



# EUROPEAN UNION OF AQUARIUM CURATORS

## REPORTING FORM

### FOR CONSERVATION PROJECTS FUNDED IN 2023

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**1 TITLE OF PROJECT:**

Harbour porpoise Photo  
Identification project

**2 NAME OF APPLICANT**

Frank Zanderink

INSTITUTION

Stichting Rugvin

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DATE OF REPORT: 05-04-24

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**PLEASE SEND YOUR REPORT TO ISABEL KOCH, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF EUAC**

(ISABEL.KOCH@WILHELMA.DE)

**AND COPY TO**

Lauren Florisson (lauren.florisson@eaza.net; Brian Zimmerman: [bzimmerman@bzsociety.org.uk](mailto:bzimmerman@bzsociety.org.uk)

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**3 LOCATION OF PROJECT (REGION & COUNTRY)**

National Park Eastern Scheldt, the Netherlands

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**4 PROJECT START AND END DATES:**

July 2020 – May 2021

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**5 PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR, ADDRESS AND INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION**

(IF DIFFERENT FROM APPLICANT)

See 1.

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**6 PROJECT TYPE**

(TICK ANY COMPONENTS THAT APPLY)

X BIOLOGICAL/ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH

VETERINARY/CONSERVATION MEDICINE

ANIMAL WELFARE

CAPTIVE BREEDING

RE-INTRODUCTION/RE-STOCKING/TRANSLOCATION

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

X EDUCATION/PUBLIC AWARENESS

X TRAINING/WORKSHOPS

X COMMUNITY-BASED/SOCIAL POLICY

X ECOTOURISM/SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SUSTAINABLE USE

WARDENING/LAW ENFORCEMENT  
PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT

EX SITU PROJECT ONLY

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

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**7 FOCAL SPECIES (COMMON AND SCIENTIFIC NAME)**

Harbour porpoise (Phocoena phocoena)

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## 8 IUCN RED LIST STATUS (OR OTHER THREAT LISTING) OF FOCAL SPECIES

CITES Yes

APPENDIX II

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### 9 PROJECT BACKGROUND

In the southwest of the Netherlands an estuary had been semi-closed off from the sea by a storm surge barrier in 1986. Before that, harbour porpoises swam in the Eastern Scheldt, as part of the population in the North Sea. At the time of closure, hardly any porpoise was left here and in the North Sea probably due to pollution and overfishing. By the end of last century, porpoises started to reappear, and some porpoises entered through the gates of the barrier and formed a small (sub)population. Now the population size is 50- 60 animals.

Rugvin started to study several topics related to the porpoises here since 2009. The photo-identification project intensified in 2015, after we discovered that harbour porpoises have external features by which they can be identified. Using photo-identification on harbour porpoises is quite unique, since only a handful organisations worldwide are using this method. The harbour porpoise is a relatively unknown species because it is a marine species and quite elusive. The Eastern Scheldt is a natural area, but relatively compact and clear. It is like a 'large aquarium' and gives us the opportunity to learn more about this species to protect it better.

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### 10 WAS THE OVERALL PROJECT PURPOSE FULFILLED?

The overall goal was to learn more about the life and behaviour of harbour porpoises by photo-identification. In many species of whales, the photo-identification method is the basis on which many discoveries about the species were made. However, it is rarely used for harbour porpoises. Using this method, we wanted to contribute to the understanding of this elusive species in order to protect it by better adapted measures in the North Sea and other areas where this species is occurring.

The second goal was to communicate the findings of the total research and its research questions to make the harbour porpoises better known to stakeholders and the public. Even with the unforeseen COVID outbreak in early 2020 and the many restrictions that followed we can say that we managed the project purpose.

We were able to drive our boat on the water, however, with less staff on board, instead of 3-4 persons for cameras, driving the boat and finding the animals, only two persons were allowed. Tasks for 3-4 p were now conducted by two. Meaning less eyes on the water looking for porpoises and dealing with more tasks than foreseen. At the end we still had an good extension of the number of photo's during the season and with 24 trips on the water since the weather conditions were more then fine.

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### 11 WHAT OBJECTIVES WERE MET?

We developed a tool to analyse the environmental data together with all pictures taken in order to learn more about social structure of the animals, the hotspots, ecological behaviour, number of calves, average age etc. It resulted in a public brochure Issued in Dutch and German. Please see the attachment. We regularly informed the public by social media, website and national media communications. And in October 2021, earlier not possible due to COVID we had a public lecture in Burgers' Zoo.

### WHAT OBJECTIVES WERE NOT MET?

Due to COVID there were no other possibilities in the Burgers' Zoo educational programme, however an article in Burgers' Zoo magazine was realised in 2021.

