

Integrating Scientific Research with Community Education for Cetacean Conservation and Population Statuses in Montenegro

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Adriatic Sea, with its high marine biodiversity is pinpointed as important cetacean habitat. Despite the cetacean studies started in early 1980s in the northern and central Adriatic, south Adriatic suffers from the lack of data, which leads to the current project. Both land and boat surveys have been conducted since September 2016. So far we have done 180 land surveys and

32 boat surveys. Two species of dolphins, bottlenose (*Tursiops truncatus*) and striped (*Stenella coeruleoalba*) have been encountered. Overall, we have encountered 86 groups of bottlenose dolphins and 16 groups of striped dolphins. The average group size for bottlenose dolphins and striped dolphins were four and nine, respectively. The overall encounter rate of bottlenose dolphins was estimated on average 3,5 groups and 9,2 individuals per 100km. Until now, we have catalogued 46 individuals of bottlenose dolphins, with a maximum re-sighting number of nine. The knowledge gained will be used to fill the scientific data gaps on the marine top predators which will form the main step on the implementation of management and conservation strategies within Montenegro.

Key words: cetaceans, sighting, conservation implications, bottlenose dolphins, striped dolphins, South Adriatic Sea
