DISTRIBUTION, FREQUENCE AND BIOLOGY OF THE COMMON DOLPHIN, <u>DELPHINUS</u>

<u>DELPHIS</u> LINNEUS, IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA •

bу

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SUMMARY

The information and the data about one of the most common cetacean of the Mediterranean Sea, <u>Delphinus delphis</u>, are reported and examined in the present paper. The distribution and the biology of such species in the central Mediterranean Sea are also pinted out.

RESUME

Le dauphin commun (<u>Delphinus delphis</u>) est certainement un commun cétacé des eaux italiennes. Jusqu'à présent, le Projet Cetacea-Ita= lie a collectionné 171 signaletions de cette espèce, pour un total d'environ 2338 individus, repérés, échoués ou capturés. Ces signala= tions sont examinées ici pour obtenir de nouvelles informations sur la biologie méditerranéenne de l'espèce et sur la distribution dans les eaux italiennes. Il est dèsormais certain, de toute façon, qu' une certaine quote-part de l'école de <u>D.delphis</u> passent dans la Mé= diterranée au moins une grande part de leur vie, formant des popula= tions assez durables mais avec des structures de groupe souvent aty= pique.

The common dolphin, <u>Delphinus delphis</u> Linnaeus 1758, (also known as saddleback dolphin) is maybe one of the most common cetaceans of the Mediterranean Sea. Till October 1982, the Project Cetacea collected 171 records, concerning a total amount of about 2338 specimens; 165 records (2331 specimens) regards sightings at sea. These important data were used to obtain information about the numerical composition

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of the schools(as shown in the table below) which seems often aty= pical: infact, a lot of common dolphins were sighted alone or in pair and that facts could indicate an environmental difficulty (may= be noise or pollution).

	specimens per school													
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	11 15	16-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-100	101 600	> 500	
16	15	11	13	13	38	27	15	11	4	3	4	1	_	
 	amount of records													

The commond dolphin is well distributed in all the central Mediter=

ranean Sea, as shown on the map. The breeding season is in summer (TOSCHI, 1965): coupling D.delphis were sighted in une (3) and July (3); calves are reported during all the months (except December), but mainly during spring and summer. Adults were seen jumping clear of the water or lobtailing and they abitually ride the bow of moving vessels. 4 records of stranding (involving 5 specimens) were re= ported within July 1978-October 1982. One specimen was captured by a trawl net and another one by a gill net.

By the present data, it is impossi= ble to difference a mediterranean population of common dolphin, due,

also, to the few research carried on that problem, but it is hypo= thesized that a certain number of specimens could live at least for lon periods inside the Mediterranean Sea.

REFERENCE

TOSCHI A., 1965 - Fauna d'Italia - VII) Mammalia. Ed. Calderini, Bologna, 647 pp.