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Report on observations of whales and interactions with fishing gear (from 2022 fishing activities)

SIOFA Secretariat

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Abstract	<p>In accordance with CMM 02(2023) annex E, and previously CMM 2022/02, the demersal longline fisheries shall report observations and interaction with gears of whales.</p> <p>In 2022, 3 CCPs used demersal longline and 2 CCPs reported observations of whales, the observations were mostly reported in sub-area 3b, and consisted mostly of sperm whales (<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>)..</p>

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Introduction

CMM 02(2023) (Data Standards) instructs CCPs to collect information on the observations and the interactions of whales for the longline fishery in accordance with the protocol described in annex E of CMM 02.

It is one of the roles of the observer(s) to collect and report such interactions.

This paper summarizes the observations that have been reported through the observer data submission in 2023 (for fishing activities made in 2022).

Methods

The data relevant to marine mammals' observation are recorded in the SIOFA observer database. The database has been queried to collect the number of demersal longline sets in each SIOFA subarea, and out of these sets how many have been observed with presence of whales.

Results

1. Reported activities:

In 2022, 3 CCPs reported activities using demersal longline (FAO code LLS for Set Longline): Australia, France OT and European Union. The activities are summarized in table 1.

Table 1: summary of operations, observed operations (in bracket) per SIOFA sub-areas in 2022 by the demersal longline fisheries (source SIOFA observer database).

CCP/Flag	SIOFA Sub-area		
	2	3b	7
AUS	-	-	20 (20)
ESP	77 (72)	141 (111)	-
FR-OT	-	80 (80)	-

2. Whale observations and interactions

Out of a total of 283 fishing operations observed, there has been 35 reports of presence of whale, sub-area 3b has the highest observation rate. These figures are summarized in table 2.

Table 2: Records of marine mammal presence during fishing operations, and proportion of occurrences (in bracket) for the observed operations and by SIOFA sub-area.

CCP/Flag	SIOFA Sub-area		
	2	3b	7
AUS	-	-	0 (0 %)
ESP	4 (5.5%)	29 (26.1%)	-
FR-OT	-	2 (2.5 %)	-

28 out of 35 observations of presence are relevant to sperm whales. Table 3 summarize the species observed in each SIOFA subarea.

Table 3: Occurrences of species observed around fishing operations in 2022 by SIOFA sub-area, and number of interactions reported (in bracket).

Species	SIOFA Sub-area		
	2	3b	7
<i>unidentified</i>		2	
Humpback whale (<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>)	4		
Long-finned pilot whale (<i>Globicephala melas</i>)		1	
Sperm whale (<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>)		28 (8)	

The only species which interacted with gear was the sperm whale, which has been reported 8 times out of 28 observations.

Conclusion

There is a high variability in whale presence depending on the area and the CCP flag. Not all whales interact with fishing gears.