

ANTHROPOGENIC ACTIVITIES RELATED TO CETACEANS IN THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR AND THE GULF OF BARBATE

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The Strait of Gibraltar, the only natural passage between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, characterized by a surface inflow of Atlantic waters and a deep outflow of dense Mediterranean waters, is inhabited by a 8 cetacean species. The object of this study is to make aware of the environmental impact that the following factors are imposing upon the population of cetaceans in this area. 1) The Strait is the second most busy in marine traffic, amounting to more than 91009 passage annually (merchant, military ships and ferries). 2) Due to the importance of the fishing industry there are numerous interactions between the fishing fleets and cetaceans. 3) The increasing activity of whale watching is lacking regulations up until today, causing interactions in the habitat and behaviour of the existing cetacean species. 4) Due to the joined political interests in the area, the management of the problems posed in this study is quite difficult. The creation of a new harbour in the north of Morocco, that will start its activities will change all the shipping lanes in the area and the creation of wind farms in the Gulf of Barbate could affect 8 species of cetaceans present in the area. Mitigation measures have to be taken into account urgently to minimise the impacts of these activities