

COMMON DOLPHIN (*Delphinus delphis*): Western North Atlantic Stock

STOCK DEFINITION AND GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

The common dolphin may be one of the most widely distributed species of cetaceans, as it is found world-wide in temperate, tropical, and subtropical seas. In the North Atlantic, common dolphins appear to be present along the coast over the continental shelf along the 200-2000m isobaths or over prominent underwater topography from 50° N to 40° S latitude (Evans 1994). The species is less common south of Cape Hatteras, although schools have been reported as far south as eastern Florida (Gaskin 1992). At least some of the reported sightings of common dolphins in the Gulf of Mexico may have been *Stenella clymene*, which has a color pattern similar to that of common dolphins (Evans 1994). NMFS is currently funding genetic and skull morphometric studies, which will provide information on common dolphin stock structure in the western North Atlantic. Preliminary work had documented a high variance in skull morphometric measurements, suggesting the existence of more than a single stock (J. G. Mead, pers. comm.). Common dolphins are distributed along the continental slope (100 to 2,000 meters), and are associated with Gulf Stream features in waters off the northeastern USA coast (CETAP 1982; Selzer and Payne 1988; Waring *et al.* 1992). They are widespread from Cape Hatteras northeast to Georges Bank (35° to 42° North latitude) in outer continental shelf waters from mid-January to May (Hain *et al.* 1981; CETAP 1982; Payne *et al.* 1984). Common dolphins move northward onto Georges Bank and the Scotian Shelf from mid-summer to autumn (Palka *et al.* in review). Selzer and Payne (1988) reported very large aggregations (greater than 3,000 animals) on Georges Bank in autumn. Common dolphins are rarely found in the Gulf of Maine, where temperature and salinity regimes are lower than on the continental slope of the Georges Bank/mid-Atlantic region (Selzer and Payne 1988). Migration onto the Scotian Shelf and continental shelf off Newfoundland occurs during summer and autumn when water temperatures exceed 11°C (Sergeant *et al.* 1970; Gowans and Whitehead 1995).

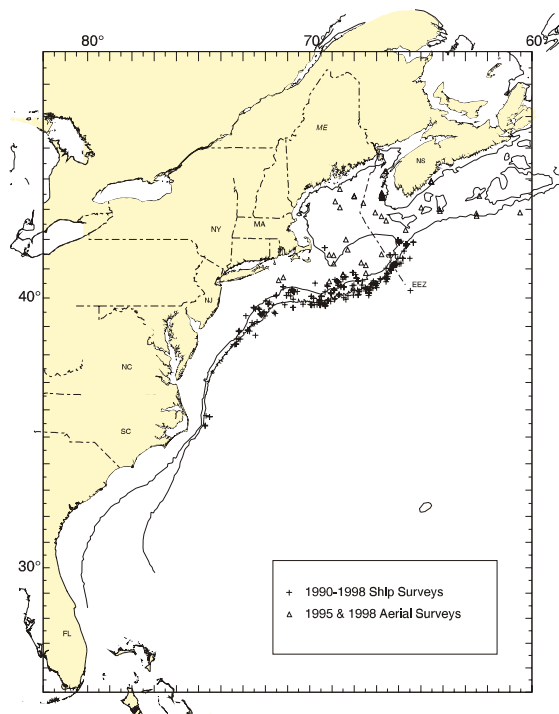


Figure 1. Distribution of common dolphin sightings from NEFSC and SEFSC shipboard and aerial surveys during the summer in 1990-1998. Isobaths are at 100 m and 1,000 m.

POPULATION SIZE

Total numbers of common dolphins off the USA or Canadian Atlantic coast are unknown, although five estimates from selected regions of the habitat do exist for selected time periods. Sightings were almost exclusively in the continental shelf edge and continental slope areas (Figure 1). An abundance of 29,610 common dolphins (CV=0.39) was estimated from an aerial survey program conducted from 1978 to 1982 on the continental shelf and shelf edge waters between Cape Hatteras, North Carolina and Nova Scotia (CETAP 1982). An abundance of 22,215 (CV=0.40) common dolphins was estimated from a June and July 1991 shipboard line-transect sighting survey conducted primarily between the 200 and 2,000m isobaths from Cape Hatteras to Georges Bank (Waring *et al.* 1992; Waring 1998). As recommended in the GAMMS Workshop Report (Wade and Angliss 1997), estimates older than eight years are deemed unreliable, therefore should not be used for PBR determinations. Further, due to changes in survey methodology these data should not be used to make comparisons to more current estimates.

