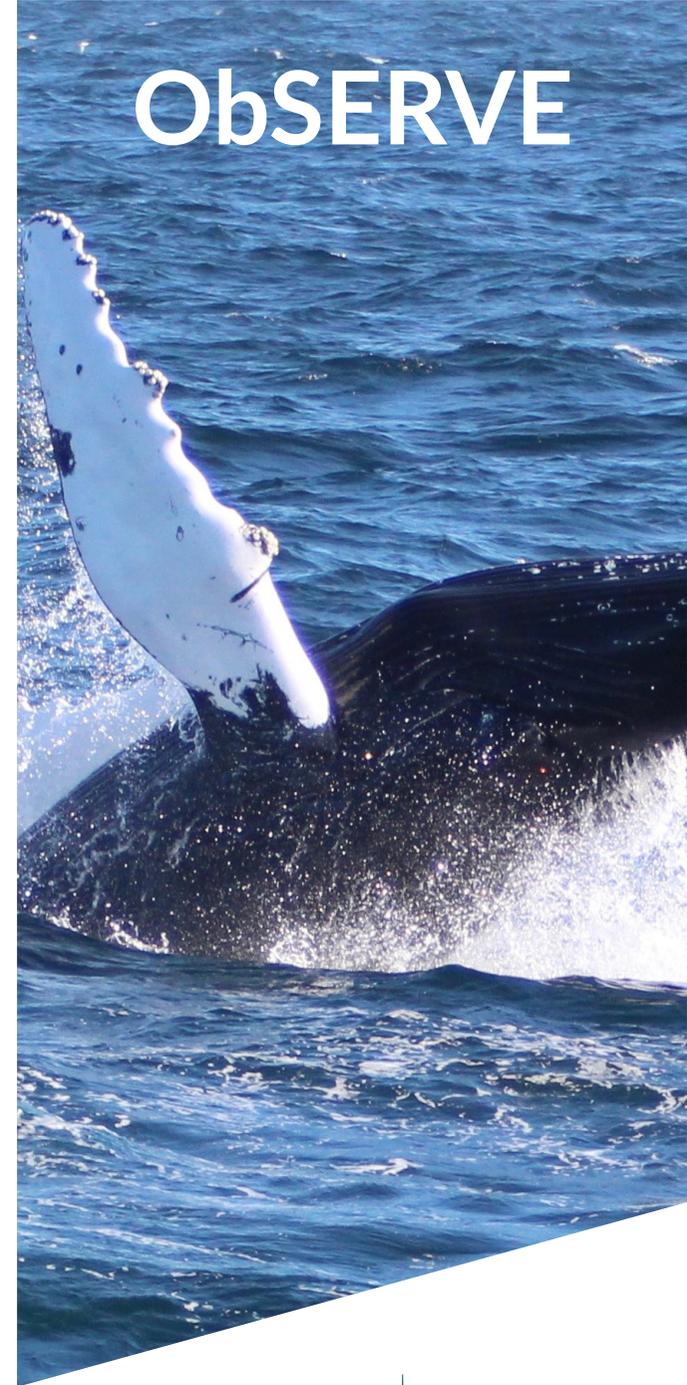


Roinn Cumarsáide, Gníomhaíthe  
ar son na hAeráide & Comhshaoil  
Department of Communications,  
Climate Action & Environment



An Roinn Cultúir,  
Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta  
Department of Culture,  
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

# ObSERVE



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

## ObSERVE

In October 2014, a major marine scientific programme called the ObSERVE Programme was launched. The main aim of the programme was to improve our knowledge and understanding of protected offshore species and their sensitive habitats.

In the spring of 2015, a twin programme of acoustic and aerial surveys of cetaceans and seabirds in the Irish Offshore began. Both projects spanned three years of data collection and analysis, and yielded unprecedented baseline data on protected species occurrence, habitat and population ecology along the Atlantic Margin.

### Acoustic Project

The Acoustic project was led by the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology with the Marine Institute, JASCO Applied Sciences, SMRU Consulting and the Irish Whale & Dolphin Group.

The project involved the targeted deployment and recovery of underwater listening devices designed to withstand extreme pressures in the deep ocean. The devices recorded an array of underwater sounds made by more than 20 species of whales, dolphins and porpoises, in order to learn more about their occurrence, distribution, abundance and migration habits.



The Acoustic Project spanned three seasons combining fixed and moving surveillance methods called Static Acoustic Monitoring & Passive Acoustic Monitoring



The majority of Ireland's Exclusive Economic Zone was covered by the Aerial project

A total survey length of 37,097km

### Aerial Project

The Aerial project was led by University College Cork with partners IMARES, Alnilam and Aerosotravia. The project involved a team of trained observers flying over the sea in a specially equipped plane along an extensive set of survey lines.

The team recorded the occurrence, distribution and numbers of whales, dolphins, porpoises and seabirds as well as other species.

Surveys were carried out across the summer and winter seasons over the three years. The finer-scale aerial surveys for seabirds were also carried out in the Summer, Autumn and Winter of 2016 in the Irish Sea.

### Programme discoveries

Over the two years of field study, twenty species of whales, dolphins & porpoises were recorded, analysed and mapped with almost 2,200 sighting records accumulated across both projects.

Aerial surveys highlighted the importance of the Atlantic Margin for seabirds with almost half a million seabirds located within the study area during both summer and winter, with bird densities highest in coastal areas. 10,000 sightings of seabirds were recorded, representing 24 species.

# Programme Outputs

The ObSERVE Programme resulted in three final reports:

01

Acoustic Surveys of Cetaceans in the Irish Atlantic Margin in 2015 - 2016: Occurrence, distribution and abundance

02

Aerial Surveys of Cetaceans and Seabirds in Irish Waters: Occurrence, distribution and abundance 2015 - 2017

03

The seasonal distribution and abundance of Seabirds in the western Irish Sea, 2016

In addition to the reports, a number of research articles have been published in peer review journals and all of the data collected is freely available to all. For more information on project data visit: [www.dccae.gov.ie/ObSERVE](http://www.dccae.gov.ie/ObSERVE)