



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



General Fisheries Commission  
for the Mediterranean  
Commission générale des pêches  
pour la Méditerranée



# GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR THE HANDLING OF CETACEANS CAUGHT INCIDENTALLY IN MEDITERRANEAN FISHERIES

In collaboration with



Financed by



# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 1 - CETACEANS<sup>1</sup> SPECIES MOST AFFECTED BY MEDITERRANEAN FISHERIES (1/2)

<sup>1</sup>The illustrations are not drawn to scale

**Sperm whale**  
(*Physeter macrocephalus*)



Solid body, stocky, dark gray to brown with light spots on the belly

Wrinkled skin especially on the rear two-thirds of the body

Mouth with white contours

**Striped dolphin**  
(*Stenella coeruleoalba*)



Slim, slender and fusiform body

Flame-shaped pattern on the flanks, going from the eye towards the dorsal fin

Large, dark, curved dorsal fin in the middle of the back

**Short-beaked common dolphin**  
(*Delphinus delphis*)



Prominent beak standing out from the melon

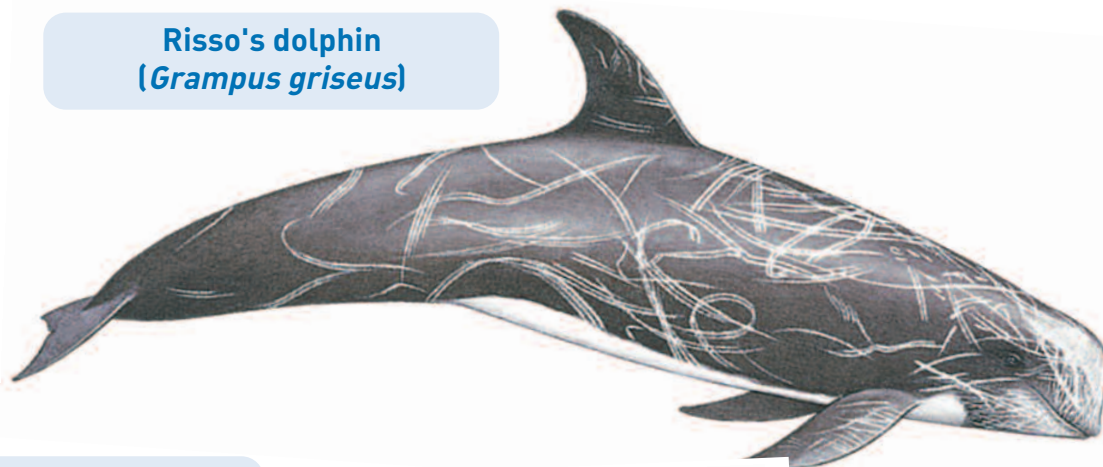
White, gray, yellow and black hourglass pattern on the flanks

Black, falcate dorsal fin, with a lighter patch in the center

# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 1 - SPECIES OF CETACEANS<sup>1</sup> MOST AFFECTED BY MEDITERRANEAN FISHERIES (2/2)

<sup>1</sup>The illustrations are not drawn to scale

**Risso's dolphin**  
(*Grampus griseus*)



Robust, stocky body, immediately recognizable by its white stripes

Bulbous forehead, sloping vertically towards the mouth

Tall, pointed, falcate dorsal fin

**Rough-toothed dolphin**  
(*Steno bredanensis*)



Conical head, slightly-domed forehead with a long narrow beak

Robust body ahead of the dorsal fin, becoming more slender towards the rear

Dorsal fin located mid-back, with a wide base, a pointed tip and sometimes a vertical rear margin

**Bottlenose dolphin**  
(*Tursiops truncatus*)



Relatively short, stubby beak

Slightly-rounded melon

Dark gray, gray-blue or gray-brown back, lighter flanks, white, light gray or pink belly

