



Kenya Marine Mammal Network

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 2

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The Kenya Marine Mammal Network

Welcome to the second edition of the KMMN Newsletter!



Humpback whale breaching off Shimoni, South coast, Kenya

In this second edition of the newsletter we will continue to provide the first consistent data on occurrence and abundance of marine mammals along the Kenyan coast collected by sport fishing vessels, diving clubs and NGOs. **This project will help to define areas of “High Importance” for marine mammals, improving our local understanding of these species on a broader temporal scale.** At the same time, this data is extremely important for the marine mammal conservation and management strategies in Kenya and it may be used as a baseline for further studies.



Bottlenose dolphin interacting with an octopus in Kisite Mpunguti Marine Protected Area

The Kenya Marine Mammal Network project proponent GVI (Global Vision International), partnering with Watamu Marine Association (WMA) and Kenya Association of Sea Anglers (KASA) and supported by Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRRI) **wants to wish all its whale reporters a *Happy New Year 2013, filled with many adventures & great encounters!***



Sightings April—September 2012

From April and September 2012, 144 sightings (Fig. 1) were reported from 22 collaborators (individuals or groups), similar number to the period between October 2011 and March 2012. The reports came from Shimoni (South coast) to Malindi-Watamu (North coast) and the most sighted locations were: Watamu (80 sightings), Kwale (61) and Mombasa (3).

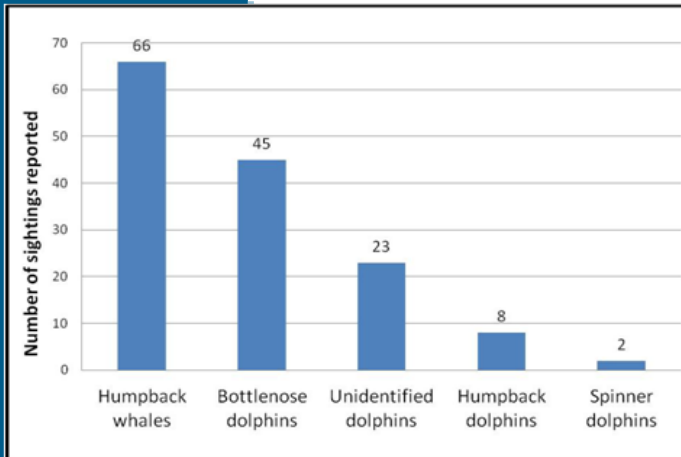


Fig. 1. Sightings reported

The Humpback whale was the most sighted species (Fig. 3) along the whole Kenyan coast, with reports from Watamu, Mombasa and Shimoni (Kwale). Most of these encounters were mothers and calves or lone individuals during the annual migration from cold to warm waters. The months with the highest numbers of humpback whales sightings were July and August with 20 and 31, respectively.