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**12 WHAT PROJECT ACTIVITIES WERE UNDERTAKEN?**

1. We went out with our boat 16 times during the project time on the Eastern Scheldt.
2. We took several thousands of pictures during these trips of harbour porpoises will be taken.
3. After uploading the photos, the identification of the individual porpoises on the photographs has taken place and being put on our NAS, Catalogue, and photo folders.
4. Analysing of the further gathered data, the environmental factors, time, coordinates, and location, noticed behaviour, group size etc. has taken place and is also a continuous activity.
5. Based on the gathered data we address as much as possible to the research questions.
6. The research outcomes have been used in press releases, our website, and social media. As well as for formal publications and presentations and for national media.
7. The data, findings and answers on the research question, photographs and footage will become part of both education and information programmes of Burgers' Zoo and Rugvin foundation and will be part of this in the future.

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**13 WHAT OUTCOMES WERE ACHIEVED DURING THE COURSE OF THE PROJECT? IF THIS WAS AN EX SITU PROJECT ONLY, WHAT WERE THE BENEFITS TO THE SPECIES EX SITU AND IN SITU?****ARE ANY ONGOING?**

The project has been fulfilled, however under other than foreseen circumstances, due to COVID. | Form a catalogue of 50-60 animals we have now a catalogue of more than 80 animals. Some animals have died, some are not seen back, and we recorded newcomers.

**DID ANY EXPECTED OUTCOMES FAIL?**

No.

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**14 DID LOCAL PEOPLE/COMMUNITIES PARTICIPATE IN THE PROJECT? IF SO, WHO WERE THEY, HOW MANY PARTICIPATED AND WILL CONTINUED CONTACT BE MADE?**

Yes we started also to imply the pictures of people through Citizen Science. Some of these people became highly drive new volunteers.

**IF THERE WAS COLLABORATION WITH ANOTHER EUAC MEMBER OR AQUARIUM PLEASE PROVIDE DETAILS ON THE COLLABORATION.**

The staff member of Burgers' Zoo, Max Janse went out with us one day in our boat to experience the fieldwork on the Eastern Scheldt and experienced the making of pictures of harbour porpoises.

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**15 DID THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HOST COUNTRY RECEIVE INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT'S RESULTS?**

Staff members of Ministry of LNV (Agriculture, nature and food) are aware of our work on the Eastern Scheldt, they do receive our annual reports and are kept up to date in spoken word.

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**16 HOW DID THE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER NGOS WORK? WERE THERE ANY ISSUES?**

We maintain an excellent good working relationship with both NGO's , national and international as with the Dutch and provincial government, the latter through the National Park Eastern Scheldt.

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**17 TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE (IN EUROS)**

€7,980

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**18 AMOUNT OF MATCHING FUNDS****SPENT:**

€3,000

**19 AMOUNT SPENT FROM EUAC FUNDS:**

€ 4,980

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**20 EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN (IN EUROS)**

TRAVEL	€ 813,33	Travel costs volunteers, transport and mileages cars fuel for boat.
SALARIES	€ 5,040	
ACCOMMODATION	€ 0,-	
EQUIPMENT	€ 1,249,50	use of boat/storage and camera's
COMMUNICATION	€ 720	
MISCELLANEOUS (PLEASE DETAIL)	€ 455,56	Boat repairs, PC Screen for Photo ID analysis
TOTAL		Total costs € 8,278.39 Contribution WWF € 3,000.00 Own contribution € 298.39 EUAC contribution € 4,980.00

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**21 PUBLICATIONS and media attention PRODUCED AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT**

In the Magazine of Burgers' Zoo an article was published about EUAC and our Photo ID project. <https://rugvin.nl/rugvin-werkt-met-burgers-zoo-samen-in-door-euac-ondersteund-natuurbehoudsproject/>

In "Zoogdier" magazine, at the time of application: <https://rugvin.nl/stichting-rugvin-in-het-zoogdier-magazine/>

Local news and our own website and social media about the death of our best known harbour porpoise. <https://rugvin.nl/bruinvis-willemien-icoon-van-de-oosterschelde/>

In the summer of 2020 the magazine of Burgers' Zoo was issued with an article about our Photo ID project on the Eastern Scheldt. <https://rugvin.nl/rugvin-werkt-met-burgers-zoo-samen-in-door-euac-ondersteund-natuurbehoudsproject/>

- In November the television recordings for "3 Op Reis" took place. <https://rugvin.nl/stichting-rugvin-zondag-18-april-met-3-op-reis-de-oosterschelde-op/>

- The Parliament of things "of the "De ambassade van de Noordzee" invited Stichting Rugvin to ask question on behalf of the porpoise in the Eastern Scheldt <https://rugvin.nl/stemmen-uit-zeeland/>

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