

Dans, S.L.; Crespo, E.A.; Garcia, N.A.; Reyes, L.M.; Pedraza, S.N.; Alonso, M.K. 1997. Incidental mortality of patagonian dusky dolphins in mid-water trawling: Retrospective effects from the early 1980s. Annual Report, International Whaling Commission 47:699-703.

Abstract:

The highest rates of incidental catches of dusky dolphins off the Patagonian coast mostly occur in mid-water trawling for shrimp. At present, this fishery is declining in use, but it was widely used during the 1980s. The objectives of this paper are to estimate the number of dusky dolphins annually caught in this fishery during the period 1982-1995 and to analyse the structure of the catches and possible effects on the population. The use of this gear for shrimp began in 1982. During 1984, the fishing effort reached a peak and the number of dolphins caught was estimated at between 442-560, decreasing during the following years. The use of mid-water nets for shrimp was recorded up to 1994, when mortality estimates reached a minimum value equal to 36 dolphins per year. The sample recovered from the fishery seems to be biased toward females and young matures. Half of the females were mature and half of these were pregnant. The total number of dusky dolphins in the fishing area was recently estimated to be close to 7,252 individuals. Thus, incidental mortality would have been significant at least during 1984-86, leading to a maximum annual mortality close to 8% of the present estimated population size. The effect on the population would have been severe considering that the catches affected mostly females of the highest reproductive value.