Prominent falcate dorsal fin



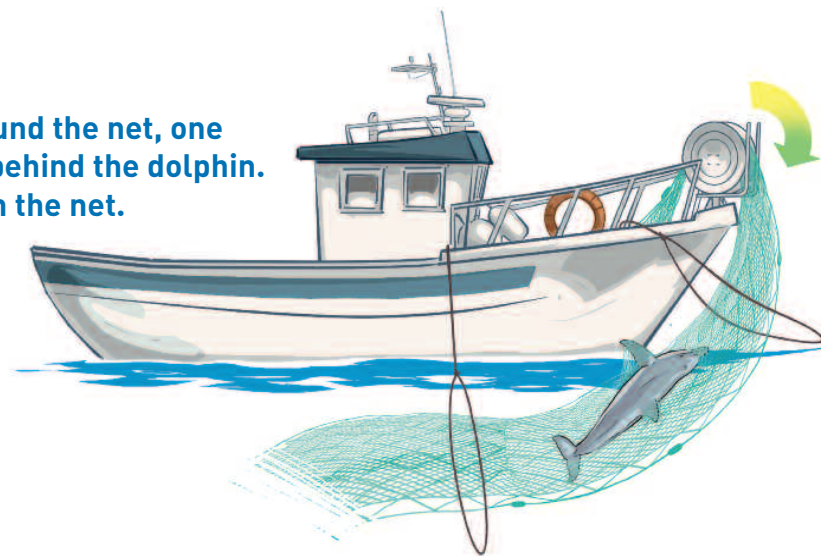
# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 2 - RELEASING DOLPHINS CAUGHT INCIDENTALLY IN SET NET FISHERIES

1



With the engine in neutral, gently pull the net up.

2



Pass two ropes around the net, one in front of and one behind the dolphin. Leave some slack in the net.



3

Using the ropes, slowly bring the dolphin alongside the vessel.

4

If the dolphin is small, slowly lift it on board and follow the guidelines in Technical Sheet 5.

If the dolphin is too big to be lifted on board, create an opening in the net wide enough to allow it to slide into the water, taking care not to wound it.

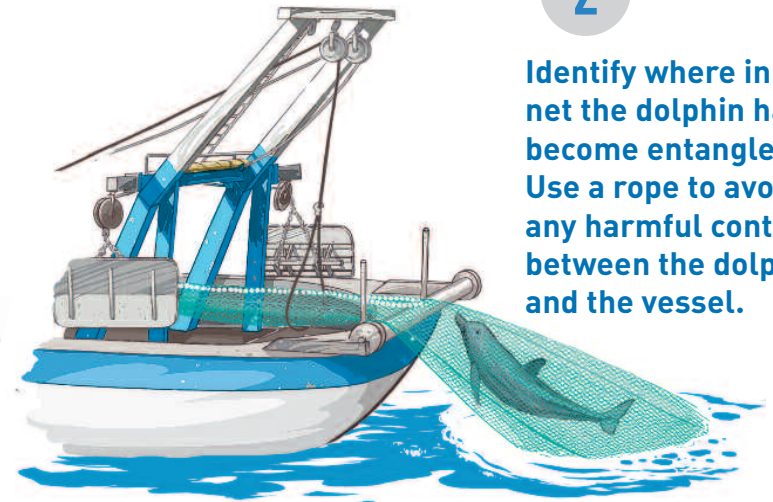


# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 3 - RELEASING DOLPHINS CAUGHT INCIDENTALLY IN TRAWL FISHERIES



1

With the engine in neutral, gently haul in the trawl net.



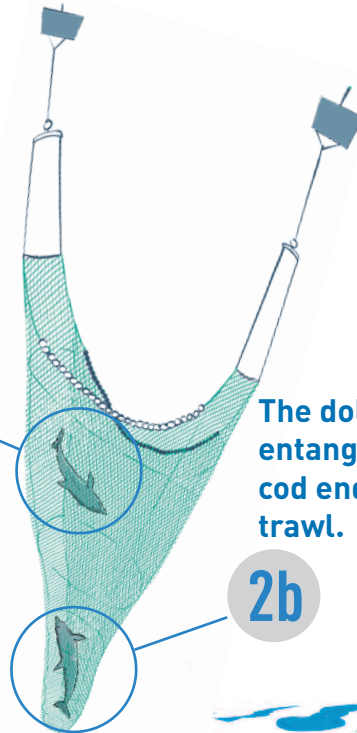
2

Identify where in the net the dolphin has become entangled. Use a rope to avoid any harmful contact between the dolphin and the vessel.