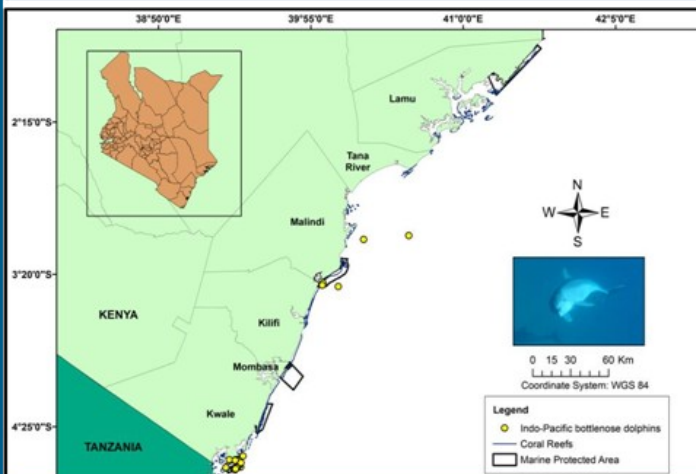


Fig. 2. Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin sightings

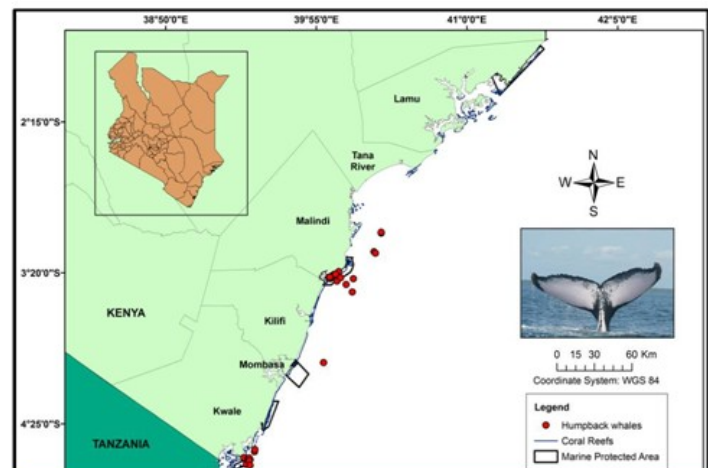


Fig. 3. Humpback whale sightings

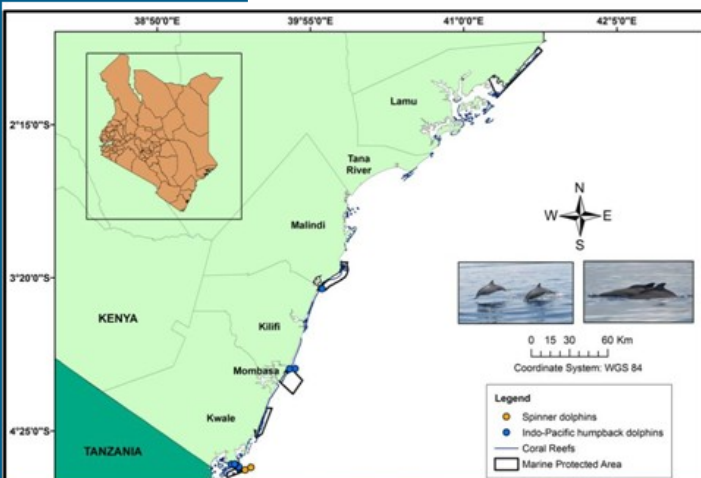


Fig. 4. Spinner and Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin sightings

Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins were sighted mainly around Kisite-Mpunguti MPA and Malindi-Watamu MPA. This species formed groups between 1 to 37 individuals, 45% of them with 1 or 2 calves. There were also two offshore sightings reported from seismic vessels (Fig. 2).

Indo-pacific humpback dolphins were encountered close to shore between Shimoni and Watamu, with groups between 1 to 8 individuals. Spinner dolphins were only reported on 2 occasions on the deep waters around Kisite-Mpunguti MPA. One group formed by 10 individuals and another by 300, with at least 6 calves (Fig. 4).



THE KENYA MARINE MAMMAL NETWORK PHOTOS



Humpback Whales: in Watamu (left, by Stuart Simpson - Hemingways' Skipper) and a calf breaching (right, GVI South Coast).



Humpback Whale (left) and Spinner dolphins around Kisite Mpunguti MPA; September, 2012 (pictures from GVI South Coast).



Humpback whales migrate from cold to warm waters every year on their annual migration along the Western Indian Ocean. In Kenya, they can be spotted from July to November along the coast. The picture on the left shows a whale leaping out of the water off the coast of Shimoni, witnessed by the GVI team.

East Africa Synchronized Whale Watching Day



Whale Watchers from Mozambique to Kenya report their sightings.

The East African Humpback Whale Network was formed four years ago as an initiative aimed at encouraging the reporting of humpback whale sightings along the East African coast. All information gathered from Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique contributes to a greater understanding of migration routes and patterns, humpback whale behaviour, population abundance and threats. Currently the network is comprised of approximately 15-20 regular whale watching locations/observers and holds records of 3,200 humpback whales. **In 2011, a record 1,989 humpback whales were recorded off the East African coast, with 69 of those whales sighted in Kenya.**

As part of GVI and WMA's involvement with the network, the teams participated in a Synchronised Whale Watching Day (SWWD) on Saturday 4th August in order to assist in obtaining an approximate count of all humpback whales off the East African coast. Sea conditions were rough due to an unpredictable *monsoon kusi* wind, but with clear skies the first breaching whales were sighted within the first 15 minutes. All sightings occurred NE of Mpunguti Marine Reserve in the shallower waters protected by the reefs of Upper Mpunguti. A total of nine whales were sighted by GVI in the Kisite-Mpunguti Marine Protected Area (KMMPA), and behaviours such as breaching, apparent aggression between individuals and tail slapping were observed. The whales seemed to be in smaller groups of 2 - 3 with a few lone whales moving between groups 500m apart. The same number of whales were seen around Watamu by WMA, some of them spy-hoping and pectoral fluke waving.

Watamu Boat and Beach Operators receive Good Dolphin Watching Training and Customer Care Classes



Boat and Beach operators training group.

In an effort to raise the standards of dolphin watching practices and dolphin welfare in Watamu, and improve the quality of the natural wildlife experience that guests can expect when they visit the Watamu National Marine Park and Reserve, Watamu Marine Association have been focusing on a continuing training program for our operators. Justin Kitsao and Fazal Omar who are WMA executives and the leaders of the Watamu Safari Sellers Association and the Watamu Association of Boat Operators, have been performing the role of teachers and mentors for their members, so far reaching up to 200 and continuing into the coming new dolphin watching season. WMA have also been focusing on the do's and don'ts of dolphin watching, which includes, keeping a safe distance and not interfering with the dolphins and not chasing them.





