



Nota breve | Short note

## First record of a live false killer whale *Pseudorca crassidens* (Owen, 1846) in Cabo Verdean waters

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Despite the limited research on cetaceans in Cabo Verde waters, 23 species have been documented (Hazevoet & Wenzel 2000, Hazevoet *et al.* 2010, Koenen *et al.* 2013, Berrow *et al.* 2015). The presence of several species is known only from strandings, such as the false killer whale, which has beached dead twice on Boavista in the 1980s–1990s, and again in 2007 (Hazevoet *et al.* 2010, Koenen *et al.* 2013). This is a CITES species, and Data Deficient according to IUCN (Taylor *et al.* 2008).

While passing from Lisbon, Portugal to Puerto Natales, Chile, a watch was kept almost continuously during daylight from the bridge (12 m above sea level) of a 102 m long expedition cruise ship. During 25 days, mostly in international waters over the abyssal plain,

19 cetacean species were identified. The 12 and 14 October 2017 were spent within the Cabo Verdean Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ). Although sea conditions were moderate (Beaufort sea state 4), five sightings of five cetaceans species were recorded: short-finned pilot whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus*, melon-headed whale *Peponocephala electra*, false killer whale *Pseudorca crassidens*, and pantropical spotted dolphin *Stenella attenuata* (Table 1). Photographs were used to confirm species identification (Fig. 1). A single beaked whale was also seen, and while not identifiable to species level, the profile, very small body size and pale grey colour was consistent with Gervais' beaked whale *Mesoplodon europaeus*.

**Table 1.** Date, time, location (coordinates in decimal degrees, datum WGS84), and estimates of group size (N) of cetacean sightings (common name and scientific name are given) in Cabo Verdean waters in 2017. (?) stands for an unconfirmed species identification.

Date	Time	Latitude	Longitude	Common name	Scientific name	N
12/10	11:00	19.503	-23.098	beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon europaeus</i> (?)	1
14/10	07:00	14.135	-25.843	short-finned pilot whale	<i>Globicephala macrorhynchus</i>	30
14/10	08:15	14.059	-25.842	melon-headed whale	<i>Peponocephala electra</i>	40
14/10	08:45	13.976	-25.873	false killer whale	<i>Pseudorca crassidens</i>	2
14/10	17:00	12.099	-26.389	pantropical spotted dolphin	<i>Stenella attenuata</i>	100



**Fig. 1.** Cetaceans seen circa 60 nautical miles (111 km) Southwest of Brava (photos by Conor Ryan). **A)** False killer whale *Pseudorca crassidens*. **B)** A group of melon-headed whales *Peponocephala electra*.

About 60 nautical miles (nm), circa 111 km southwest of Brava, three cetacean species (never mixed) were identified in under three hours (i.e. over 36 nm of survey): short-finned pilot whale, melon-headed whale, and false killer whale. Such species richness, over a comparable distance, was observed nowhere elsewhere on the 6400 nm passage. The two false killer whales approached the ship from abeam and surfed in its wake (Fig. 1A). This is the first confirmed at sea record of false killer whale for Cabo Verde, although has been considered native in these waters (Odell & McClune 1999, Taylor *et al.* 2008).

The record of melon-headed whales (Fig. 1B) is the seventh at sea sighting in Cabo Verde, after sightings on Boavista, Sal, São Nicolau, Santa Luzia, São Vicente and Brava (Hazevoet *et al.* 2010, Berrow *et al.* 2014).

Short-finned pilot whales and pantropical spotted dolphins are both among the most frequently recorded cetacean species in the archipelago (Hazevoet & Wenzel 2000, Berrow *et al.* 2006, Berrow *et al.* 2015).

Although brief and opportunistic, our survey provides valuable information on cetaceans within offshore Cabo Verdean EEZ waters. Cetacean surveys in these waters have focused on inshore or inter-island waters, as the primary focus has been on humpback whales *Megaptera novaeangliae* (Hazevoet & Wenzel 2000, Wenzel *et al.* 2009, Ryan *et al.* 2013). Further survey effort offshore using ‘vessels of opportunity’ (e.g. Correia *et al.* 2016) or by static acoustic monitoring is recommended to improve baseline knowledge of species presence and distribution.

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