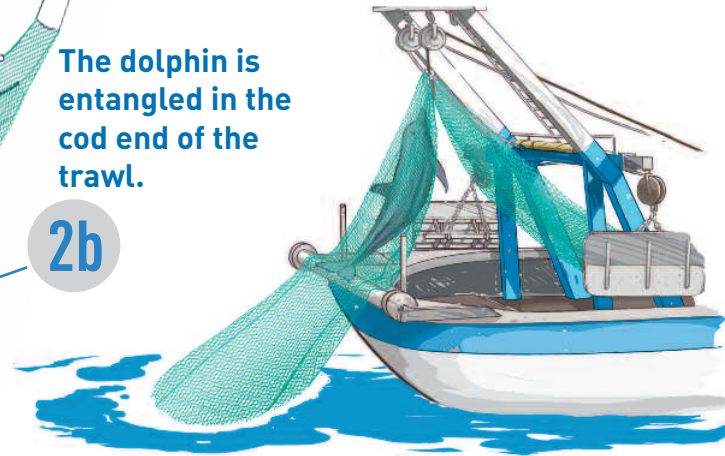
2a

The dolphin is entangled in the front end of the trawl: pass two ropes around the net, one in front of and one behind the dolphin, to hoist it on board more easily.



The dolphin is entangled in the cod end of the trawl.

2b



3

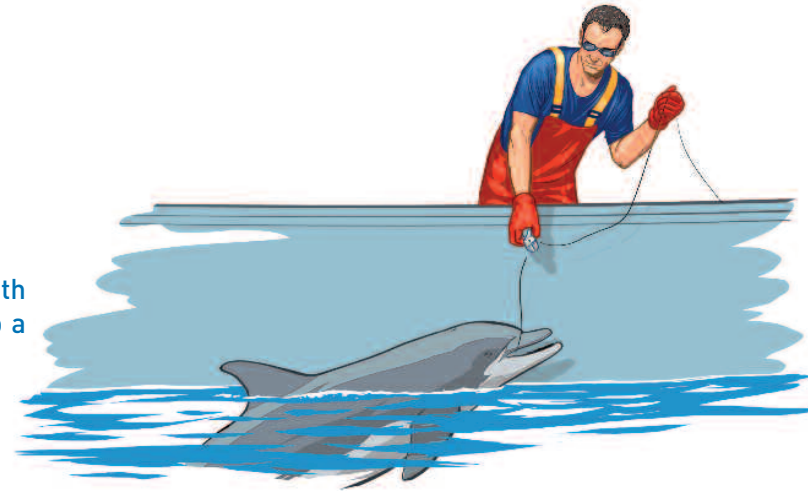
Hoist the dolphin, slowly bring it on board and follow the guidelines in Technical Sheet 5.

# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 4 - RELEASING DOLPHINS CAUGHT INCIDENTALLY IN LONGLINE FISHERIES

1

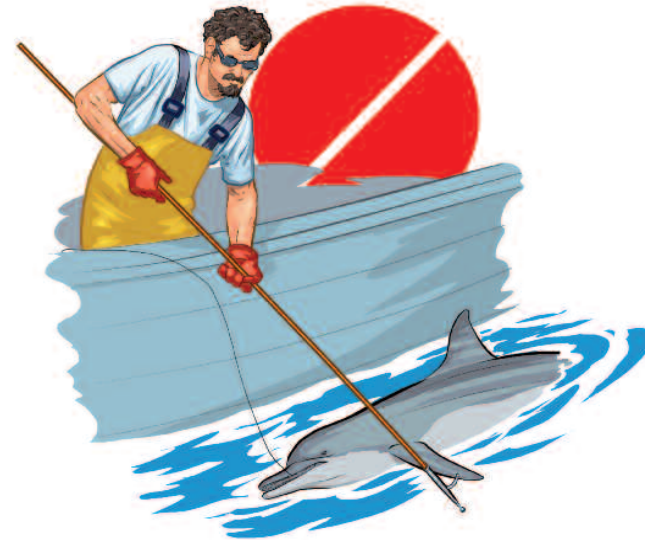
Bring the dolphin as close to the vessel as possible without pulling on the line to avoid wounding it.