An abundance of 1,645 (CV=0.47) common dolphins was estimated from a June and July 1993 shipboard line-transect sighting survey conducted principally between the 200 and 2,000 m isobaths from the southern edge of Georges Bank, across the Northeast Channel to the southeastern edge of the Scotian Shelf (Anon. 1993). Data were collected by two alternating teams that searched with 25x150 binoculars and were analyzed using DISTANCE (Buckland *et al.* 1993; Laake *et al.* 1993). Estimates include school size-bias, if applicable, but do not include corrections for $g(0)$ or dive-time. Variability was estimated using bootstrap resampling techniques.

An abundance of 6,741 (CV=0.69) common dolphins was estimated from a July to September 1995 sighting survey conducted by two ships and an airplane that covered waters from Virginia to the mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Table 1; Palka *et al.* in review). Total track line length was 32,600 km. The ships covered waters between the 50 and 1000 fathom depth contour lines, the northern edge of the Gulf Stream, and the northern Gulf of Maine/Bay of Fundy region. The airplane covered waters in the mid-Atlantic from the coastline to the 50 fathom depth contour line, the southern Gulf of Maine, and shelf waters off Nova Scotia from the coastline to the 1000 fathom isobath. Data collection and analysis methods used were described in Palka (1996).

An abundance of 30,768 (CV=0.32) common dolphins was estimated from a line transect sighting survey conducted during July 6 to September 6, 1998 by a ship and plane that surveyed 15,900 km of track line in waters north of Maryland (38° N) (Figure 1; Palka *et al.* in review). Shipboard data were analyzed using the modified direct duplicate method (Palka 1995) that accounts for school size bias and $g(0)$, the probability of detecting a group on the track line. Aerial data were not corrected for $g(0)$.

No common dolphins were encountered during the SEFSC component of the joint surveys. That shipboard line transect sighting survey was conducted between 8 July and 17 August 1998 and surveyed 5,570 km of track line in waters south of Maryland (38°N) (Mullin 2003).

Although the 1991, 1993, 1995, and 1998 surveys did not sample the same areas or encompass the entire common dolphin habitat (e.g., little effort in Scotian shelf edge waters), they did focus on segments of known or suspected high-use habitats off the northeastern USA coast. The 1993, 1995 and 1998 data suggest that, seasonally, at least several thousand common dolphins are occupying continental shelf edge waters, with perhaps highest abundance in the Georges Bank region.

The best available abundance estimate for common dolphins is 30,768 (CV=0.32) as estimated from the July 6 to September 6, 1998 USA Atlantic surveys. This estimate is considered best because these surveys have the most complete coverage of the species' habitat. The previous best estimate of 22,215 (CV=0.40) is nearly eight years old.

Table 1. Summary of abundance estimates for western North Atlantic common dolphin. Month, year, and area covered during each abundance survey, and resulting abundance estimate (N_{best}) and coefficient of variation (CV).

| Month/Year | Area | N_{best} | CV |
|--------------|----------------------------------|------------|------|
| Jul-Sep 1995 | Virginia to Gulf of St. Lawrence | 6,741 | 0.69 |
| Jul-Sep 1998 | Maryland to Gulf of St. Lawrence | 30,768 | 0.32 |

Minimum Population Estimate

The minimum population estimate is the lower limit of the two-tailed 60% confidence interval of the log-normally distributed best abundance estimate. This is equivalent to the 20th percentile of the log-normal distribution as specified by Wade and Angliss (1997). The best estimate of abundance for common dolphins is 30,768 (CV=0.32). The minimum population estimate for the western North Atlantic common dolphin is 23,655 (CV=0.32).

