

# Boom time for Arctic animals

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CONTRARY to popular belief, Arctic animals have done rather well over recent decades. The first analysis of a 40-year database of Arctic species reveals that populations grew by 16 per cent on average between 1970 and 2004.

The Arctic Species Trend Index covers 35 per cent of all Arctic vertebrate species. The analysis, led by Louise McRae at the Zoological Society of London, shows several mammals have benefited from hunting bans. Populations of bowhead whales, for instance, have risen by about 3 per cent per year for 30 years.

Populations of bowhead whales have risen by about 3 per cent per year for 30 years. But the trend masks worrying recent declines. Warmer waters in the Bering Strait boosted the Bering Sea pollock between 1970 and 2003 by increasing plankton growth, but numbers have since declined. The dark-bellied brent goose has also declined, after an initial recovery of numbers. The team says the recent declines could be linked to climate change.