
MARINE LITTER INGESTION IN STRANDED SEA FAUNA OF GALICIAN COAST

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Abstract

The coasts of Galicia are one of the regions with more diversity of sea fauna in Europe. With almost 1.500 km of coast, the annual mean of strandings is 256 individuals (cetaceans, seals, turtles and sharks). The objective of this study is to identify the species which are affected by marine litter. For that, we review the data of stranding animals from January 2000 to June 2022. In this period, foreign body had been detected in 51 individuals: 28 cetaceans, 5 seals, 15 turtles y 3 sharks. Regarding the species described in these waters, 45.8% (11/24) of the total species of cetaceans, 33.3 % (2/6) seals and 60% (3/5) of turtles were affected. Concerning cetaceans (28), deep-divers were more affected (9 *Ziphius cavirostris*; 2 *Physeter macrocephalus*, 2 *Kogia breviceps*, 2 *Mesoplodon densirostris*, 2 *Globicephala melas* and 1 *M. mirus*) than other shallow species (4 *Tursiops truncatus*, 2 *Stenella coeruleoalba*, 1 *Grampus griseus*, 1 *Balaenoptera physalus* y 1 *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*). Foreign bodies were observed in sea turtles (15): *Caretta caretta* (8), *Dermodochelys coriacea* (5) and *Chelonia mydas* (2). Regarding seals (5), 3 *Cystophora cristata* and 2 *Halichoerus grypus* were affected. *Cetorhinus maximus* (3) was the only shark species with foreign bodies. Although the origin of the marine litter could not be identified, foreign bodies were mostly from domestic use and the fishery industry. Foreign bodies were mainly located in the stomach. Future studies will shed light on the prevalence of these interactions and the pathologies associated with the ingestion of marine litter.

Keywords: marine litter, plastic debris, cetacean, pinnipeds, sharks, seaturtle, Galicia

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