Current Population Trend

There are insufficient data to determine the population trends for this species.

CURRENT AND MAXIMUM NET PRODUCTIVITY RATES

Current and maximum net productivity rates are unknown for this stock. For purposes of this assessment, the maximum net productivity rate was assumed to be 0.04. This value is based on theoretical modeling showing that cetacean populations may not grow at rates much greater than 4% given the constraints of their reproductive life history (Barlow *et al.* 1995).

POTENTIAL BIOLOGICAL REMOVAL

Potential Biological Removal (PBR) is the product of minimum population size, one-half the maximum productivity rate, and a "recovery" factor (MMPA Sec. 3. 16 U.S.C. 1362; Wade and Angliss 1997). The minimum population size is 23,655 (CV=0.32). The maximum productivity rate is 0.04, the default value for cetaceans. The "recovery" factor, which accounts for endangered, depleted, threatened stocks, or stocks of unknown status relative to optimum sustainable population (OSP) is assumed to be 0.48 because the CV of the average mortality estimate is between 0.3 and 0.6 (Wade and Angliss 1997), and because this stock is of unknown status. PBR for the western North Atlantic common dolphin is 227.

ANNUAL HUMAN-CAUSED MORTALITY AND SERIOUS INJURY

Total annual estimated average fishery-related mortality or serious injury to this stock during 1997-2001 was 190 common dolphins (CV=0.30; Table 2).

Fishery Information

USA

Prior to 1977, there was no documentation of marine mammal bycatch in distant-water fleet (DWF) activities off the northeast coast of the USA. With implementation of the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (MFCMA), an observer program was established which has recorded fishery data and information of incidental bycatch of marine mammals. DWF effort in the Atlantic coast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) under MFCMA has been directed primarily towards Atlantic mackerel and squid. From 1977 through 1982, an average of 120 different foreign vessels per year (range 102-161) operated within the US Atlantic EEZ. In 1982, there were 112 different foreign vessels; 16%, or 18, were Japanese tuna longline vessels operating along the USA east coast. This was the first year that the Northeast Regional Observer Program assumed responsibility for observer coverage of the longline vessels. Between 1983 and 1991, the numbers of foreign vessels operating within the US Atlantic EEZ each year were 67, 52, 62, 33, 27, 26, 14, 13 and 9, respectively. Between 1983 and 1988, the numbers of DWF vessels included 3, 5, 7, 6, 8 and 8, respectively, Japanese longline vessels. Observer coverage on DWF vessels was 25-35% during 1977-1982, and increased to 58%, 86%, 95% and 98%, respectively, in 1983-1986. From 1987 to 1991, 100% observer coverage was maintained. Foreign fishing operations for squid and mackerel ceased at the end of the 1986 and 1991 fishing seasons, respectively.

During the period 1977-1986, observers recorded 123 mortalities in foreign *Loligo* squid-fishing activities (Waring *et al.* 1990). In 1985 and 1986, Italian vessels took 56 and 54 animals, respectively, which accounts for 89% (n=110) of the total takes in foreign *Loligo* squid-fishing operations. No mortalities were reported in foreign *Illex* squid fishing operations. Because of spatial/temporal fishing restrictions, most of the bycatch occurred along the continental shelf edge (100 m) isobath during winter (December to February).

From 1977 to 1991, observers recorded 110 mortalities in foreign mackerel-fishing operations (Waring *et al.* 1990; NMFS unpublished data). This total includes one documented take by a USA vessel involved in joint-venture fishing operations in which USA captains transfer their catches to foreign processing vessels. The bycatch occurred during winter/spring (December to May).

Data on current incidental takes in USA fisheries are available from several sources. In 1986, NMFS established a mandatory self-reported fisheries information system for large pelagic fisheries. Data files are maintained at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC). The Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) Fisheries Observer Program was initiated in 1989, and since that year several fisheries have been covered by the program. In late 1992 and in 1993, the SEFSC provided observer coverage of pelagic longline vessels fishing off the Grand Banks (Tail of the Banks) and provides observer coverage of vessels fishing south of Cape Hatteras.

