

RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION OF A RESIDENT BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN POPULATION IN AMVRAKIKOS GULF

D. ZAFIROPOULOS *, L. MERLINI **

*The American College of Greece/Deree College, Xenias 6-8, 115 28 Athens , GREECE

** Marathonos 199, 190 05 Athens, GREECE

ABSTRACT

Amvrakikos Gulf, a eutrophicated and productive estuary in western Greece, supports a very high population density of bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) as indicated by very high sighting frequencies. During a three year survey of the geographical distribution and photoidentification, bottlenose dolphins were consistently observed mostly in the central and eastern part of the gulf. Surface feeding behavior observed only by the Amvrakikos gulf population, and the very low sighting frequencies in the western part of the gulf and in the adjacent coastal Ionian Sea waters indicate that the Amvrakikos Gulf bottlenose population is a resident one. An analysis of the photoidentification data has resulted in the identification of 48 individuals. Food availability seems to be the crucial factor for the conservation of this dolphin population. Control measures therefore should be aimed at controlling nutrient inputs and eutrophication phenomena and protecting fishstocks.