



INTRODUCTION - The Northern part of the Taranto Gulf (North Jonian Sea) covers a marine area which is characterized by a very high human pervasion (commercial shipping and professional fishing activities) and a strong exposure to pollution's effects of the local industry. The Taranto city area is one of the most polluted sites in Europe and its environment is heavy endangered. This research, which is a part of a greater research project, named "Jonian Cetaceans Project", has started a preliminary evaluation of the interaction between marine mammals and human activities.

AIM - To survey all cetaceans in the area and to asses how the local condition affects marine mammals abundance and behavior in this area.

METHODS - a) to compare the preliminary sightings, obtained with linear transect visual census from small boats, with the human activities observed during the sighting; b) to interview the marine professional operators (using specific interview sheet).

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION - The number and the diversity of the geo-positioned and photo-identified sightings (which consisted of these detections: *Balaenoptera physalus*, *Stenella coeruleoalba*, *Grampus griseus* e *Physeter catodon*) occurred during the human activities (mainly professional fishery with trawl nets) seem to suggest a low interference between human activities and animals. This observation is confirmed by the statements released by the first interviewed marine operators. They consider these animals (mainly *S. coeruleoalba*) habitual during fishing activity and not as disturbance or a great threat for the fish harvest. In conclusion, the start up of a survey on population status and behavioral habitus of the Taranto Gulf marine mammals and the study of the human interaction offer a great potential chance, because of the scientific relevance and the possibility of creating an occasion for an ecologically sustainable development.