Cut the line as close as possible to the dolphin's beak with a cutting tool (wire-cutters or with a blade attached to a long handle for large longliners)



pull the line

Do not:



use the boathook



## TECHNICAL SHEET N° 5 - HANDLING DOLPHINS ON BOARD

1

Using a knife or wire cutters, gently release the dolphin from the net taking care not to wound it.



2

Whatever the condition of the dolphin, place it in the shade, in a quiet and safe place and put a wet cloth over its body, covering its eyes to avoid any additional stress.

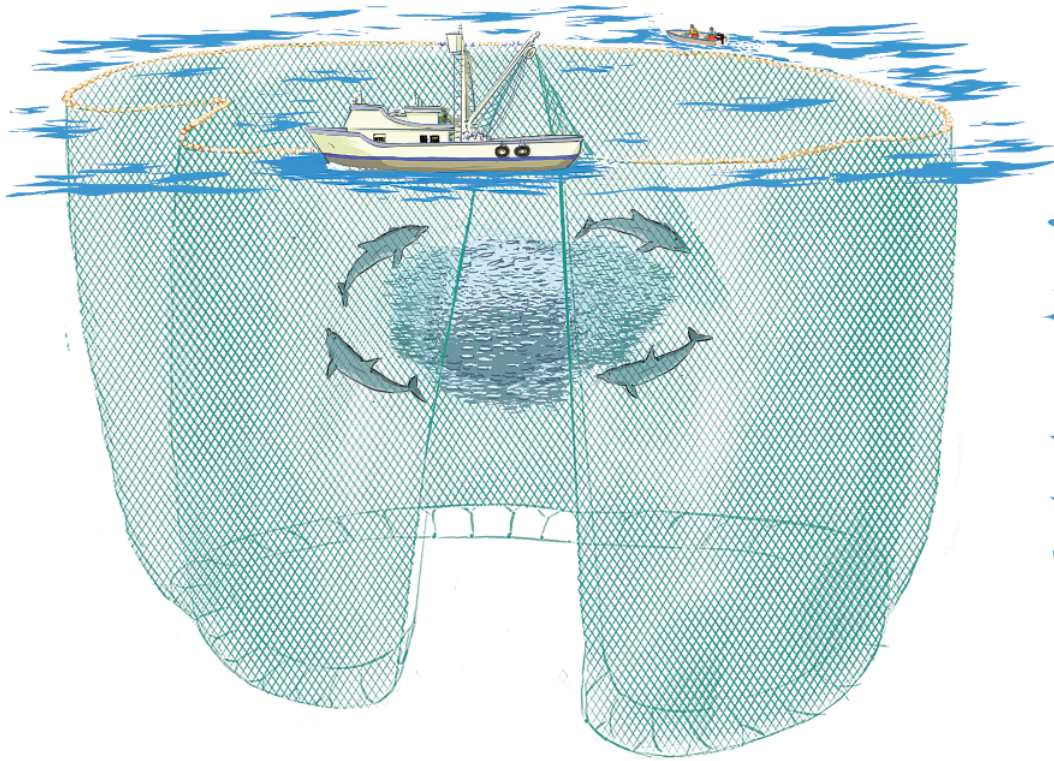


Keep it under observation and follow the guidelines in Technical Sheet 7.

# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 6 - RELEASING DOLPHINS ENCIRCLED INCIDENTALLY DURING PURSE SEINE FISHING

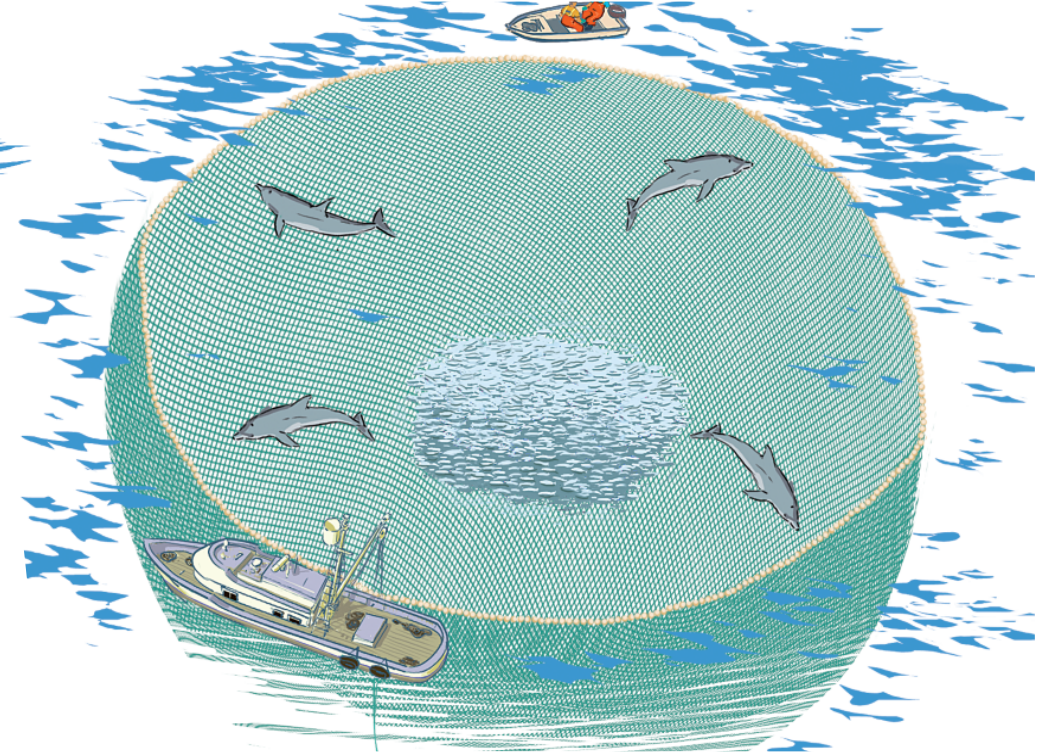
1

Attracted by pelagic fish, dolphins may become trapped in the net during encirclement.



2

Trying to escape, they may dive and become entangled in the seine netting.

