

**CETACEAN BYCATCH IN THE WESTERN COAST OF THE
TURKISH BLACK SEA IN 1993-1997**

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The Black Sea has a very fragile ecosystem because it is semi-enclosed and has the largest anoxic water mass on the planet. Eutrophication, heavy pollution, over-fishing, invasion of alien species and coastal erosion are the main threats for the Black Sea biodiversity. Cetaceans, as top predators of this marine ecosystem, are also subjected to these dangers. Nonetheless, bycatch is probably the biggest threat for those living in the coastal waters.

The cetacean bycatch was studied in 1993-97 on the western coast of the Turkish Black Sea, from the Bulgarian border to Istanbul. A total of 63 specimens were examined. Except one specimen of bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*, all specimens were harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*. These two species inhabit the coastal waters while the common dolphin *Delphinus delphis*, the other component of cetacean fauna of the Black Sea, was not found as its habitat is generally more offshore than the other two species. Most specimens were immature animals, with a body length less than 130 cm.

Bycatches occurred in bottom gill nets for turbot fisheries from April to June. The mesh size of the turbot net is 22 cm and the length is 150 m. Maximum depth of the setting of the net is about 80 m. There is an urgent need to regulate the turbot fishery so that the cetacean bycatch can be reduced.