

Analyzing the behaviors of the common bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* in Savannah, Georgia
Poster #13

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The unnatural trait of begging by common bottlenose dolphins has been hazardous to the dolphin's health. Even though it's illegal to feed dolphins under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, an act that protects all aquatic mammals in U.S. waters. Due to the illegal feeding, mothers don't teach their calves how to hunt and fish but to beg. That is not the only terrible occurrence that happens as boats strike down unnoticed begging dolphins, and aggressive hungry dolphins ready to attack. However, marine scientists have begun to tag dolphins by taking pictures of a dolphin's dorsal fin and checking for recognizable traits or wounds. This has made it much easier to track dolphins and see if they continuously beg, making it easier to understand the different kinds of bottlenose dolphin behavior in Savannah, Georgia.

Year-round Presence of Beaked Whales off Cape Hatteras North Carolina

Poster #3

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We conducted monthly aerial surveys off Cape Hatteras, NC, USA as part of an ongoing monitoring project of sites utilized by the US Navy for training and testing activities along the US Atlantic coast. Survey tracklines extend from shallow continental shelf waters, across the continental shelf break, to deep pelagic waters. During surveys we record the geographic position of each marine mammal sighting, take extensive photographs of each animal, and review these images in the lab to confirm species identification. Characteristics utilized to identify beaked whales to species are based upon our sightings of adult males with erupted teeth and from comparisons with images of stranded animals we have confirmed species ID. Between May 2011 and December 2014, we recorded 63 beaked whale sightings, representing 173 individuals. Beaked whales were observed in every month of the year, with the highest number of sightings (n=42) from May through August. The most commonly encountered species, observed in every month of the year, was *Ziphius cavirostris* (n=36 sightings, 106 individuals). *Mesoplodon* spp. (n=27 sightings, 67 individuals) were encountered in all months except September and October. Five of these mesoplodont sightings could be identified to species with *M. europaeus* (n=4 sightings, 12 individuals) and *M. mirus* (n=1 sighting, 2 individuals) identified from May through July. All beaked whales were encountered along the continental shelf break suggesting a restricted distribution. This area has recently been opened by the US Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to offshore oil and gas exploration. The geographic distribution of beaked whales off Cape Hatteras overlaps the "Manteo Prospect" and is included in the areas of interest identified in six pending permits for commercial seismic surveys. The cumulative impacts of seismic surveys are of special concern as deep-diving beaked whales have been shown to be vulnerable to high-amplitude anthropogenic sounds.

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