

ABOUT THE BEHAVIOUR OF A GROUP OF *STENELLA COERULEOALBA* LIVING IN A HARBOUR

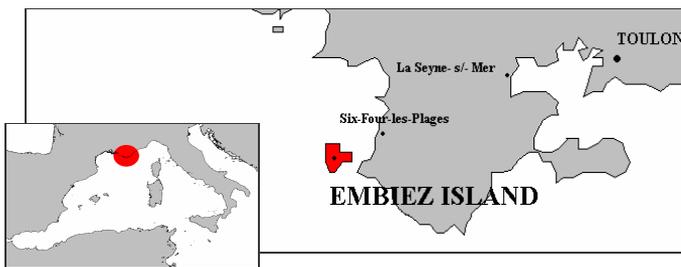
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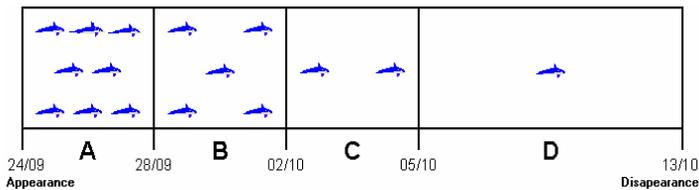
A group of 7 young Striped dolphins frequents a French southern harbour, during summer 2000. The animals progressively go back to the sea but two remaining individuals behave more and more apathetic and indolent and show surprising behaviours.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area



Phenology



Study period : C to D

Observing methods

The behaviour has been observed regularly every fifteen minutes, excepted during the night when this regularity could not be respected. Three principal behaviours were determined with some subdivisions for each type :

- **The Rest** (long, light)
- **The Medium Behaviour**
- **The Active Behaviour** (games and/or socialisation, hunting and hard hunting)

RESULTS

First of all, the investigations clearly show that those animals hunt especially on evening and during the night, and rest during the day. We also can observe that, as day goes on :

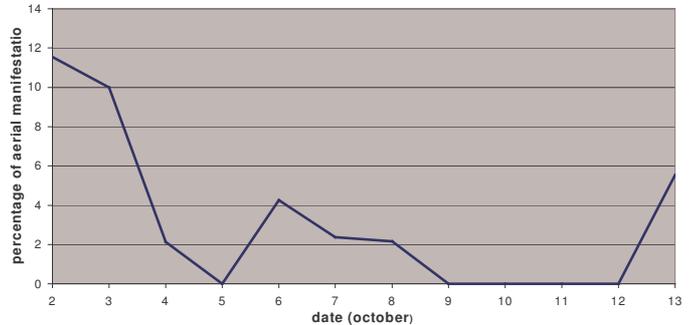
- the intensity of each type of activity slacken : 25% to 12% for the long Rest and 9% to 0% for the hard Hunt
- the time used to Active Behaviour evolves from 23% to 17% and the Rest one from 41% to 37%

These results show a diminution of active and sleep periods in aid of increasing apathetic. Other data support this finding :

- diminution of aerial behaviour (spy hoping above all) : see next graph
- diminution of dive rate : to 65% from 44%, with 0% the 12th ! and so, increasing of sun exposition time
- increasing of surface vocalisations : to 0% from 14%, with 70% the 12th !

However, these results show a reversion of this tendency the 13th, day were the last individual show a slight increase in activity the day before its disappearance.

Evolution of aerial behaviour



A particular event : the last animal (a female) was accepting some dead fishes given by a human and was allowing Eric Demay, a framer, to take a fish hook off from its gum, although it was deeply stuck, without struggling.



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Different hypothesis would explain the intrusion of these animals in a human infrastructure :

- The week-end preceding their appearance, mines were shouted by the Marine off the coast, this could have scare them and make them taking refuge in this harbour.
- Maybe the group went with one or several ill individuals. This hypothesis would be confirmed because the two last individuals shown various symptoms in addition to the apathy : trembling, sores on the skin, long vocalisations and important thinness. One of them was found dead and its autopsy revealed different alien bodies in the stomach but no classical preys (GECM). Unless it was their stay in the port which have engineered a pathology.
- The fact that animals could not have found the exit of the harbour has been dismissed because they went out each night in order to hunt.
- Maybe the increasing of the vocalisation rate of the last individual is a call to congeners, an attempting of communication with humans staying on the quay or it is linked with suffering.

Their behaviour in front of humans is still an enigma and we did not find any work dealing with such facts with Striped dolphins, a pelagic and not tame specie.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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