

Science Notes

BOEM
BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT



Science for Informed Decisions

June 29, 2018

Dear Reader,

This month's Science Note is devoted to the results from the largest survey of marine protected species on east coast, the Atlantic Marine Assessment Program for Protected Species, or AMAPPS. BOEM develops, funds, and manages rigorous scientific research such as AMAPPS to inform policy decisions on the development of energy and mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf. Phase I took place between 2010 and 2014 between the Florida Keys and Maine. The enormous scope of the study has yielded a trove of data on more than 32 species of cetaceans, as well as sea turtles, marine birds, and the ecosystems in which they live. Following the data analysis, BOEM published the final report in December 2017. Phase II is taking place between 2014 and 2019. Please enjoy reading this edition, and feel free to send your comments to us at boempublicaffairs@boem.gov.

Sincerely,

William Y. Brown
Chief Environmental Officer

Now available:

Findings from Atlantic Marine Assessment Program for Protected Species

Results from the first phase of the Atlantic Marine Assessment Program for Protected Species (AMAPPS I) are now available. AMAPPS I was the first major assessment of protected species in the Atlantic since the Cetacean and Turtle Assessment Program in the 1980s and has greatly enhanced our knowledge about the region's marine life and ecosystem.

AMAPPS is a comprehensive multi-agency research program on the US Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), from Maine to the Florida Keys. The overarching objectives of AMAPPS are to assess the abundance, distribution, ecology, and behavior of marine mammals, sea turtles, and seabirds throughout the US Atlantic OCS, to place them in an ecosystem context, and to provide spatially explicit density estimates in a format that can be used when making marine resource management decisions.



**A short-beaked common dolphin, *Delphinus delphis*, observed during the July 2013 AMAPPS mission.
Photo by Desray Reeb, BOEM**

What did we learn? Here are some of the highlights:

- Improved modeling calculations helped scientists address how often various cetacean species could be detected. As a result, the new abundance estimates for many cetacean species were higher than previous estimates. Scientists collected a wealth of new data on dolphins and published the first description of acoustic recordings from Sowerby's Beaked Whales. Overall, more than 32 cetacean species were studied.
- Researchers identified persistent, higher concentrations of marine birds off the Outer Banks, off eastern Long Island, and in the Martha's Vineyard/Nantucket region than in other areas along the U.S. Atlantic.
- Relatively high densities of loggerhead turtles were found in coastal waters from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, to Long Island, New York, during the summer.
- Researchers identified a potential new spawning area for Atlantic bluefin tuna off the U.S. northeastern continental shelf in an area called the Slope Sea.

AMAPPS I took place through an inter-agency agreement with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service and in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Navy.

The second phase -- [AMAPPS II](#) -- is taking place from 2014-2019, and continues to take direct aerial and shipboard surveys from northern Maine to Florida. Researchers are also conducting acoustic surveys in U.S. coastal waters over multiple years using hydrophones (underwater microphones) to pick up and record animal sounds.

The information gathered is relevant to all three BOEM program areas: offshore renewable energy, conventional energy, and marine mineral resource development on the Atlantic coast.

More information about AMAPPS I is available in the [final report](#).

In addition, NOAA's new [map viewer](#) allows viewers to access geo-referenced information on species locations from the study. Other information is available on NOAA's [main](#) AMAPPS page.

To learn more about BOEM's other regional and multi-disciplinary research activities, visit BOEM's [Environmental Studies Program](#), which develops, funds, and manages rigorous scientific research to inform policy decisions regarding the development of energy and mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf.

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