

The Caribbean Cetacean Society, a local network breaking the islands frontiers for Cetacean conservation

La Caribbean Cetacean Society, una red local que rompe las fronteras de las islas para la conservación de los cetáceos.

La Caribbean Cetacean Society, un réseau local qui franchit les frontières des îles pour la conservation des cétacés.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Cetaceans is the group representing whales and dolphins. That group has an important ecosystemic value in the world. The International Monetary Funds estimate thesis services at 1 trillion dollars per year. As an apex predator, they are shaping the trophic chain and therefore play an important role in the fisheries. The whale watching is a great income for as part of the development o the blue economy. They are also recognized as one of the main nature-based solutions to fight climate change as whales can store for more times carbon dioxide than the Amazon forest. The Caribbean host more than a third of the world's cetacean species as 33 species have been reported to breed, fed, reproduce and rest in the region. However, there are important gaps of data that could lead to the extinction of some population. Indeed, for many islands in the Caribbean the diversity, distribution, abundance and movement of these species are not known. These animals travel great distances, and their distribution can include several countries between which they circulate regularly. On the scale of some large cetacean species, the Caribbean is a unique space that these animals have used for longer than us, with no boundaries other than environmental parameters. It is therefore up to us to adapt and work together to break down our barriers, in order to protect them despite our differences – in legislation, language and culture – in each of our territories. Organizations undertaking quality field and policy work exist on many islands, but are often isolated. Projects aimed at enhancing collaboration within the region are limited in time and funding, thus leading to a lack of temporal and geographical continuity. An organization led by local scientists is needed to coordinate the different actions on the long term.

The Caribbean Cetacean Society (CCS) (www.ccs-ngo.com) Tis an NGO established in 2020. This NGO is a French association based in Martinique, working at the Caribbean scale to improve cetacean conservation through international cooperation, education, and research. Their objective is to improve understanding of, distribute and share the knowledge on cetaceans in the Caribbean, and ultimately to ensure adequate conservation measures are put in place. CCS was established in response to the lack of effective, structural, and scientific-based conservation efforts of cetaceans in the Wider Caribbean Region. CCS's mission is to lead cooperation between the islands in the WCR to fill the gap of scientific data and thus set up appropriate and effective conservation measures within each territory. CCS uses best practices in science and conservation to build knowledge and enhance the protection of cetaceans in the WCR. In addition, CCS shares its knowledge and available information concerning existing threats to raise awareness and support within local communities for cetacean protection and inform policy by supporting actors and governments with their conservation needs. To realize this mission, CCS invests in building local capacity to ensure the sustainability of the required action taking place in the Caribbean. The core work of CCS centers on conservation and applied science. By monitoring cetacean populations in the region, by gathering new and collecting important existing data through collaborative networks, education and training of youth and key stakeholders that interact with cetaceans to raise awareness by changing perceptions and mindsets.

Since 2021 CCS is leading the largest Cetacean standardized monitoring program in the Caribbean. The Ti whale an nou scientific expedition has been built to understand more about the cetaceans diversity, distribution, abundance and movements in the lesser Antilles. Each group of islands from Grenada to Anguilla have been sampled twice per year thanks to a protocol based on boats surveys. Thanks to visual sightings, passive acoustic monitoring (with a towed array of hydrophones) and photo identification CCS is trying to reduce the gap of data and the inequality of knowledge between the islands. This program of cooperation, education and research is a perfect platform for capacity building in the region. It has been possible to realize it thanks to the partnership we made with WWF-NL, AWI, PNRM, DCNA, Corail Caraïbes, CTM, Région Guadeloupe, EDF, SARA and BMF.

Caribbean People are invited to continue the cooperation and participate in the future surveys (www.ccs-ngo.com/link).

