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Another strike in the French Mediterranean Sea

Friday 9 May, 2014, 9:50am

ST SOLENE approaches the Gulf of Ajaccio. Having left from Fos-sur-mer the day before, the tanker from SeaTanker shipping sails at cruise speed (12.4 kn). Two people are on watch and sailing conditions are ideal: good visibility, light breeze, no swell. While everything is going well, a sperm whale surfaces 50m on the front port side and immediately dives. A brief moment after, a strong vibration is felt by the crew, followed by a red blow of blood in the wake of the ship. Very shaken, the Captain alerts the MRCC. A police patrol boat and a helicopter of the customs are sent on site at 11am but the animal has disappeared. It is found two days later in the Gulf of Propriano, deeply wounded by the propeller of the ship. The necropsy carried out by Cathy Cesarini (association CARI, French National Stranding Network), concluded that the animal did not die immediately but after a series of heart attacks following the strike.

It is the 5th recorded sperm whale having been killed by a ship strike in the French Mediterranean Sea since 2006. However, this figure is widely underestimated as a large number of hit individuals are never recovered: 1 out of 10 sperm whales stranded along the French Mediterranean coast were killed by a ship strike¹. In Greece, that rate can be as high as 61%². For a population of several hundred individuals with females giving birth to a single calf every 4 to 5 years, these impacts are very worrying.

¹ *Stranding Network and Souffleurs d'Ecume databases*

² *Frantzis A., Alexiadou P. et Gkikopoulou K.C. (2014) - Sperm whale occurrence, site fidelity and population structure along the Hellenic Trench (Greece, Mediterranean Sea). Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems. 24(Suppl. 1). 83-102 p.*





REPCET escorts COSTA CONCORDIA

At the end of July, COSTA CONCORDIA sailed for the last time from the island of Giglio to the port of Genoa to be dismantled. Among the 14 ships of the convoy, sailing boat KIDAN, armed by the Italian NGO Oceanomare Delphis Onlus¹ led the way. Its main mission was to detect marine mammal presence (visual and passive acoustic detection) in order to prevent any disturbance during the journey which was entirely crossing the Pelagos Sanctuary² (280km). For the occasion KIDAN was equipped with REPCET upon request from the Italian Ministry of Environment. During the 4-day journey, dedicated observers on KIDAN sent five cetacean observations, including a fin whale. As a Party Country of the Pelagos Sanctuary and ACCOBAMS³, Italy is engaged in promoting the use of mitigation systems such as REPCET. The deployment of REPCET on the Italian side is now a necessity for the efficiency of this collaborative software. This experience could be a step towards this essential and now urgent objective.



¹ www.oceanomaredelphis.org

² www.pelagos-sanctuary.org

³ Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and contiguous Atlantic Area, www.accobams.org

ENSM training course in Marseille: 10 years already



Every year since 2005, sailing officers, seafarers and executive sedentary personnel go back to the benches of the French National Superior School of Shipping of Marseille (*Ecole Nationale Supérieure Maritime de Marseille, ENSM*) for a training course on Mediterranean cetaceans, ship strikes and mitigation measures. Organised in two steps (one session in March for professionals and one or two sessions in spring for 5th year officer students) this course is carried out in the framework of the activities of the French part of the Pelagos Sanctuary and of ACCOBAMS. For its 10th anniversary, the course had the highest

attendance with about 60 professionals and 20 student officers.

In fact, 81 officers, 15 seafarers and 15 executive sedentary personnel representing 11 shipping companies have attended the course since 2005. An additional 32 officers from the Maritime



REPCET real time plotting of cetaceans

Authorities and the French Navy, 15 scientists and environment managers and 23 Captain degree students have also attended the course. Finally, about 470 5th-year students have also been trained.

Next course: Friday 27 March 2015

Information and registration : www.souffleursdecume.com/english/formation_collisions_EN.html



Région PACA



The MAUVE goes green

On October 9, the patrol vessel MAUVE of the Inter-Regional Department of the Sea (*Direction Inter-Régionale de la Mer, DIRM*) was equipped with REPCET. The whole crew attended a specific training session on Mediterranean cetacean identification, the interest of reducing ship strikes and the use of the REPCET system. Based in Marseille, MAUVE thus becomes the 9th mobile unit equipped with REPCET, in addition to the three land units equipping the French Mediterranean MRCC (*CROSSMED*), Port-Cross National Park, and Souffleurs d'Ecume. This was made possible thanks to the support from the French Marine Protected Area Agency (*Agence des Aires Marines Protégées*¹).



¹ www.aires-marines.com



REPCET, a project worth its salt!



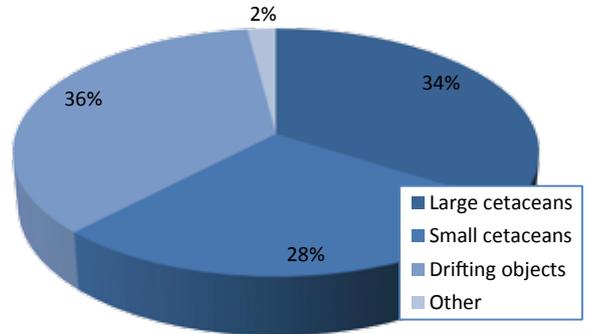
For the 80th anniversary of the salt brand *La Baleine* (the Whale), the *Fondation Salins*¹, under the auspices of the *Fondation de France*, launched its first call for projects on the protection of Mediterranean cetaceans, in collaboration with the Paul Ricard Oceanographic Institute. Souffleurs d'Ecume, having been working on the reduction of collision risks between ships and large cetaceans for 14 years had the honor of receiving this first trophy. With this price, the *Fondation Salins* wanted to support the NGO for the concrete aspect of its actions and for their implementation in a collaborative way with shipping companies.

¹ www.salins.com/en/foudation/



2013 REPCET data: the way to go

The analysis of the observations sent via REPCET in 2013 shows that the number of observations has sharply increased compared to 2012 (+50%, from 233 to 350). This conclusion follows the trend already noticed the year before (+61% between 2011 and 2012). It confirms the increasing implication of crews, the number of equipped ships having remained constant between 2012 and 2013. The most sighted species are the striped dolphin and the fin whale, the two most frequent species in the Pelagos Sanctuary.



Full report: www.repcet.com/docs/SE_2014_bilan-obs-repcet-2013_FINAL_EN.pdf



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