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Update on the status of the endangered short-beaked common dolphin (Delphinus delphis) in the Central Mediterranean Sea.

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Once considered abundant, the short-beaked common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) in the Mediterranean Sea has been subject to a large-scale decline during the last few decades. Despite considerable efforts in the conservation of this species, to date, only a few conservation measures have been implemented. Furthermore, although Malta is recognized as one of the few areas of conservation importance for *D. delphis* in the Central Mediterranean Sea, the most recent studies on the species distribution in the waters of Malta dates back more than one decade (Bearzi et al. 2004, Vella 2005). Here we present the results from a recent survey in Maltese waters that update the information on the species' status.

A transect survey was conducted from August to October 2013 and July to September 2014. During a total visual effort of 3123 nm, 11 sightings of *D. delphis* have been recorded (4 in 2013 and 7 in 2014). Average group size was 20 individuals (SD=14), with a maximum group size of 45 dolphins. On two occasions dolphin movements were tracked for 5 h 40 min, and 1 h 20 min respectively.

Our study confirms the regular presence of *D. delphis* in the waters of Malta during summer and early autumn and underlines the importance of this area for this species which subpopulation in the Mediterranean Sea is listed as endangered (Bearzi 2003). However, differently from what previously reported by Vella (2005), our data do not confirm the presence of large groups (150-250 animals). Despite the methodological differences which do not allow direct comparisons between the two studies, our data point to a need for further investigation on the ecology and population dynamics of *D. delphis* in Maltese waters in order to ground conservation measures for this endangered species on sound and updated data.