KEYWORDS: Cetacean conservation, networks, Caribbean

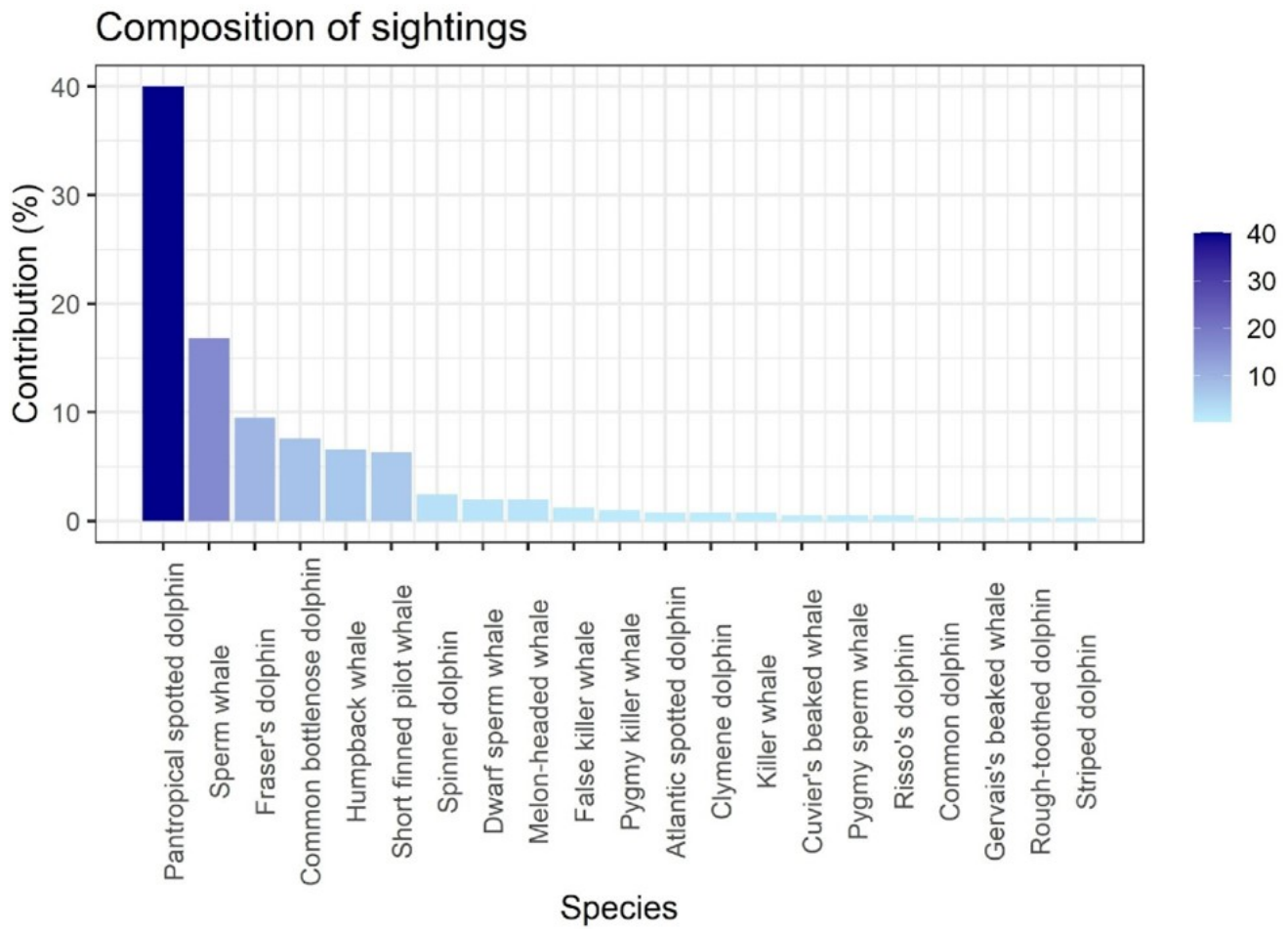


Figure 1. Composition of the sightings for each species during all the expeditions from 2021 to 2022 between Grenada and Anguilla