Bycatch has been observed by NMFS Sea Samplers in the pelagic drift gillnet, pelagic pair trawl, pelagic longline, mid-Atlantic coastal gillnet, North Atlantic bottom trawl, Northeast multispecies sink gillnet, and Atlantic squid, mackerel, butterflyfish trawl fisheries.

Pelagic Drift Gillnet

The estimated total number of hauls in the pelagic drift gillnet fishery increased from 714 in 1989 to 1,144 in 1990; thereafter, with the introduction of quotas, effort was severely reduced. The estimated number of hauls in 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1998 were 233, 243, 232, 197, 164, 149 and 113 respectively. In 1996 and 1997, NMFS issued management regulations which prohibited the operation of this fishery in 1997. Further, in January 1999 NMFS issued a Final Rule to prohibit the use of driftnets (*i.e.*, permanent closure) in the North Atlantic swordfish fishery (50 CFR Part 630). Fifty-nine different vessels participated in this fishery at one time or another between 1989 and 1993. From 1994 to 1998, between 10 and 13 vessels participated in the fishery. Observer coverage, expressed as percent of sets observed, was 8% in 1989, 6% in 1990, 20% in 1991, 40% in 1992, 42% in 1993, 87% in 1994, 99% in 1995, 64% in 1996 and 99% in 1998. Effort was concentrated along the southern edge of Georges Bank and off Cape Hatteras. Examination of the species composition of the catch and locations of the fishery throughout the year, suggested that the pelagic drift gillnet fishery be stratified into two strata, a southern or winter stratum, and a northern or summer stratum. Estimates of the total bycatch, from 1989 to 1993, were obtained using the aggregated (pooled 1989-1993) catch rates, by stratum (Northridge 1996). Estimates of total annual bycatch for 1994 and 1995 were estimated from the sum of the observed caught and the product of the average bycatch per haul and the number of unobserved hauls as recorded in self-reported fisheries information. Variances were estimated using bootstrap re-sampling techniques. Eight hundred and sixty-one common dolphin mortalities were observed between 1989 and 1998 in this fishery. Mortalities were observed in all seasons and areas. Seven animals were released alive, but 6 were injured. Estimated annual mortality and serious injury attributable to this fishery (CV in parentheses) was 540 in 1989 (0.19), 893 in 1990 (0.18), 223 in 1991 (0.12), 227 in 1992 (0.09), 238 in 1993 (0.08), 163 in 1994 (0.02), 83 in 1995 (0), 106 in 1996 (0.07) and 255 in 1998 (0). Since this fishery no longer exists, it has been excluded from Table 2 (see Waring *et al.* 1999).

Pelagic Pair Trawl

The pelagic pair trawl fishery operated as an experimental fishery from 1991 to 1995, with an estimated 171 hauls in 1991, 536 in 1992, 586 in 1993, 407 in 1994 and 440 in 1995. This fishery ceased operations in 1996, when NMFS rejected a petition to consider pair trawl gear as an authorized gear type in the Atlantic tuna fishery. The fishery operated in August to November in 1991, from June to November in 1992, from June to October in 1993 (Northridge 1996), and from mid-summer to December in 1994 and 1995. Fisheries Observer began in October of

1992 (Gerrior *et al.* 1994) where 48 sets (9% of the total) were sampled. In 1993, 102 hauls (17% of the total) were sampled. In 1994 and 1995, 52% (212) and 55% (238), respectively, of the sets were observed. Nineteen vessels have operated in this fishery. The fishery operates in the area between 35°N to 41°N and 69°W to 72°W. Approximately 50% of the total effort was within a one degree square at 39°N, 72°W, around Hudson Canyon from 1991 to 1993. Examination of the 1991-1993 locations and species composition of the bycatch, showed little seasonal change for the six months of operation and did not warrant any seasonal or areal stratification of this fishery (Northridge 1996). Twelve mortalities were observed between 1991 and 1995. The estimated annual fishery-related mortality and serious injury attributable to this fishery (CV in parentheses) was 5.6 in 1991 (0.53), 32 in 1992 (0.48), 35 in 1993 (0.43), 0 in 1994 and 5.6 in 1995 (0.35). Since this fishery is no longer in operation it has been deleted from Table 2. During the 1994 and 1995 experimental pelagic pair trawl fishing seasons, fishing gear experiments were conducted to collect data on environmental parameters, gear behavior, and gear handling practices to evaluate factors affecting catch and bycatch (Goudey 1995, 1996), but the results were inconclusive.