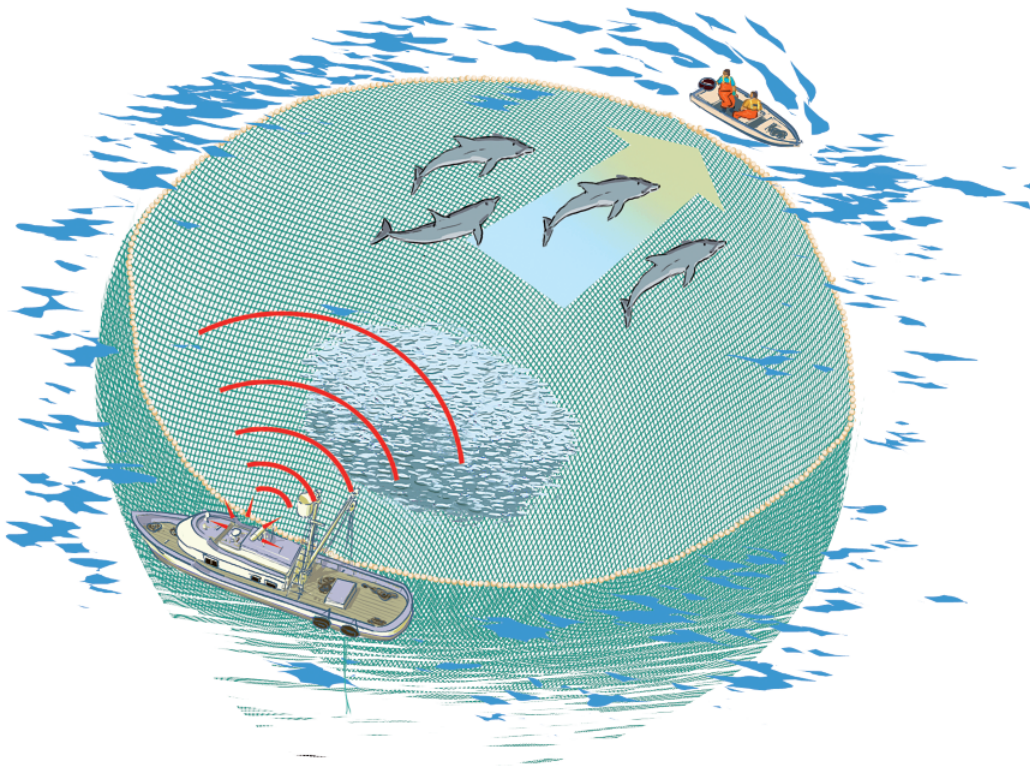




# FICHE TECHNIQUE N° 6 - LIBÉRATION DES DAUPHINS ACCIDENTELLEMENT ENCERCLÉS PAR UNE SENNE AU COURS D'ACTIVITÉS DE PÊCHE (2/2)

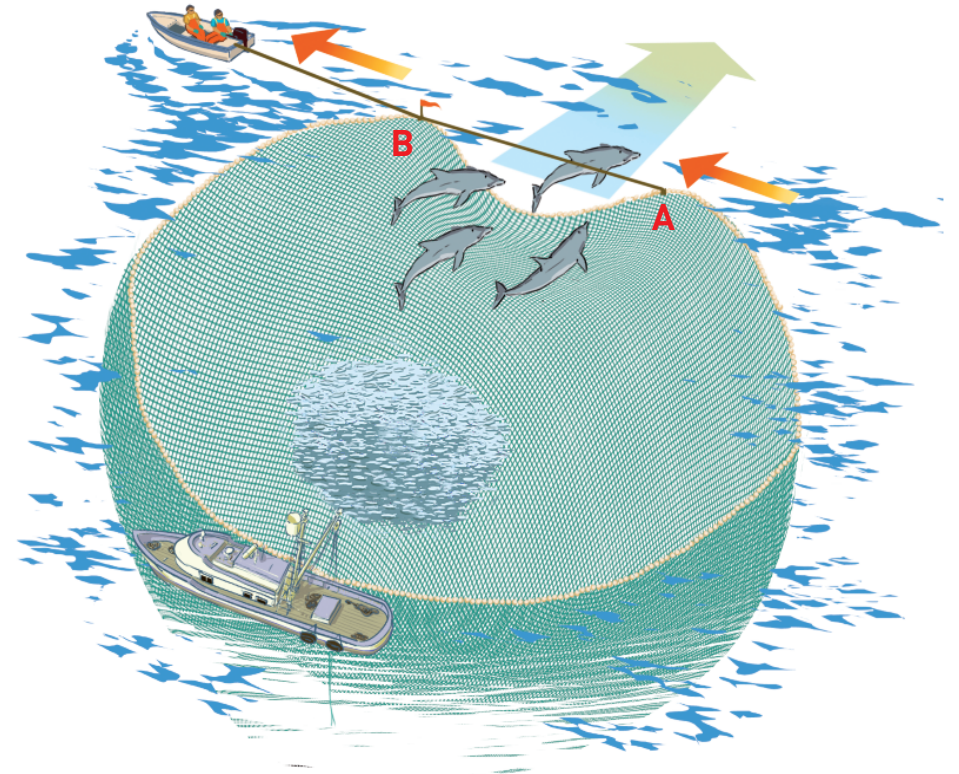
3

To avoid this situation, wait until the dolphins are on the opposite side of the vessel. They will tend to move away spontaneously from the vessel due to the engine noise.



