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DO★MAR
PHD PROGRAM IN MARINE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

PhD project: **Diet analysis of the main cetacean's species in waters of the North-West Iberian Peninsula and analysis of macro and microplastics in their stomachs**

Supervisors: Dr. Graham Pierce (Spanish National Research Council - CSIC)
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Summary: Cetaceans, as top predators, play an important role in the functioning of marine ecosystems regulating the abundance of species at lower trophic levels in the marine food chain. In addition, the cetacean populations are subjected to several anthropogenic threats (*e.g.*, incidental capture in fishing gears, overexploitation of resources by fisheries, pollution, marine debris) which can affect their survival and conservation status. In the Atlantic region of the Iberian Peninsula the most abundant marine mammal species are: the common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*), the bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), the striped dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*), and the harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*). In this thesis, the analysis of the stomach contents of these cetacean species is necessary to characterize, both qualitatively and quantitatively, their diet composition. In addition, the identification of the prey remains will allow us to estimate the amount of food consumed annually, to infer the variation of the diet at different scales (interannual, seasonal, and geographical), as well as in relation to the sex and the size and the cause of death of cetaceans (bycaught vs non-bycaught individuals), and also to determine the overlap between the diet of these cetaceans and the catches of the fisheries operating in the study area. Regarding the pollution, the presence of macro and microplastics found in the stomachs of the different species of cetaceans, through the years of study, will be analysed, classified and quantified.