Pelagic Longline

Total effort, excluding the Gulf of Mexico and fishing regions east of 60°W longitude, for the pelagic longline fishery, based on mandatory self-reported fisheries information, was 11,279 sets in 1991, 8,579 sets in 1992, 8,644 sets in 1993, 9,191 sets in 1994, 9,124 sets in 1995, 7,818 sets in 1996, 7,707 sets in 1997, 6,305 sets in 1998, 5,832 sets in 1999 and 6,582 in 2000 (Cramer 1994; Scott and Brown 1997; Johnson *et al.* 1999; Yeung 1999a; Yeung *et al.* 2000; Yeung 2001). Since 1992, this fishery has been monitored with about 5% observer coverage, in terms of trips observed, within every statistical reporting area within the US Atlantic EEZ and beyond. Off the USA Atlantic coast, the fishery has been observed from January to March off Cape Hatteras, in May and June in the entire mid-Atlantic, and in July through December in the mid-Atlantic Bight and off Nova Scotia. The 1994-1998 estimated take was based on a revised analysis of the observed incidental take and self-reported incidental take and effort data, and replace previous estimates for the 1992-1993 and 1994-1995 periods (Cramer 1994; Scott and Brown 1997; Johnson *et al.* 1999). Further, Yeung (1999b) revised the 1992-1997 fishery mortality estimates in Johnson *et al.* (1999) to include seriously injured animals. The 1998 bycatch estimates were from Yeung (1999a). Most of the estimated marine mammal bycatch was from US Atlantic EEZ waters between South Carolina and Cape Cod (Johnson *et al.* 1999). Between 1990 and 2000 sixteen common dolphins were hooked and released alive (Yeung *et al.* 2000; Yeung 2001).

Northeast Multispecies Sink Gillnet

In 1993, there were approximately 349 full and part-time vessels in the Northeast multispecies sink gillnet fishery, which covered the Gulf of Maine and southern New England (Table 2). An additional 187 vessels were reported to occasionally fish in the Gulf of Maine with gillnets for bait or personal use; however, these vessels were not covered by the observer program (Walden 1996) and their fishing effort was not used in estimating mortality. Observer coverage in terms of trips has been 1%, 6%, 7%, 5%, 7%, 5%, 4%, 6%, 5%, 6%, 6% and 4% for 1990 to 2001 respectively. The fishery has been observed in the Gulf of Maine and in Southern New England. In 1996, the first observed mortality of common dolphins in this fishery was recorded. The estimated annual fishery-related mortality and serious injury attributable to this fishery (CV in parentheses) was 0 in 1995, 63 in 1996 (CV=1.39), 0 in 1997, 0 in 1998, 146 in 1999 (0.97) and 0 in both 2000 and 2001; estimated annual mortality (1997-2001) was 29 common dolphins (CV= 0.97) (Table 2).

Mid-Atlantic Coastal Gillnet

Observer coverage of the USA Atlantic coastal gillnet fishery was initiated by the NEFSC Fisheries Observer program in July, 1993; and from July to December 1993, 20 trips were observed. During 1994 and 1995, 221 and 382 trips were observed, respectively. This fishery, which extends from North Carolina to New York, is actually a combination of small vessel fisheries that target a variety of fish species, some of which operate right off the beach. The number of vessels in this fishery is unknown, because records which are held by both state and federal agencies have not been centralized and standardized. Observer coverage, expressed as percent of tons of fish landed, was 5%, 4%, 3%, 5%, 2%, 2% and 2% for 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001, respectively (Table 2).

