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5	Abstract title:	GROWTH OF WHALE WATCHING IN SPAIN. THE SUCCESS OF THE PLATFORMS IN SOUTH MAINLAND. NEW RULES.
6	Abstract:	Spain is the premier location in Europe for whale watching having more than one million visitors and over 2.000 M ptas of direct income. To date in Europe only the Canary Islands (Spain) and Azores (Portugal) have whale watching regulations. The Spanish government is currently drafting a law in order to regulate whale watching in Spain due to the progressive increase of this activity on the Spanish mainland, mainly in the south (Andalusia). Apart from specific cases, the increase of this activity in the southern Iberian mainland has really only occurred in the last couple of years, from 11 boats in 1996 to approximately 28 in 1999. A similar situation existed in the Canaries 4 years ago with similar mass tourism of potential visitors brought in by sun and sand. In 1999 there were 28 boats belonging to 8 harbours along 871 km of coast, with a potential capacity relative to the effort days of 22.000 passengers. Next year more than 5 boats are expected and the growth possibilities are infinite. For reference, data of one single boat (foundation firmm@Spain) in Tarifa by the Gibraltar Strait, from April to October, is shown : 268 departures, in 199 days with 501 sightings of 7 different species (including 30 of sperm whales, 5 killer whales ). The success of the sightings is about 85% by effort day and the activity could be developed for 6 month per year due to the climatologically conditions (April-October.). New Spanish regulations and an early awareness of the importance of good whale watching practices are key to marine conservation, especially of cetaceans in areas such as the Gibraltar Strait, significant and strategic as a possible migratory route for cetaceans and resident populations, a critical habitat due to the impact of 80000 vessels/year of marine traffic.
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