



Present Status of Common Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) along the Northeastern coast of Sardinia (ITALY) after nine years of field-research...what future?

Fozzi A.(1), Magnone F.(1), Falconi R.(2), Picollo V.(1), Fozzi R. (1), De Lazzari A. (1), Trainito E. (1), Navone, A.(3)

1) C.R.I.M.M. onlus (Marine Mammals Research Center) Via Molara snc 07020 Porto san Paolo –Sardinia-Italy, www.crimm.org – Info @crimm.org

(2) University of Bologna (IT)

(3) Marine Protected Area "Tavolara Punta Coda Cavallo" via Porto Romano 07020 Olbia – Sardinia –Italy www.amptavolara.it – Info@amptavolara.it

INTRODUCTION

Long-term monitoring research on Common Bottlenose Dolphin along the North eastern coast of Sardinia has entered its ninth year. A great deal about some aspects of their biology and conservation status had been learnt over the past years. In the study area were establish some different protected areas for the great value of marine biodiversity.

In this work are show all results and the future prospects for middle and long term survival of this population and the effective role play of Protected Areas.



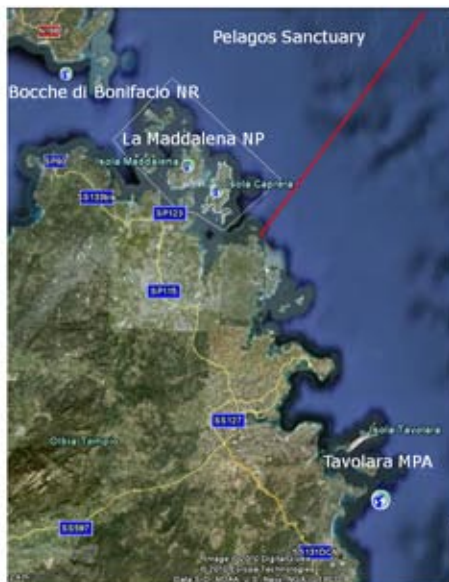
MATERIALS and METHODS

Boat surveys have been taken on calm sea days following standard routes (Beaufort scale 3 or less). Survey routes are recorded with a GPS and each outing lasted between 3 and 6 hours. Composition of groups is determined by standard photo identification technique. In order to minimize the disturbances, dolphins has never been approached closer than 20-50 metres and females with calves have never been followed longer than 30 minutes.

STUDY AREA

Southern Corse and northeastern Sardinia coasts are characterized by granitic rock, small and large bays and few small islands. Calcareous cliffs are localized in Capo Figari and Tavolara island. The shallow water is dominated by a lush sea grass meadow (*Posidonia oceanica*). The depth limit of the study area is 100m.

The study area included Tavolara Punta Coda Cavallo Marine Protected Area (Marine area surface: 15.357 ha), SPA (Special Protection Area) Capo Figari and Figarolo, La Maddalena National Park (13.000 ha), Bocche di Bonifacio Natural Reserve and Pelagos Sanctuary.



RESULTS

Between January 2001 and August 2009, **627** days were spent surveying, resulting in 2.243 hours of sea surveys, **421** sightings and **2056** observations.

Tab.1:

2001 - 2009	TOT
DAYS	627
HOURS	2243
SIGHTINGS	421
OBSERVATIONS	2056



CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of group composition showed a high percentage of females and calves. These results strongly imply that the North eastern coast of Sardinia is an important feeding ground and nursery for this population.

For this coastal dolphin population the major threats are bycatch (direct) and vessel traffic (indirect).

From 2001 to 2009 4 new pleasure boat harbours were built in the North eastern Sardinia also with a high increment of new mooring buoy camp.

The study area is also an important location for several sailing regatas.

Also in the study area ferry-boats to and from Sardinia have been increased by about 200% in the last 5 years.



The exponential anthropic growth in coastal areas reduced the available habitat.

If this anthropic growth trend will increase, the future prospects for middle and long term of dolphin population and marine coastal habitat such as *Posidonia oceanica*, will be more threatened.

Now the Protected Areas playing an important rules about awareness, but will implement coordinate actions to guarantee the future for marine life.