

CETACEANS SIGHTINGS IN THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR DURING THE WHALE WATCHING SEASONS 2003, 2004 AND 2005



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INTRODUCTION

In the Strait of Gibraltar seven species of cetaceans meet, some of which inhabit it during the whole year while others travel through it (De Stephanis et al, 2001). This groups have been object of whale watching trips since 1996 (Pérez Gimeno et al, 2002).

In this poster, the spatial and temporal distribution of the sightings carried out from a whale watching boat in the area, during the touristic whale watching season, during 2003, 2004 and 2005 is presented.



Strait of Gibraltar

From June to September of 2003, 2004 and 2005, all sightings fulfilled from the Jackelin's deck (23m long boat) owned by Turmares Tarifa, company dedicated to whale watching activities, were registered.

Depending on the route followed, 3 types of trip can be distinguished:

- From Tarifa's Port towards the western area of the Strait (1) (Number of trips: 25, total time: 69 hours)
- From Tarifa's Port towards the central area of the Strait (2) (N: 466, total time: 1023 hours)
- From Algeciras's Port inside the Bay of Algeciras (3) (N: 48, total time: 96 hours)



Routes

At least one trained observer was present in each trip.



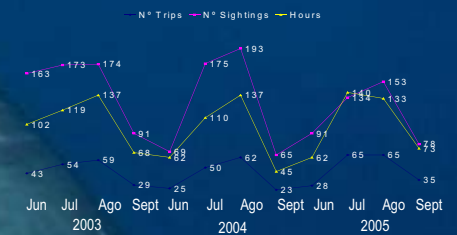
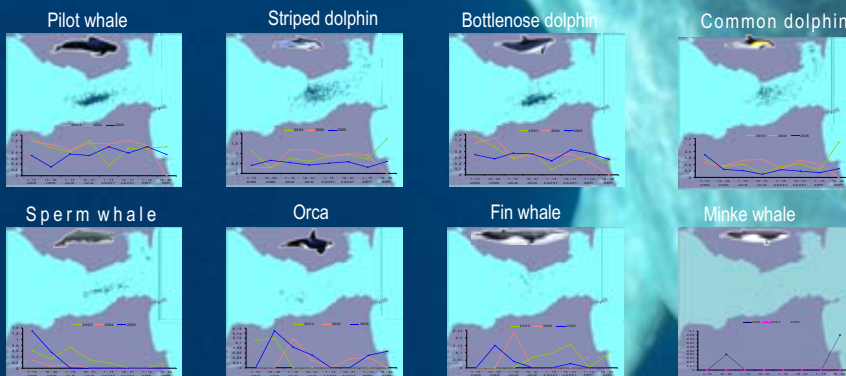
Jackelin

Each sighting was registered according to the complete data form of the Spanish Cetacean Society (SEC) following the Protocol for the collection of sighting and beaching data of cetaceans and marine turtles (Sociedad Española de Cetáceos, 2000), which includes: Specie, time, position, oceanographic and meteorologic conditions, group size, social structure, behaviour, and effort, during the first sighting, contact and end of sighting.

RESULTS

539 trips were done, during which, 8650 nautical miles were covered, being a total of 1188 hours in the study area. 1564 sightings of eight cetacean species were registered: Long-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala melas*), striped dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*), bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*), sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*), orca (*Orcinus orca*), fin whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) and minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*).

SIGHTINGS SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION AND NUMBER OF SIGHTINGS PER TRIP OF EACH SPECIE



SPECIE	2003	2004	2005	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Pilot whale	146	175	174	495	31.6
Striped dolphin	97	144	149	390	24.9
Bottlenose dolphin	132	116	124	372	23.8
Common dolphin	42	70	71	183	11.7
Sperm whale	24	6	53	83	5.3
Orca	5	4	11	20	1.3
Fin whale	9	5	5	19	1.2
Minke whale	2	0	0	2	0.1

CONCLUSIONS

Pilot whale, bottlenose dolphin and striped dolphin were the most sighted species: 80.5% of the sightings

Pilot whale and bottlenose dolphin were observed along the central area of the Strait

Striped and common dolphin were widely distributed in the area

92.8% of all the sperm whale sighting occurred during the first half of the seasons (june and july)

90% of the orca sightings took place in the western area of the Strait

The occasional presence of minke whale in the Strait of Gibraltar was detected.

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Cetaceans Illustrations: Martín Carrm