No common dolphins were taken in observed trips during 1993 and 1994. Two common dolphins were observed taken in 1995, 1996, and 1997, and no takes were observed from 1998-2001 (Table 2). Observed effort was concentrated off New Jersey and scattered between Delaware and North Carolina from 1 to 50 miles off the beach. All bycatches were documented during January to April. Using the observed takes, the estimated annual mortality (CV in parentheses) attributed to this fishery was 7.4 in 1995 (CV=0.69), 43 in 1996 (0.79), 16 in 1997 (0.53), and 0 in 1998-2001. Average annual estimated fishery-related mortality attributable to this fishery during 1997-2001 was 3 common dolphins (CV=0.53).

Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Squid, Mackerel, Butterfish Trawl Fisheries

In 1996, mackerel, squid, and butterfish trawl fisheries were combined into one Atlantic squid, mackerel, and butterfish fishery management plan and designated as a Category II fishery. Because of spatial and temporal differences in the harvesting of *Illex* and *Loligo* squid, and Atlantic Mackerel, each one of these sub-fisheries are described separately. Butterfish (*Peprilus triacanthus*) undergo a northerly inshore migration during the summer months and southerly offshore migration during the winter months and are mainly caught as incidental bycatch to the directed squid and mackerel fisheries. Fishery observers suggest that a significant amount of butterfish discarding

occurs at sea. The *Illex* and *Loligo* squid fisheries are managed by moratorium permits, gear and area restrictions, quotas, and trip limits. The Atlantic mackerel and butterfish fisheries are managed by an annual quota system.

Historically, the mid-Atlantic mackerel and squid trawl fisheries were combined into the Atlantic mid-water trawl fishery in the revised proposed list of fisheries in 1995. The mackerel trawl fishery was classified as a Category II fishery since 1990 and the squid fishery was originally classified as a Category II fishery in 1990, but was reclassified as a Category III fishery in 1992. The combined fishery was then reclassified as a Category II fishery in 1995.

***Illex* Squid**

The USA domestic fishery, ranging from Southern New England to Cape Hatteras North Carolina, reflects patterns in the seasonal distribution of *Illex* squid (*Illex illecebrosus*). *Illex* are harvested offshore mainly by small mesh otter trawlers when they are distributed in continental shelf and slope waters during the summer months, June-September. No incidental takes of common dolphins have been observed in the *Illex* fishery. Annual observer coverage of this fishery has varied widely and reflect only the months when the fishery is active. Between 1996-2001 annual observer coverage was 3.7%, 6.21%, 0.97%, 2.84%, 11.11% and unknown, respectively.

***Loligo* Squid**

The USA domestic fishery for *Loligo* squid (*Loligo pealeii*) occurs mainly in Southern New England and mid-Atlantic waters. Fishery patterns reflect *Loligo* seasonal distribution where most effort is directed offshore near the edge of the continental shelf during the fall and winter months (October-March), and inshore during the spring and summer months, April-September. This fishery is dominated by small-mesh otter trawlers, but substantial landings also are taken by inshore pound nets and fish traps during the spring and summer months (Clark 1998). All incidental takes attributed to this fishery were observed during the first quarter of the year (Jan-Mar), exclusively in the offshore fishery. Between 1996-2001, observer coverage of the fall/winter offshore fishery was .03%, 0.50%, 0.78%, 0.86%, 1.08% and 1.25%, respectively. Observer coverage of the spring/summer inshore fishery was .02%, 2.10%, 0.47%, 0.51%, 0.59% and 0.47% between 1996-2001, respectively. The estimated fishery-related mortality of common dolphins attributable to the fall/winter offshore fishery was 0 between 1997-1998, 49 in 1999 (CV=0.97), 273 in 2000 (CV=0.57) and 126 in 2001 (CV=1.09). The average annual mortality between 1997-2001 was 90 common dolphins (CV=0.47) (Table 2). However, these estimates should be viewed with caution due to the extremely low (<1%) observer coverage.

