

NEW INFORMATION ABOUT THE PILOT WHALE, GLOBICEPHALA MELAENA TRAILL,
IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA

by

Antonio DI NATALE

Istituto di Zoologia e di Anatomia Comparata
Università di Messina, 98100 Messina - Italia

SUMMARY

The schools' structures, abundance and distribution of the pilot whale, Globicephala melaena, are examined in this note. New information about the biology of such species is reported too.

RESUME

Dans ce travail on examine les données et les informations déduites de 64 signalements de globicephale noir, Globicephala melaena, concernant environ 1238 individus, repérés, échoués ou capturés. De ces signalements, on a déduit des nouvelles certaines sur des périodes de reproduction et sur les mois où sont présents des nouveaux-nés à l'intérieur des écoles. En outre, une indication vient d'être fournie sur la composition quantitative des singulières écoles signalées.

The pilot whale, Globicephala melaena (Traill, 1809), seems to be often recorded in the Italian seas. In fact, within July 1978 and September 1982, 64 records concerning 1238 specimens of pilot whales were collected by the Project Cetacea; 60 sightings (regarding 1238 specimens) were used to make the distribution map of this species and to obtain the numerical composition of the schools, as shown in the table of the next page.

Globicephala melaena seems to prefer the open deep waters, like the

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Ligurian Sea and the area around the Eolian Islands, where it feeds on squids and small Tunnidae (DI NATALE, 1979).

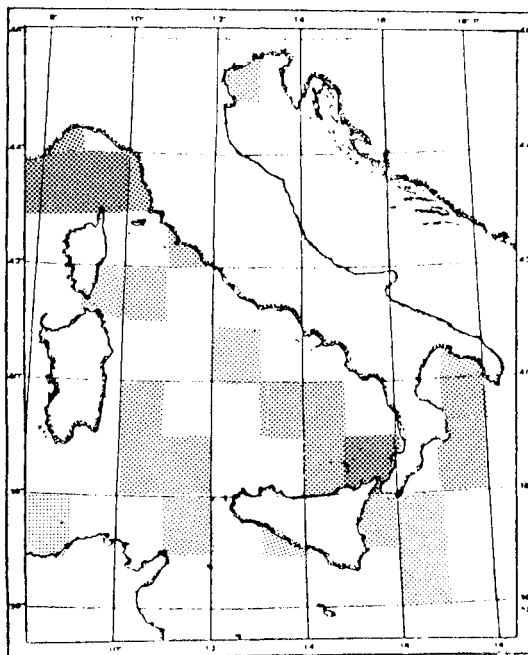
specimens per school													
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-100	101-500	>500
14	3	6	3	4	10	2	9	4	2	3	2	2	-
amount of records													

During the same period of the research, three strandings were recorded (two specimens were killed by propellers) and one specimens was captured by a surface drifting net.

Two cases of coupling specimens were reported during June (one of them is video-tape recorded); calves were sighted in March (1), April (1), June (5) July (3), September (1) and October (2).

Pilot whales are sometimes found hanging vertically in the water, with the head out of the water ("spy-hopping or pitchpoling"), as described by LEATHERWOOD et al., 1976.

In a case, the characteristic circle arrangement of the herd around a parturient pilot whale has been noticed.



REFERENCES

- DI NATALE A., 1979 - Progress of research relating to Mediterranean Cetacea. Project Cetacea, special report, V. Annex to: Mem.Biol.Mar.Ocean., IX (1-2), 50 pp.
- LEATHERWOOD S., CALDWELL D.K., WINN H.E., 1976 - Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises of the Western North Atlantic: a guide to their identification. NOAA Tech.Rep., NMFS CIRC-396, 176 pp.