

Project Update: May 2011

By the end of May 2011, we had completed most of the planned field study in the Black Sea coast of Turkey. Black Sea towns where there were many turbot fisheries were determined first. Due to the bathymetric structure of the Black Sea continental shelf plate, turbot fisheries mostly take place in the western coasts of Black Sea. For that reason, we started the field trip from the middle of the Black Sea through to the border of Bulgaria.

During the meetings, fishermen were very involved in the subject because of their frequent experience with dolphin and harbour porpoise bycatches. First of all, we described the basics of marine ecosystems, how marine organisms are related to each other and which species of marine mammals inhabit the Black Sea. Also information like the timing and magnitude of bycatch occurrences was gathered from local fishermen. Due to legal restrictions, it was not possible to join them on boat trips when they were going to pick up turbot nets. Because one of us could not collect tissue samples, we taught the fishermen how to collect tissue samples for genetic analysis. After we left the region, the fishermen kept on collecting tissue samples themselves from dead harbour porpoises which had been tangled in their nets and sent these samples to us for analysis. Received tissue samples are currently being genetically examined.

Long-term scientific studies on marine mammals are quite insufficient in Turkey. The lack of these studies makes the efforts of the fishermen even more valuable. Collaborating with fishermen, who are the most important beneficiaries of sea and coast, is the principle aim of this study. In a pleasing manner, their approach to the issue has been quite positive thus far.

