These abnormal winter feeding movements are likely to be responsible for Yorkshire and Humberside's first harp seal records.

Field Notes

On 5th April 1987, a 1.5 - 2 m specimen was hauled out on the mud near the jetty at North Killingholme Haven on the south bank of the Humber (Grid ref. TA/167230). It was observed from a range of 3 - 4 m and due to its contrasting cream and black markings was judged to be a male (M. Fisher, pers. comm.).

Although the situation was apparantly not as acute during the winter of 1987/8, feeding movements again resulted in harp seals entering the North Ses.

On 23rd February 1988 a specimen was found dead in the Wash near Boston, Lincolnshire and on 24th February a sick specimen was reported off the Kent coast (S. Anderson, pers. comm.).

On 12th March 1988, a harp seal, judged to be the size of a female grey seal, was observed at 3.35p.m., 80 - 100 yards off Flamborough Head. It was watched for over 25 minutes swimming on the surface, rolling and diving, giving good views of its striking black to dark brown facial, shoulder, flank and abdominal markings which contrasted with its generally white to cream pelage. The specimen eventually moved off to the north (A. Allport, pers. comm.).

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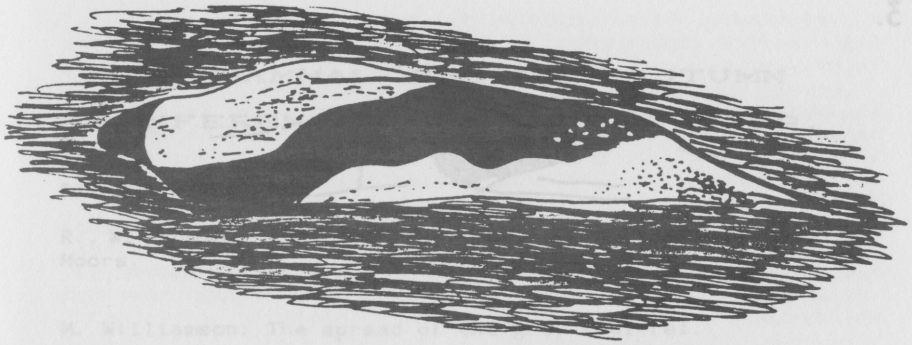
1.



1. Sketch of the North Killingholme specimen (seen 5/4/1987) by Mik Fisher.

2.

2-4. Sketches of the Flamborough Head specimen (seen 12/3/1988 3.35-3.58 p.m.) by Andy Allport.

2. Swimming upside down, belly up. Looked all white, clean, blackish nose and chin. Dark spots noted towards tail. Looked vaguely like a strange coloured cetacean, whiteish with dark "beak".