

PRESENCE AND DISTRIBUTION OF BALAENOPTERA PHYSALUS (L.) AND BALAE=
NOPTERA SPP. IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA . °

by

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SUMMARY

The present paper referes on the data collected during four year of research within "Project Cetacea - Italy", concerning the fin whale , Balaenoptera physalus. Information about biology and distribution of such species in the italian seas is also reported. In the same paper, furthermore, all the data concerning unidentified Balaenoptera spp. are examined, because it is supposed that they could be referred, mainly, to the fin whale.

RESUME

Ce document reporte les nouvelles et les données qui concernent la biologie et la distribution du Rorqual commun (Balaenoptera physalus), collectionnés pendant les quatre premières années du "Projet Cetacea - Italie". En particulier, on fournit les données produites d'un total de 112 signalations, qui concernent 245 individus, comprenant repérages, échouages et captures.

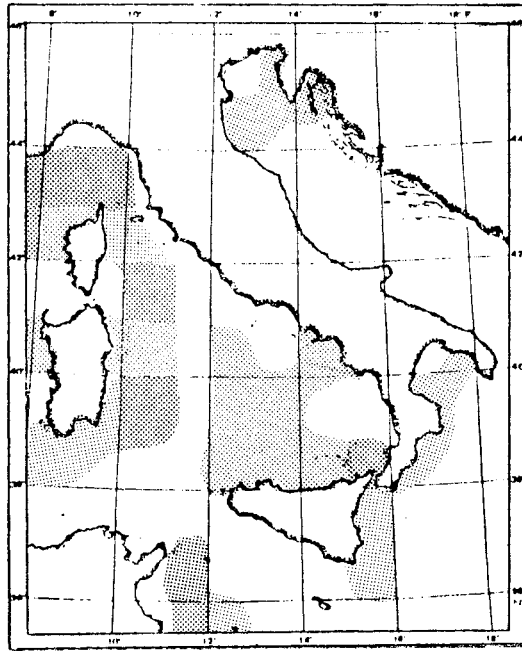
En outre, on a retenu nécessaire de commenter aussi les données des autres 31 signalations (54 individus), qui regardent Balaenoptera spp. (non identifiés) étant donné que, très probablement, il s'agit en majorité de B. physalus.

During more than four years of research, it has been possible to collect new sure information about the presence and the distribution of the fin whale, Balaenoptera physalus (Linnaeus, 1758), in

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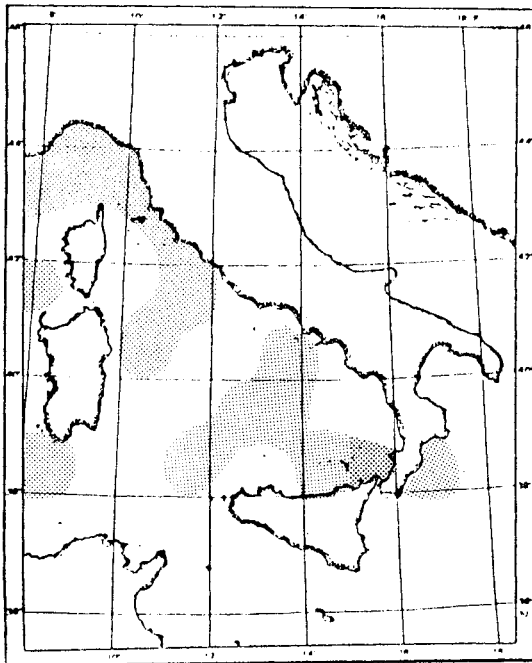
MAP N. 1

Distribution of the fin whale (Balaenoptera physalus).



MAP N. 2

Distribution of unidentified whales (Balaenoptera spp.)



the Italian seas (for the literature see: CAGNOLARO et al, in press). Actually, there are 112 records concerning 245 specimens of fin whales; 5 records regard incidental killings, mainly due to ship's propellers. It was reported, also, a case regarding a calf captured by a long line near Siracusa (Sicily). 4 records of stranding are also reported. The most important section regards sightings at sea: 112 reports, concerning 238 specimens, which give a lot of information about the geographical distribution (see map n.1), the numerical composition of the schools (see table below), the reproductive sea-

specimens per school													
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-100	101-500	> 500
58	25	16	5	4	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
amount of records													

son (that seems to take place in the late spring, mainly during April) and the calving periods (calves have been noticed in May, June, July and September).

But herewith we have reported, also, 31 records concerning 54 specimens of unidentified Balaenoptera spp., because, probably, a large part of them is referred to B. physalus. They are 30 sightings (53 specimens) and 1 stranding; the distribution is reported on map n.2 and the numerical composition of the schools on the table below.

specimens per school													
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-100	101-500	> 500
19	8	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
amount of records													

Coupling specimens have been noticed during June, while a calf was noted in September.

Maybe, a couple of unidentified whales, sighted in the northern Tyrrhenian sea near the Isle of Elba, could be referred to young specimens of the blue whale, Balaenoptera musculus, due to the general pattern of the body and to the diving behaviour, but there are no sufficient data to be sure about this doubtful identification.

So, the presence of the blue whale in the Mediterranean sea remain uncertain and never demonstrated.

REFERENCE

CAGNOLARO L., DI NATALE A., NOTARBARTOLO DI SCIARA G.- Guide per il riconoscimento delle specie animali delle acque lagunari e costiere italiane: Cetacei. C.N.R. (in press).

