DAVID STARR JORDAN WEEKLY REPORT - Robert Pitman

SCIENCE SUMMARY: 10-16 August 2000

We had only had 5 effort days this week: one day was lost to bad weather (14 August); another slipped away as we pulled into Manzanillo, Mexico, our first port stop, on 16 August. Tropical Storm Ileana sent us scampering back toward the mainland before the end of the day on 13 August, cutting short our last outbound loop before Manzanillo. Ileana had a brief fit, showering rain and blowing 40 kts of wind at us all day on the 14th, but by the next morning we were back on Lake Placid. We had two large schools of "Tres Marias" spinners this week and both offered up lots of photos (helo and handheld), and skin samples. Spotted dolphins off northern coastal Mexico are problematical: they are bigger and more heavily spotted than "offshore" types, but smaller and less spotted than the graffmani form. For those of us whose job is to identify cetaceans in the field, evolution is not just a fact, it's a problem.

Helo ops continue to be a wellspring of frustration. No further comments on that at this time.

Turtles were in the limelight again this week. We captured a very small olive ridley (8-10" long, sub-Frisbee size) that was tangled in a woven nylon salt sack ("Sal Bahia"). It was easily caught because it could barely swim dragging along a pillowcase-sized sea anchor. These salt sacks are constructed of thinly woven nylon strips that unravel in the water. Sea turtles are attracted to floating objects and they readily get themselves tangled in any kind of filamentous material. As the turtle struggles to free itself, the strands constrict, cutting off circulation; eventually the limb dies and falls off. This little guy probably would have died if we hadn't picked him up and cut him free. Two days later, however, we caught an even smaller olive ridley, the size of a CD disk. It was also tangled in a salt sack but the constricting strands had already amputated its right front flipper (and its future), and one of its rear flippers was swollen and necrotic, soon to drop off also. Fishermen use salt to make brine for storing fish in their wells and they apparently toss the empty sacks over the side because we regularly see them floating at sea, often with turtles tangled in them. Although tuna fishermen make some effort to release turtles accidentally captured in their purse seines, they unwittingly kill hundreds, perhaps thousands of turtles every year through the careless disposal of salt sacks. Kerry and I will be bringing this issue to the attention of the marine turtle community in the upcoming months to see what can be done to stop this unnecessary cruelty. From the Sports Desk: Roy Dehart, our helo mechanic, landed a 65 lb yellowfin tuna, the biggest of the trip (so far!). Raw chunks from a slab he graciously donated to the galley were set out for lunch which resulted in a feeding frenzy on the mess deck; fortunately no one was injured.

MARINE MAMMAL EFFORT AND SIGHTINGS

Date Time Latitude Longitude Effort Beaufort

081000 0652 N24:41.97 W108:35.79 89.6 nmi 2.5
1858 N23:35.96 W107:12.16

081100 0650 N23:46.66 W107:01.02 67.9 nmi 3.3
1742 N22:27.65 W107:14.21

081200 0727 N21:43.45 W106:56.59 64.2 nmi 2.1
1906 N20:46.08 W105:51.35

081300 0717 N20:46.42 W107:15.66 83.4 nmi 2.7
1808 N20:08.69 W108:51.02

081500 0704 N20:21.71 W105:47.58 48.7 nmi 2.2
1902 N19:14.89 W105:03.87

Code	**Species**	**Number of Sightings**
002	Stenella attenuata (offshore)	7
003	Stenella longirostris (unid. subsp.)	1
010	Stenella longirostris orientalis	10
013	Stenella coeruleoalba	2
015	Steno bredanensis	1
017	Delphinus delphis	2
018	Tursiops truncatus	9
021	Grampus griseus	2
037	Orcinus orca	1
048	Kogia sima	3
049	ziphiid whale	1
051	Mesoplodon sp.	1
061	Ziphius cavirostris	1
072	Balaenoptera edeni	1
077	unid. dolphin	11
080	Kogia sp.	1
090	Stenella attenuata (unid. subsp.)	13
096	unid. cetacean	1
Total		68

AERIAL PHOTOGRAMMETRY: During 12.6 h of flight, 7 cetacean species were photographed including 3 calibration schools: B. edeni 1, Kogia sima 2, Grampus 1, Tursiops 1, S. coeruleoalba 1, S. longirostris 3, S. attenuata 5.

BIOPSY:

Species	This Week	Trip Total
Balaenoptera edeni	0	2
Balaenoptera musculus	0	10
Berardius bairdii	0	2
Delphinus capensis	0	3
Delphinus delphis	0	4
Globicephala macrorhynchus	0	13
Lagenorhynchus obliquidens	0	4
Orcinus orca	2	3
Stenella attenuata	19	26
Stenella attenuata subsp.	28	28
Stenella coeruleoalba	0	1
S. longirostris orientalis	36	36
Steno bredanensis	2	2
Tursiops truncatus	10	24
Total	97	158

35 mm PHOTO-ID:

Species	Schools/Individuals
Orcinus orca	1/5
Stenella attenuata (offshore)	3
S. attenuata (unid. subsp.)	5
S. longirostris orientalis	4 (2 near Tres Marias)
Steno bredanensis	1
Ziphius cavirostris	1

TURTLE CAPTURES:

Species	This Week	Total
Loggerhead (C. caretta)	0	9
Olive Ridley (L. olivacea)	20	29
Green (C. mydas)	0	5
Total	20	43