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The 17th Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society took place in **Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Canary Islands, in March 2003** and was hosted by **Michel André**.

The theme of the conference was:

"MARINE MAMMALS AND SOUND"

The Annual General Meeting 2003 decided upon a position paper: **the Statement by the Council of the ECS on Sounds and Cetaceans**.

THE STRIPED DOLPHINS OF THE GULF OF KORINTH, 1996-2002 A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION In October and November 2002 an international team of researchers conducted a sighting and acoustic survey in the enclosed sea area of the Gulf of Korinth, Greece under the auspices of the Cetacean Research Group of the University of Athens. This project is a follow-up of a previous study undertaken in the area during August 1996, July and August 1997. The target of this study was to compare the results with those previously found and furthermore to confirm the high sighting frequency of the pelagic species, *Stenella coeruleoalba*, during autumn months.

MATERIALS AND METHODS The survey took place onboard a sailing vessel. The presence of the animals was assessed visually and acoustically using an IFAW type towed hydrophone array. GPS units were employed for vessel tracking and SeaPro 2000 navigation software to record the track and process the results. Visual spotting conditions were considered positive at a sea state of 3 Beaufort or less. In addition photo-identification data were collected using a digital camera (Nikon D100).

RESULTS In total 18 sightings of striped dolphins were made during 72 hours and 57 minutes of positive conditions' effort. The school size of striped dolphins varied from 3 up to 50 animals (Mean 17,00, StDev 14,19). Interspecies association (*Stenella coeruleoalba* with *Delphinus delphis*) observed in 1996-1997 was also recorded during the recent study. More specific up to 3 individuals of common dolphins were identified in 5 of the striped dolphins' sightings.

DISCUSSION *Stenella coeruleoalba* is a species known to be abundant mainly in offshore waters, at depths greater than 800 metres and at least 15 nautical miles away from the nearest coast (Beaubrun, 1995; Forcada *et.al.*, 1990; Franco *et.al.*, 1995; Nortabartolo di Sciara and Bearzi, 1992; Nortabartolo di Sciara and Demma, 1994; Politi *et.al.* 1992). The results of the present study verify the high sighting frequency of this pelagic species in the closed sea area of the Gulf of Korinth, also observed during the previous research conducted the summer months of 1996 and 1997 (Mardikis *et.al.*, 1999). In some cases, dolphin groups were seen closer than a mile from the coast. The 18 sightings made during October and November 2002 endorse the presence of the striped dolphin population in the area not only during the summer months but also in the fall period. Evidence for an interspecies association of striped and common dolphins in the area was established.

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(5) Abstract title:	THE STRIPED DOLPHINS OF THE GULF OF KORINTH, 1996-2002 A COMPARATIVE STUDY
(6) Abstract:	A currently undertaken study by an international team of researchers, under the auspices of the Cetacean Research Group of the University of Athens, determines the presence and high sighting frequency of the pelagic species, <i>Stenella coeruleoalba</i> , in the enclosed area of the Korinthiakos Gulf. The presence and abundance of the animals was assessed visually, acoustically using an IFAW type towed hydrophone array and by photo-identification using a digital camera. The results of the ongoing study verify the findings of previous research conducted during the summer months of 1996 and 1997. The 18 sightings made during October and November 2002 endorse the presence of the Striped dolphin population in the area not only during the summer months but in the fall period as well. Furthermore, individuals of the Common dolphin species, <i>Delphinus delphis</i> , were identified in 5 of the Striped dolphin sightings. The latter provide evidence for an interspecies association in the area. The continuation of the study at different seasonal periods would help ascertain the residence and home range of the striped dolphin population in the area.
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