4

Using a skiff, attach a rope to a net float (point A) and stretch this rope through a point B to create a U-shaped passage; then reduce the net tension to sink the floatline and allow the dolphins to pass over the net. If necessary, use a boathook to help lower the net.



# TECHNICAL SHEET N° 7 - REPORTING INCIDENTAL CATCHES

## CONTACT THE NATIONAL AUTHORITIES



Contact the relevant national authorities to report each incidental dolphin catch.

Describe the dolphin's condition, especially whether it is alive and in good shape, or is injured, or shows no sign of life/is dead.

Organise with the authorities any follow-up care that will be necessary on return to port.

## FOR THE CATCH OF ANY DOLPHINS, RECORD THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THE LOGBOOK:



*Date*



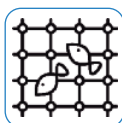
*GPS Position*

*Geographical subregion*



*Type of vessel (Fleet segment)*

*Fishing gear*



*Species caught*

*Total number of specimens caught*

*Number of specimens released alive*

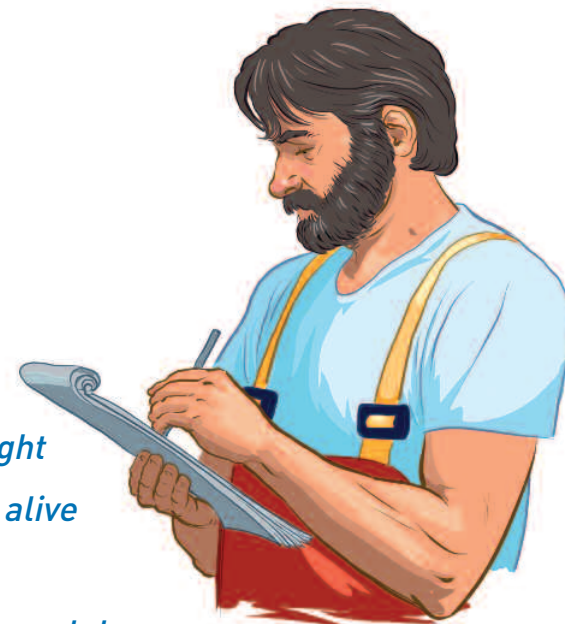
*Number of dead specimens*

*Number of specimens in unknown status*



And if possible...

*Take photos of the dolphin(s)*



The information above is extremely important! Please submit it, as soon as possible, to the relevant national authorities. If in doubt, ask for their help.

# GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR THE HANDLING OF DOLPHINS CAUGHT INCIDENTALLY IN MEDITERRANEAN FISHERIES

This guide was developed within the framework of a project which aimed to mitigate the negative interactions between endangered marine species and fishing activities. This project was implemented by the Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS) and by the Secretariat of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), in collaboration with the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC). The main objective of the project was to enhance the conservation of endangered marine species (cetaceans, sea turtles and seabirds, etc.) by promoting responsible fishing practices in the Mediterranean.

## Technical and scientific contribution (in alphabetical order)

Aurora Nastasi, Julia Pierraccini, Jacques Sacchi

## Illustrations

Massimo Demma (Technical Sheet 1)

Alberto Gennari (Technical Sheets 2-7)

## Graphic design

Stile Libero Communication Monaco

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ACCOBAMS, 2012. Module d'enseignement relatif à la conservation des cétacés, Les espèces de cétacés – Identification des espèces pertinentes pour la zone géographique de l'ACCOBAMS. 51pp.

Claro F., Poisson F., Sacchi J. Guides pratiques pour la libération des tortues marines capturées lors des activités de pêches dans la mer Méditerranée.

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GFCM, 2017. GFCM Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF). Version: 2017.1

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