

S64 BASELINE INFORMATION FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF CETACEAN POPULATIONS IN OFFSHORE AREAS OF ATLANTIC SPANISH WATERS.

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Although the terrestrial Natura 2000 network is well represented in Spain, there is a huge lack of implementation in marine network, mainly in offshore waters. In 2006-2007 CEMMA carried out an interregional research project in collaboration with several northern NGOs of Spain to identify offshore areas of special interest for cetaceans. In September 2006 coordinated ship surveys were carried out in the north Spanish offshore waters using the same methodology covering from west to east; Galicia bank, Aviles canyon, Cachucho sea mountain, Torrelavega canyon and Cap Breton canyon. In May 2007 one additional 5 days survey was carried out in Galicia Bank. During the 10 days of survey in Galicia Bank, a total of 1540.2 Km were covered and 60 sightings of 7 different species were recorded. During the 7 days of survey in the rest of areas a total of 956.5 km were covered and 39 sightings of 5 species were recorded. Truncation distances for fin whales and small cetaceans were estimated in 2000 and 1500m respectively. Density estimates (individuals per 25 Km²) were calculated for each area: Galicia bank, 9.93, Aviles canyon, 26.82, Cachucho sea mountain, 50.14, Torrelavega canyon, 42.76, and Cap Breton canyon, 9.08. Abundance estimates for the most frequent sighted species were obtained. Abundances of small dolphins were estimated in 2065 (919-3305) for striped dolphins, 1339 (542-2137) for common dolphins, 1038 (766-1310) for bottlenose dolphins, and 163 (135-191) fin whales.

S65 SIGHTING FREQUENCY AND PHOTO-IDENTIFICATION OF BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS (*TURSIOPS TRUNCATUS*) ALONG THE COAST OF BAHÍA SAN ANTONIO, PATAGONIA, ARGENTINA

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The sighting frequency (SF), site fidelity, home-range and group composition of bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) were assessed during a photo-identification study in 2006 and 2007. This study aims to provide first data on this unknown austral bottlenose dolphin population to answer to their increasing conservation needs. Data and pictures were collected during 132 surveys with an average observation effort of 2.8h (SD=1.6) per survey. All clear pictures were analysed using the automatic identification systems FinEx and FinMatch (EuroPhlukes Initiative). The SF was obtained dividing the number of sightings by the amount of effort. Site-fidelity was estimated using the Capture Mark Recapture method and the degree of residency by the re-identification frequency following Culloch (2004). In total, 377.4h were spent searching for bottlenose dolphins of which 57.3h was spent in the presence of 126 dolphin groups divided in 105 sightings. The SF was 0.28/h with an average duration of 43.2min/sighting (SD=0.76). A total of 43 dolphins were classified into an identification catalogue. These recognizable dolphins were re-identified up to 10 days with 44% (n=43) showing a degree of residency (resighting frequency (RF)≥4). The average group size was 6.1 (SD=7.9) ranging from one to fifty animals. Group size increased significantly with the presence of calves and with the distance from the coast. Nevertheless, all dolphins were seen in inshore waters ≤20m deep. The most frequent group formation was loose (34.5%), variable (29.8%), disperse (20.2%) and tight (15.5%). At least 6 identified dolphins, including one mother with her calf, were photographed in the mouth of the Río Negro 250km from the study area indicating that their home-range is far from limited to Bahía San Antonio. Data indicate that it concerns a resident but yet unknown population of bottlenose dolphins with a high commercial potential and an urgent need of conservation measurements. (Culloch, R.M. 2004. Mark recapture abundance estimates and distribution of bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) using the coastline of the outer Moray Firth, NE Scotland, MS dissertation, University of Whales, Bangor. 95pp.)