Convention on Biological Diversity— Southern Indian Ocean Workshop



Convention on
Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was signed by 150 government leaders at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and has been acting as a practical tool to promote worldwide sustainable development. The CBD regional workshop was held in Flic en Flac, Mauritius from 31st July to 4th August 2012, to facilitate the description of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas.

The workshop was supported by the Government of Japan, through *Japan Biodiversity Fund*, convened by the Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Nairobi Convention and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and hosted by the Government of Mauritius. Before the workshop began, delegates were trained on the description of areas meeting the scientific criteria for ecologically and biologically significant areas (EBSAs). The technical support team collated, analyzed, synthesized and mapped the relevant scientific information including biological, biogeographical and physical data in support of EBSA description.

Delegates from the North and Western Indian Ocean (Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, and some marine areas beyond national jurisdiction) specifically proposed three areas that met the EBSA criteria: **Kisite-Mpunguti MPA, Lamu-Kiunga area and Watamu area.**

The workshop's final report with the description of areas that meet the criteria for EBSAs will be made available for considerations by future meetings of the Convention's scientific body. We're very pleased to see that the information collected by the Kenya Marine Mammal Network along the Kenyan coast has found its way to the official meeting documents of the Convention on Biological Diversity. This information was delivered by Ms. Nina Wambiji (Research Officer, KMFRI)

*The Kenya
Marine Mammal
Network
contribution for
the description
of ecologically
significant
marine areas in
the Southern
Indian Ocean
Region.*

KMMN Facebook group reaches 220 members!

The Facebook group was created on the 16th of April 2012 to provide a useful and powerful tool to all that people interested in the marine mammals, who would like to report sightings, learn about cetaceans or share their experience with these animals along the Kenyan coast.

We reached 220 group members in only five months!



KENYA MARINE MAMMAL NETWORK

KMMN on the news



The Kenya Marine Mammal Network (KMMN)

Relatively little is known about the marine mammal species around Kenya. The scarce knowledge on these species is based on data collected during aerial surveys conducted between 1994 and 2001, and information from stranded animals. Since then, some of these species have been in constant decline in the Western Indian Ocean, facing real threats such as by-catch in fishing gears, loss of habitat, overfishing or whale/dolphin-watching activities.

For these reasons, there is an urgent need to get a more comprehensive data set for these species. Introducing opportunistic sightings can be an economical resource as well as a vital contribution to acquiring more data. Opportunistic sighting surveys can be defined as species data collection from non-scientific vessels and persons who regularly frequent the seas.

This network aims to provide the first consistent data on occurrence and abundance of marine mammals along the Kenyan coast collected by sport fishing vessels, diving clubs and NGOs as a platform of opportunity. Also, this project will help to define areas of high importance for marine mammals, which will improve our understanding of these species in this region and on a broader temporal scale.



Humpback whale, Photo courtesy of George Allen

- Written by
Sergio Pavesi & Anne Trist
- Between October 2011 and March 2012, 23 collaborators reported a total of 157 marine mammal sightings from 8 species, 56 of these sightings were from 10 deep sea fishermen.
 - The Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin was the species with the most reports. This species was sighted along the whole Kenyan coast, from Manda Bay (Lamu) to Shimoni (Kwana). Most of these encounters were close to shore, showing the coastal preference of this species.
 - Spinner dolphins were reported on 23 occasions, most of them by sea anglers from Shimoni and Watamu. The animals were mainly found in deep waters off the Pemba Channel and Watamu banks.
 - Humpback whales, which migrate from cold to warm waters every year on their annual migration along the Western Indian Ocean, were spotted around Manda Bay, Kilambala, Malindi and Watamu.
 - Killer whales were observed on three occasions, twice around North Lodge (Watamu) and once in Centre Malindi. All these sightings were observed during the month of February and around the area known as "The Rip".
 - Other species such as humpback and common dolphins, pilot and sperm whales were also observed.

This is the first time marine mammal data has been collected along the Kenyan coast since 2001.

Get involved with the network and Report your sightings!!!

They got involved KASA skippers especially helpful whales in the area



As Watamu's dolphin and whale reporting network (assisted by the KMMN!!) is attracting more and more contributions from local and sports fishermen, Watamu Marine Association has received record numbers of sightings of between June and October this year with over 160 separate reports from the 19 fishermen now enrolled. This has meant that Watamu, through Hemingways Resort has been able to market itself as the first Whale Watching destination in Kenya which attracted a lot of attention

from the media houses, many of who did not realize we had whales in Kenya. Dickson Wekesa KBC's Environmental Reporter on the coast, and K24's reporter David Sharif picked up the story immediately and came down to interview our fishermen, including sports fisherman Lwembe and Fazwal Lali, a local fisherman from Watamu village, who talked about their experiences of whales (and dolphins).

