Aerial survey for the St. Lawrence beluga

Dates: Variable, January to December
Recurrence: Annually, since 2001
Location: Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence
Aircraft: Cessna 337

Description

Each year, aerial photographic or visual surveys are conducted in the Estuary and Gulf of St. Lawrence to learn more about the distribution, abundance and habitat of the St. Lawrence beluga (***Delphinapterus leucas***). These surveys take place at different times of the year to gather more information about the distribution of the beluga throughout the seasons.

When weather conditions permit, observers criss-cross the study area on board small aircraft to collect data on belugas and other marine mammals. The information provided by these surveys is key to furthering knowledge of the beluga habitat and the abundance trends of this population.

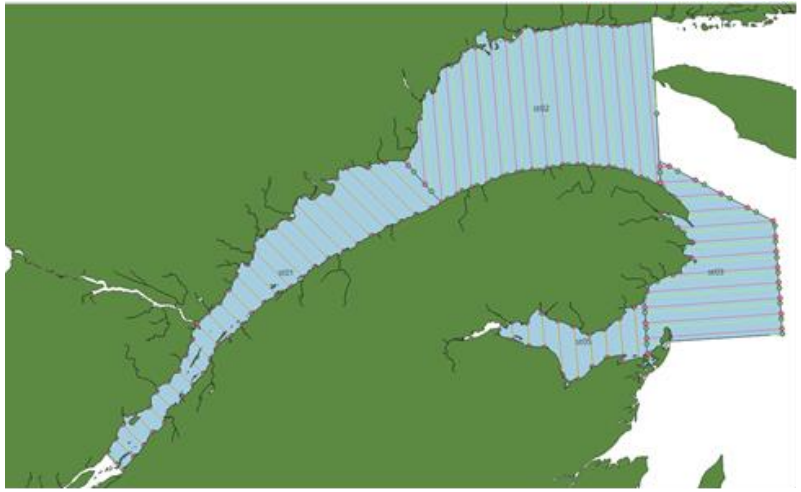

Figure 1: Map showing the areas under study for aerial surveys of the St. Lawrence beluga

Objectives

1. Assess the abundance and distribution of the St. Lawrence beluga throughout the seasons;
2. Deepen knowledge of the habitat of the St. Lawrence beluga;
3. Assess the abundance and distribution of other marine mammals during the fall and winter; and
4. Prepare scientific advice for the recovery of the species.

Aerial photo of belugas