STOMACH CONTENTS ANALYSIS OF PILOT WHALES (*Globicephala melas*) FROM THE PORTUGUESE, GALICIAN AND SCOTTISH COASTS

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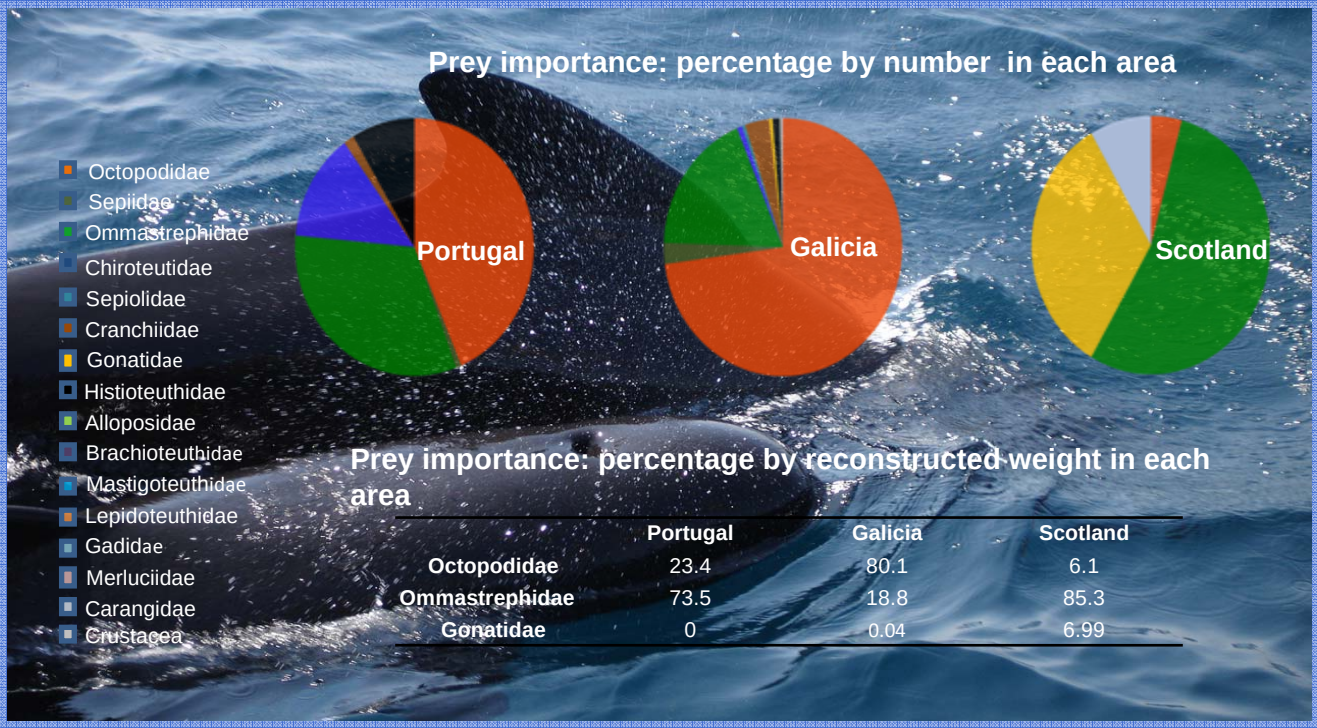
INTRODUCTIO N

The implementation of marine mammal management and conservation actions requires data on population ecology, genetics, morphology, as well as on the impact of human activities in cetacean species. Although there are available studies on the diet of the most common cetacean in the NE Atlantic (1,2,3,4,5), this kind of information is still lacking for most cetacean species in Portugal and for more uncommon cetacean species in Galicia and Scotland.

METHODS

The stomach contents of long-finned pilot whales (*Globicephala melas*) stranded along Portugal (n= 5) and Galicia (n= 9) were analyzed and compared with previous available information from Galicia (n=21) and Scotland (n=6). Methodology is described in [2]. The feeding habitats of this species were compared between areas, based on the relative importance (frequency of occurrence, % number and % reconstructed weight) of each prey species.



Prey importance: percentage by reconstructed weight in each area

	Portugal	Galicia	Scotland
Octopodidae	23.4	80.1	6.1
Ommastrephidae	73.5	18.8	85.3
Gonatidae	0	0.04	6.99

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In agreement with studies of piscivorous cetaceans (1,2,3,4,5), the animals from Galicia exibited a more diverse diet (minimum of 23 species) , followed by Portugal (minimum of 10 species) and Scotland (minimum of 5 species).

Most of the prey remains consisted of cephalopod beaks, in higher numbers and with a greater diversity than in studies on *G. melas* from the western Atlantic or Pacific Oceans (6,7). Both in Portugal and Galicia, octopus (*Eledone cirrhosa*) was the most important prey, followed by Ommastrephid squids. However, in Scotland the predominant prey were Ommastrophid squids, followed by species of Gonatidae and Octopodidae. Although there were no fish remains in Portuguese animals, in Scotland the Gadidae remains constituted an important part of the diet by number (5.6%), although they only represented 1.6% of the reconstructed prey biomass.

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