



International
Whaling
Commission

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Lampedusa, 5 March 2013

Dear Mr Montanaro,

Thank you very much for all of your help with the International Whaling Commission telemetry project (contract number 48041, Prot. 0002895 – 11/01/2013 – PNM-VI) in collaboration with the Tethys Research Institute, which amongst other scientific information should provide valuable information for a number of conservation matters including the issue of vessel strikes and fin whales.

We are very pleased to inform you that we have been able to respond very quickly to information from the local Marine Protected Area office that fin whales have arrived in Lampedusa and that if we were prompt there was a window of acceptable weather conditions so critical to the success of the project. We arrived on the island of Lampedusa on Saturday 2 March and were able to go out at sea on Sunday and Monday.

We are now in port due to a strong wind from south-west that will blow for the next couple of days. We expect to be able to go back out at sea on Thursday 7 March.

From our initial photo-identification work we have confirmed that at present there are three individual fin whales off Lampedusa, in the waters of the south-east side of the Island. We are delighted to be able to inform you that we have thus far managed to successfully deploy two satellite tags, one on Saturday and one on Sunday.

The fin whale marked on Saturday was also seen on Sunday, when we were able to take good photographs of the instrument attached to the body of the whale, 24 hours after deployment. This will assist in allowing us to monitor any eventual reaction of the whale to the attached instrument - a very important component of our work. No evident unusual dermal reactions have been seen thus far. We are pleased to report that the tagged animal was seen to be feeding normally, both shortly after the tag was placed and on Sunday when it was observed to be still together with the whale that it had been seen with on Saturday when it was tagged. We are also pleased to be able to confirm that the animals are feeding in the area with clear episodes of surface feeding, visible concentrations of krill and observed defecation.

The other good news is that both the transmitters are working fine and we have received the first data from the Argos satellites, which we are attaching for your information.

We are delighted to say that the project is being greatly facilitated by the staff of the local Marine Protected Area office. In addition to the provision of their inflatable boat for the research itself, it is of great advantage to benefit from their network of connections and their previous knowledge on fin whales presence in these waters in the winter months.

Chair: Ms Jeannine Compton-Antoine (St. Lucia)

Vice-Chair: Mr Frédéric Chemay (Belgium)

Executive Secretary: Dr Simon Brockington

Given the importance of fast mobilisation, we of course have had to begin the project prior to the payment of the first instalment for the project from your Ministry. It was essential to take advantage of the reported presence of fin whales off Lampedusa, known to be limited to a few weeks in the winter, as I am sure you understand. However, it will be greatly appreciated if you can confirm to us when the grant will be received at the office of the International Whaling Commission.

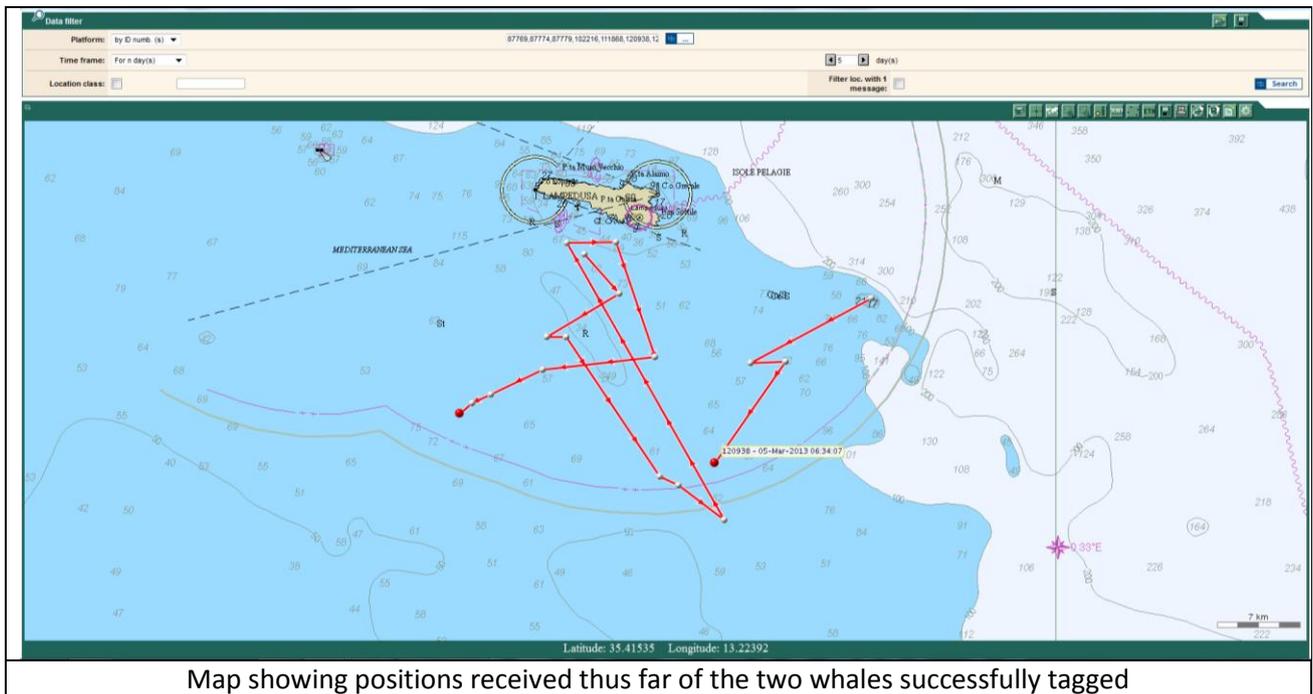
With our warmest regards, we look forward to receiving your kind feedback and will of course, continue to advise you of progress with the project.

Greg Donovan

Greg Donovan, IWC Head of Science

Simone Panigada

Simone Panigada, Tethys vice-president





Surface feeding of fin whales off Lampedusa



Fin whale near the coast of Lampedusa



Two fin whales in the waters of Lampedusa