Atlantic Mackerel

The USA domestic fishery for Atlantic mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) occurs primarily in the southern New England and mid-Atlantic waters between the months of January and May (Clark 1998). This fishery is dominated by mid-water (pelagic) trawls. Observer coverage of this fishery was 0.79%, 0.00%, 1.13%, 4.9% and 3.4% between 1997-2001, respectively. One common dolphin take was observed in 1997. The estimated fishery-related mortality attributed to this fishery was 161 (CV=0.49) animals in 1997, and 0 between 1998-2001. The average annual mortality between 1997-2001 was 32 common dolphins (CV=0.49) (Table 2).

A USA joint venture (JV) fishery was conducted in the mid-Atlantic region from February-May 1998. NMFS, maintained 100% observer coverage on the foreign JV vessels where one hundred and fifty-two transfers from the USA vessels were observed. Seventeen incidental takes of common dolphin were observed in the 1998 JV mackerel fishery. This fishery did not operate in 1999-2001. The former distant water fleet fishery has been non-existent since 1977. There is also a mackerel trawl fishery in the Gulf of Maine that generally occurs during the summer and fall months, May-December.

Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic Mixed Groundfish Trawl Fisheries

This fishery occurs year round ranging from Cape Cod Massachusetts to Cape Hatteras North Carolina. It represents a variety of individual sub-fisheries that include but are not limited to; monkfish, summer flounder (fluke), winter flounder, silver hake (whiting), spiny and smooth dogfish, scup, and black sea bass. Observer coverage of this fishery was 0.24%, 0.22%, 0.15%, 0.14%, 0.35% and 0.41% between 1996-2001, respectively. There was one observed take in this fishery reported in 1997. The estimated fishery-related mortality for common dolphins attributable to this fishery was 93 (CV=1.06) animals in 1997 and 0 between 1998-2001. The average annual mortality between 1997-2001 was 19 common dolphins (CV=1.06) (Table 2). However, these estimates should be viewed with caution due to the extremely low (<1%) observer coverage.

CANADA

Between January 1993 and December 1994, 36 Spanish deep water trawlers, covering 74 fishing trips (4,726 fishing days and 14,211 sets), were observed in NAFO Fishing Area 3 (off the Grand Banks) (Lens 1997). A total of 47 incidental catches were recorded, which included 1 common dolphin. The incidental mortality rate for common dolphins was 0.007/set.

Table 2. Summary of the incidental mortality of common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) by commercial fishery including the years sampled (Years), the number of vessels active within the fishery (Vessels), the type of data used (Data Type), the annual observer coverage (Observer Coverage), the mortalities recorded by on-board observers (Observed Mortality), the estimated annual mortality (Estimated Mortality), the estimated CV of the annual mortality (Estimated CVs) and the mean annual mortality (CV in parentheses).

| Fishery | Years | Vessels ³ | Data Type ¹ | Observer Coverage ² | Observed Serious Injury | Observed Mortality | Estimated Serious Injury | Estimated Mortality | Estimated Combined Mortality | Estimated CVs | Mean Annual Mortality |
|---|-------|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Northeast Multispecies Sink Gillnet | 97-01 | 349 | Obs. Data Dealer, Logbooks | .06, .05, .06, .06, .04 | 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 0, 0, 2, 0, 0 | 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 0, 0, 146, 0, 0 | 0, 0, 146, 0, 0 | .0, 0, .97, 0, 0 | 29 (.97) |
| Mid-Atlantic Coastal Gillnet | 97-01 | NA | Obs. Data Dealer | .03, .05, .02, .02, .02 | 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 2, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 16, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 16, 0, 0, 0, 0 | .53, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 3 (.53) |
| SNE/mid-Atlantic <i>Loligo</i> Squid Trawl (offshore) | 97-01 | 384 ⁴ | Obs. Data Dealer | .005, .008, .009, .011, .012 | 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 0, 0, 1, 6, 2 | 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 0, 0, 49, 273, 126 | 0, 0, 49, 273, 126 | 0, 0, .78, .57, 1.09 | 90 (.47) |
| SNE/ mid-Atlantic Bottom Trawl | 97-01 | NA | Obs. Data Dealer | .002, .001, .003, .003, .004 | 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 1 ⁴ , 0, 0, 0, 0 | 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 93, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 93, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 1.06, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 19 (1.06) |
| SNE/Mid-Atlantic Mackerel Trawl-domestic | 97-01 | 2,242 ⁴ | Obs. Data Dealer | .007, .00, .01, .04, .03 | 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 1, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 0, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 161, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 161, 0, 0, 0, 0 | .49, 0, 0, 0, 0 | 32 (.49) |
| SNE/Mid-Atlantic Mackerel Trawl-JV | 1998 | 4 | Obs. Data | 1.00 | 0 | 17 | 0 | 17 | 17 | 0 | 17 (0) |
| TOTAL | | | | | | | | | | | 190 (.30) |

