

Alice Nebuloni

“Presenza, abbondanza e distribuzione del tursiope, *Tursiops truncatus* (Montagu, 1821), nel levante ligure, in relazione al traffico marittimo da diporto e alle attività di pesca”

Abstract

The bottlenose dolphin, *Tursiops truncatus* (Montagu, 1821), is the second most sighted and frequent cetacean species in the Mediterranean Sea, following the striped dolphin. Throughout the basin, this dolphin exhibits a clear preference for the habitat of the continental shelf and only rarely ventures beyond the 200-meter depth contour. However, the coastal environment simultaneously represents the most exploited marine area for anthropogenic activities, such as commercial fishing, aquaculture, and recreational boating. Due to these reasons, the bottlenose dolphin is one of the target species of the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and is included in Annexes II and IV of the European Union Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) as a species of community interest, which means that its conservation necessitates the designation of special protected areas. In light of these conservation objectives, the establishment of a Special Conservation Zone (SCZ) for the safeguarding of this species along the Ligurian coasts is imminent. For this reason, in this report, the ecology and the distribution of the bottlenose dolphins' population, and the interactions between these dolphins and anthropogenic activities (with a particular focus on recreational maritime traffic and trawl fishing) in the eastern Ligurian sea have been investigated, to contribute to the necessary knowledge for the conservation of this species in the area.