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# The bottlenose dolphins (Tursiops truncatus) in Southern Portugal (Southwestern Europe)

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## Introduction:

Despite its regular occurrence along the Portuguese mainland coast, the knowledge on the bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) population is limited (Castro, 2010). In 2010, AIMM began to run a project to enable the collection of more consistent data on cetaceans in the entire south coast of Portugal. Hereby, we present the results focusing on the occurrence, distribution and group composition of bottlenose dolphins in this area (Fig. 1).





Fig. 1 – Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) in Southern Portugal.

### **Methods and Results:**

From May to October (2010 – 2012), platforms of opportunity were used for data collection. A total of 239 sightings of bottlenose dolphins were recorded (Fig. 2). The group size varied from 1 to 200 individuals, and the most representative class is [10 - 20] every year (Fig.3). A relevant occurrence of juveniles was recorded, being these present in 65% of the sightings. Of the groups sighted, 11% were composed by adults, calves and newborns; 33% had juveniles and

adults; and 26% had exclusively adults (Fig. 4). In 42% of the

Fig. 2 – Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) distribution in Southern Portugal between May to October in 2010 to 2012.



Fig. 3 – Histogram of the distribution of the number of individuals per group of Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops* truncatus) in South Portugal, throughout the study period.

sightings the groups were considered compact (1-5 bodies) (Fig.5). 40 Freq. (%)



throughout the study period. A - Adult; J - Juvenile; C - Calf; N - New born

#### **Discussion and Conclusions:**

These results might suggest that this is an important area for this species. The bottlenose dolphin is listed in the Annex II of the EU

**⊗**<sup>100</sup> 2010 eq. 80



throughout the study period

#### **References:**

Castro, J. 2010. Characterization of Cetaceans in the South coast of Portugal between Lagos and Cape São Vicente. Master thesis, Faculty of Sciences, University of Lisbon.

#### **Acknowledgments:**

These results could not have been possible without the collaboration of the whale watching companies "Cape Cruiser", "Dolphins Driven", "Dream Wave" and Algarexperience

Habitats Directive, which considers it a priority species for conservation and, thus, requires the creation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in European waters. Whale watching activity is very intensive in the south coast of Portugal and its impact should be considered since the bottlenose dolphin is one of the target species. Therefore it is essential to better understand how this **species use this area**, and further work should be carried out.