¹ Observer data (Obs. Data) are used to measure bycatch rates, and the data are collected within the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) Fisheries Observer Program. NEFSC collects dealer reported landings data. Total landings are used as a measure of total effort for the coastal gillnet, Northeast sink gillnet and the SNE/Mid-Atlantic and squid, mackerel, butterfish trawl fisheries.

² The observer coverage for the Northeast multispecies sink gillnet fishery are measured in trips. Observer coverage for the Mid Atlantic coastal sink gillnet fishery is measured in tons of fish landed. Observer coverage of the SNE/Mid-Atlantic and squid, mackerel, butterfish trawl fisheries are measured in trips.

³ These are numbers of potential fishing vessels based on permit holders in the 2002 fishery. Many of these vessels participate in the other fisheries and therefore the reported number of vessels are not additive across the squid, mackerel and butterfish fisheries. (67FR 65937).

⁴ The incidental take was observed on a trip than landed scup as the primary species.

Other Mortality

From 1997 to 2001, 164 common dolphins were reported stranded between Maine and Florida (Table 3). The total includes mass stranded common dolphins in Massachusetts during 1997 (10 animals); 1998 (9 animals and 5 animals); and 1999 (3 animals), and in North Carolina in 2001 (7 animals). Three common dolphins which had stranded alive in Massachusetts in 2000 were released. In 1999, 1 stranding mortality in New Jersey was designated as a human interaction (fishing gear). In 2001, the cause of death of 1 stranding mortality in Virginia and another animal in North Carolina were designated as human interactions/fishing interactions.

Four common dolphin strandings (6 individuals) were reported on Sable Island, Nova Scotia from 1970 to 1998, with all having occurred since 1996 (Lucas and Hooker 1997; Lucas and Hooker 2000.)

Table 3. Common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) strandings along the US Atlantic coast, 1997-2001

| STATE | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | TOTALS |
|-----------------------------|----------------|------|----------------|------|-----------------|--------|
| Maine | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Massachusetts ¹ | 17 | 21 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 67 |
| Rhode Island | 1 ² | 2 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 13 |
| Connecticut | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| New York | 7 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 24 |
| New Jersey | 2 | 1 | 3 ³ | 5 | 5 | 16 |
| Delaware | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Maryland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Virginia | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 4 ³ | 9 |
| North Carolina ⁴ | 2 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 14 ³ | 24 |
| Georgia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| TOTALS | 29 | 29 | 28 | 37 | 41 | 164 |

¹ Massachusetts mass strandings (1997 - 10 animals, 1998 - 9 and 5 animals, 1999 - 3 animals)

² Boat collision (14 Feb 1997 - Rhode Island)

³ Fishery/Human Interactions (North Carolina - 1 H.I., fishing gear, April 2001; Virginia - 1 F.I. March 2001, New Jersey - 1 F.I. reported with net marks January 1999)

⁴ North Carolina mass stranding (2001 - 7 animals)

STATUS OF STOCK

The status of common dolphins, relative to OSP, in the US Atlantic EEZ is unknown. The species is not listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. There are insufficient data to determine the population trends for this species. The total fishery-related mortality and serious injury for this stock is not less than 10% of the calculated PBR and, therefore, cannot be considered to be insignificant and approaching zero mortality and serious injury rate. This is not a strategic stock because the 1997-2001 average annual fishery-related mortality and serious injury does not exceed PBR. The status has changed, but mortality is close to PBR. In the last five editions of this stock assessment report, it has been designated as non-strategic solely in 2002.

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