SC/MAY19/AAWW/05

Assessment of the threats on the small cetaceans of the Cameroonian coast

Takoukam, A.K., Yamb,L., Nguedia, C.F. and Akono, E.N.

INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

[Short note on an ongoing study]

Assessment of the threats on the small cetaceans of the Cameroonian coast

Aristide Kamla Takoukam, Lionel Yamb, Cedrick Fogwan Nguedia, Eddy Nnanga Akono

African Marine Mammals Conservation Organization (AMMCO), BP/PO Box 908 Edéa

In this study, we combined data from various survey techniques including boat surveys, beach monitoring, interview survey, fish landing monitoring, and citizen science to gather data on the presence and threats on cetaceans along the coast of Cameroon between 2015 and till date. The spatial and temporal sampling effort and resolution varied between techniques. The heterogeneity in the distribution of the sampling effort was largely due to the convenience of the available resources which was mostly limiting. However, our effort was optimized to maximize any sighting either opportunistically or actively.

The goal of this study is to resorb the knowledge gap on cetaceans in Cameroon and contribute to improving their conservation status. Specifically, this study aimed at 1) documenting the species of cetaceans present along the coast of Cameroun and 2) assess and monitor the threats they are facing. No cetacean species are explicitly listed in the list of integrally protected species of the Cameroon fauna law; one of the reasons being the state institution in charge of wildlife protection in Cameroon does not have enough data to justify their listing among integrally protected species. Therefore, this study on a short- or mid-term might provide data to back up our advocacy for the legal protection of cetaceans in Cameroon.

Preliminary results

Out of the 78 fishermen interviewed on the northern coast of Cameroon in between May and July 2018, 22 (28%) and 28 (36%) reported having seen at least a dead dolphin and baleen whale the previous year respectively. They attributed the cause of the death of dolphin to accidental catch (7 fishermen), food intoxication and the other (3), old age (3) and unknown (9).

Five of the 78 respondents (6.4%) reported having ever accidentally captured a dolphin in their fishing, and none of them release the animal back into the water but consume the meat with the family or sold it.

Though our citizen science program, we were able to document between 2015 and 2019, four carcasses of dolphins including the bottlenose and common dolphins and six carcasses of humpback whales.

Espece	Date	Latitude (x)	Longitude (y)
Dolphin	16/06/2015 13:21:00	2.93755	9.907034
Humpback whale	04/02/2016 10:35:00	3.803226	9.585267
Humpback whale	04/12/2016 11:01:00	2.940594	9.910192
Humpback whale	22/07/2017 10:26:00	3.667	9.637
Common dolphin	15/08/2017 09:36:00	4.034	9.086
Humpback whale	12/09/2017 15:19:00	4.008	9.166
Bottle nose dolphin	28/12/2018 11:49:00	4.403	8.88
Bottlenose dolphin	31/08/2018 07:04:00	4.003803	9.120818
Dolphin	03/12/2018 07:58:00	3.979878	9.190023
Humpback whale	01/01/2019 11:25:00	2.890477	9.887333

No cetacean carcasses have been documented so far during our ongoing weekly beach and fish landing monitoring.

During our boat survey along the northern coast of Cameroon, we encountered a group of more than 150 individuals of spinner dolphins on September 2018.

Picture: photos of cetacean taken in Cameroon coast by fishermen of the SIREN network :

Bycaught humpback whale (a) and dolphins (b and c)