WMA Coordinator Jimmy Kahindi Yaa was also interviewed and was able to explain the importance of recruiting for the reporting network not only on a local basis but also along the coast and especially through the **Kenya Marine Mammal Network**. He spoke about the growth of the KMMN partnerships and especially between Global Vision International, WMA, KWS, KMFRI and KASA and explained how we are for the first time connecting along the coast to help KWS begin to develop a national protection plan with all the information that is being collected. The program was aired as a local feature item on KBC news and can be found on YouTube for all to enjoy.

Over the last months, the Kenya Marine Mammal Network has been on the media promoting the goals of this initiative and explaining the first results from the data collected between October 2011 and March 2012, published on the first issue of this newsletter.



Watamu's top Whale Reporters - KMMN in action



Hassan and crew in Arsenal in the MPA taken by the WMA whale survey team

In 2011 Watamu Marine Association received only 3 reports of humpback whales during their migration north from the Antarctic, however since WMA has promoted the importance of the KMMN we received over 160 reports between June and October from local and sports fishermen. Two of the most dedicated fishermen who regularly called in sightings of whales and dolphins, even in the roughest Kusi conditions are Hassan Makame and Fazwal Lali, totaling almost 40 reports so far and still counting.

During a rare moment on shore relaxing at their docked motor dinghy Arsenal used for deep sea fishing, Hassan and Fazwal spoke about their lives in the ocean. Both have been fishermen all their lives for up to 25 years and have seen many changes to the Kenyan oceans including the decline in numbers whales and dolphins. Hassan started fishing at the young age of eight and knew that life as a fisherman was his destiny. He has not only worked in the Watamu area, but has spent time in Somalia, fishing there back in 1992. He did branch out and worked as a guide in the Watamu Marine Park, and remembers first working on the glass bottomed boats in the Watamu Marine Park when the fees were only \$1US! More recently WMA have worked with him on our designated research surveys as well.

Hassan is also a keen birder and working as guide in the Mida Creek Watamu, part of the a UN Protected Biosphere Area he can now name and recognize all the birds in that area ranging from the seasonal Crab Plover to the resident Black Kite.

Hassan is not shy of the camera and has featured in a Discovery Channel production when they took an opportunity to film him for a documentary depicting the traditional methods of Kenyan fishing in the traditional dhow sailing boats which are so popular with visitors. However Hassan and Fazwal prefer the more modern method of deep sea fishing in their motorized dinghies and look forward to more fishing in the coming Kaskasi season. Which is excellent news for the KMMN as the reports of Watamu whales and dolphins will keep on coming in to the WMA offices.



Arsenal Crew



KMMN Collaborators

The following people provided valuable contribution to the Kenya Marine Mammal Network: Shikami Kennedy (Fisheries officer), John Karungo (Fisheries Observer), Kathryn Wheatley (Marine Mammal Observer - FAR Limited), Hassan Makame, Mohammed Ahmed (Buccaneer diving), Ishmail Athman, Fazwal Lali and Althman Lali (Watamu Youth Development Community), Callum Looman, Abraham, Billy Sadiki, Richard Bennett, Athman Abdallah, Mohamed Fadhili, Pete Darnborough, Mohammed Athman, Phil Revett, Rob Hellier, Athman Abdulah, Stuart Simpson, Sander Der Haring (Buccaneer Diving), Christian Koellnberger (Diving the crab), Steve Webb, Steve George, Rob Coverdale; Jane Spilsbury and Steve Trott (Watamu Marine Association) and the WMA Volunteer Research Team, all members of the Watamu Association of Boat Operators (WABO), Simon Hemphill (Sea adventures Ltd. and Kenya Sea Anglers Association), Sergi Perez, Chloe Corne, Thalia Pereira, Zeno Wijten, Inês Gomes and all the volunteers (GVI), Dr. Nina Wambiji (KMFRI), Dr. Mohamed Omar Said (KWS), Warden Richard Lemarkat (KWS), Warden Dixon Korir (KWS) and KWS researcher Lynn Njuguna. The WMA Research Program is supported by the African Fund for Endangered Wildlife (Kenya).

Thank you very much!

Asanteni sana!

KENYA MARINE MAMMAL NETWORK

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Kenya Marine Mammal Network



GET INVOLVED!

With the Kenya Marine Mammal Network (KMMN)



Report your marine mammal sightings and help us to create a better understanding of these species

The Network

The Kenya Marine Mammal Network aims to provide the first consistent data on occurrence and abundance of marine mammals along the Kenyan coast using sport fishing vessels, diving clubs and NGOs as a platform of opportunity.

This project will help to define areas of "High Importance" for marine mammals, which is critical to improve the conservation of these species in the region.

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Organizers



Partners

