

## CETACEAN POPULATION IN COAST OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY: A FIRST APPROACH.

Marcos-Ipiña E. (1, 2), Salaza-Sierra JM., (1, 2), De Stephanis, R., (2).

(1) E.I.B.E. C/ Baserritar Etorbidea 6 3ºD 20280 Hondarribia, SPAIN, (2) CIRCE Spain, Cabeza de Manzaneda 3, Pelayo 11390, Algeciras, SPAIN

The Bay of Biscay is a zone of interest in which a total of 23 species of cetaceans has been identified. In this frame, a preliminary study has been done to determine the diversity and distribution of cetaceans in summer in the adjacent waters of the geographic territory of The Basque Country in the Bay of Biscay. Shipboard visual surveys were conducted, in a 15 meters long boat according to the methodological protocols of the Spanish Cetaceans Society. Samplings were made during spring and summer 2003, sailing a total of 1082,25 miles with correct observation effort, covering 7.532,32 Km<sup>2</sup>. The data, both of sighting and observation effort, was analysed with a Geographic Information System (Arc view 3.2), and a Statistic program SPSS 1.1. Ten different species were encountered in a total of 31 sightings. The most frequent species of cetacean observed during the season was the bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) with 9 sightings (29 %), striped dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*) with 6 (19 %), common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) with 5 (16 %), non identified ziphiidae, 3 (10%), Cuvier's beaked whale (*Ziphius cavirostris*), 2 (6%) long-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala melas*), 2 sightings (6 %), short-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*), 1 (3%), Risso's dolphin (*Grampus griseus*), 1 (3%), sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*), 1 (3%), and minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*), with one sighting (3%). From the data collected, the distribution of all the species with respect to the depth was examined. Significant differences were observed, between the rates of encounter in relation to the effort made and according to the depth. A greater presence in depths from 1200-2000 m-s is shown. Located mainly in the zone of the canyon of Capreton (70% rate of encounter), the continental slope (25%) and finally in the continental platform (5%), where the only cetacean present was the bottlenose dolphin.