

SIGHTINGS OF *DELPHINUS DELPHIS*  
(CETACEA, ODONTOCETI) IN THE OTRANTO CHANNEL  
(SOUTHERN ADRIATIC SEA AND NORTHERN IONIAN SEA)

AVVISTAMENTI DI *DELPHINUS DELPHIS*  
(CETACEA, ODONTOCETI) NEL CANALE D'OTRANTO (MAR  
ADRIATICO MERIDIONALE E MAR IONIO SETTENTRIONALE)

FRANCESCO MARIA ANGELICI(\*) & LUCA MARINI(\*\*)

ABSTRACT

Two sightings of Common dolphin *Delphinus delphis* in the Channel of Otranto are reported, and the status of this species in the Mediterranean Sea is briefly discussed.

Key words: *Delphinus delphis*, Cetacea, Mediterranean Sea.

RIASSUNTO

Sono riportati due avvistamenti di Delfino comune *Delphinus delphis* nel Canale d'Otranto, lungo la costa greca e quella italiana. Viene inoltre brevemente commentata la frequenza degli avvistamenti e degli spiaggiamenti di tale specie nel Mar Mediterraneo.

Parole chiave: *Delphinitus delphis*, Cetacea, Mar Mediterraneo.

Two sightings of the Common dolphin *Delphinus delphis* Linnaeus, 1758, have been recorded by the Authors on 3th September, 1990. The dolphins were sighted at a distance of about 15 m from a ferry-boat cruising from Corfu Island (Greece) to Brindisi (Italy) at a speed of about 15 knots. The state of the sea was about 2 for the entire crossing period. Observations were made with the aid of an 8 x 40 binocular.

A school of 5 adults specimens was sighted at 8.00 a.m., out of the Greek coast, north of Corfu Island, at a sea depth of about 100 m. The specimens approached the ferry broadside and swam parallelly to it for about one minute with full leaps protruding from the water.

Another school was sighted out of the Italian coast, at 12.15 p.m., at a sea depth of about 100 m. The school was composed by 4 adults and swam about the ferry

(\*) Dipartimento di Biologia Animale e dell'Uomo, Università "La Sapienza", Viale dell'Università 32, 00185 Roma

(\*\*) Cooperativa Interdisciplinare Natura e Ambiente, Piazzale del Caravaggio 6, 00147 Roma

similarly to the previous school. About 25 seconds later it brought about its direction. This sighting also lasted about one minute.

Besides, we recorded a school of 4-6 specimens of Striped dolphin *Stenella coeruleoalba* (Meyen, 1833) on the 18th August 1990, at 11.30 a.m., along the ferry-line Tgoumenitsa - Patras, between the Greek mainland and the Isle of Ithaca.

The estimated sighting locations are reported in Fig.1.

Common dolphin was considered abundant in the Mediterranean Sea in the past (Tocchi, 1965; Cagnolaro et al., 1983) but it seems to have declined since the '70's, at least in Western part of the basin: perhaps it has been replaced by Striped dolphin (Perrin, 1988). *Delphinus delphis* is still abundant in the southern Mediterranean (Duguy et al., 1983).

The lack of Common dolphin records appears significant in stranding data recorded by Centro Studi Cetacei (1987, 1988, 1990) in the southern Adriatic Sea and in the northern Ionian Sea, especially if compared with the 45 specimens of Striped dolphin stranded in the same years and in the same area.

Recently Politi et al. (1992) report some sightings of Common dolphin along Greek Ionian Islands.

In addition, according to our opinion, the many sightings of Common dolphin by occasional {non specialist} observers in the Otranto Channel and in the Aegean Sea (reported by Pilleri & Pilleri, 1987) can't be considered fully reliable.

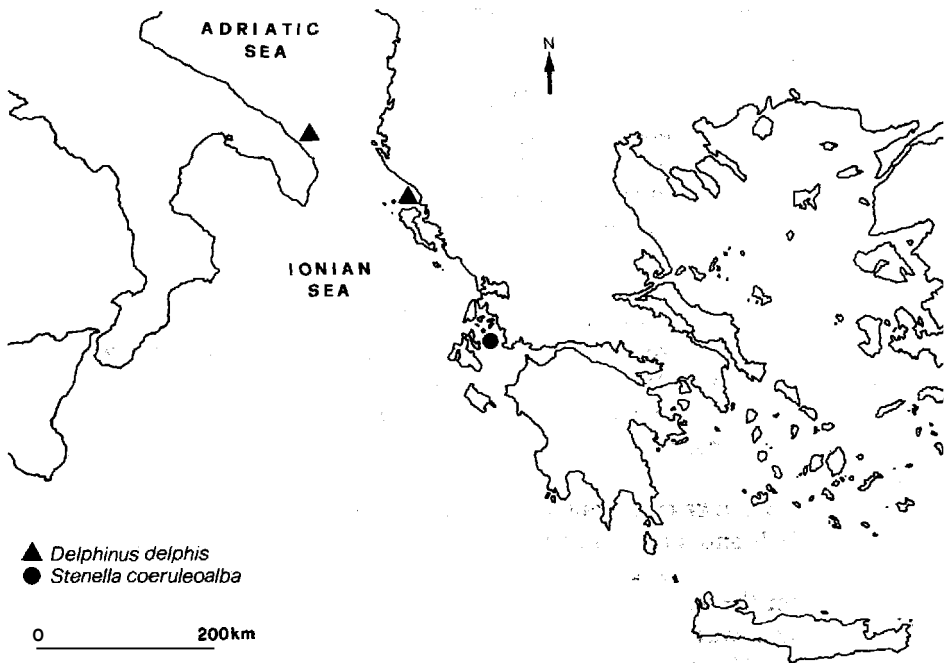


Fig. 1 - Estimated sighting locations.  
*Punti di avvistamento.*

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