Southern Coastal and Shelf Waters of South Africa IMMA

Summary

The southern coast of South Africa represents one of the world's most productive marine regions, famed for its annual 'Sardine Run' which occurs along the southeast coast between May and June. This annual event supports a number of top predators, including common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*), Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus*), fur seals (*Arctocephalus pusillus*) and killer whales (*Orcinus orca*). The inshore waters, within 500m of the coast and with water depths of less than 25m, provide important year-round habitat for feeding and reproduction for endangered Indian Ocean humpback dolphins (*Sousa plumbea*) (Fig. 1). Furthermore, the waters over the continental shelf present important habitat for the inshore form of Bryde's whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*).

Criterion A: Species or Population Vulnerability

Recent local (South Africa) and international (IUCN) Red List assessments have classified the Indian Ocean humpback dolphin as 'Endangered' in South African waters (Plön et al., 2016) as well as globally (Braulik et al., 2017). Analyses of photo-identification data of this species have indicated that national abundance may be well below previous estimates of 1000 individuals, with numbers possibly closer to 500 (Vermeulen et al., 2017).

Area Size

166,700km²

Qualifying Species and Criteria

Indian Ocean humpback dolphin – *Sousa plumbea*
  Criterion A, B1

Bryde’s whale - *Balaenoptera edeni*
  Criterion C2

Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin – *Tursiops aduncus*
  Criterion B1, C3, D1

Common dolphin - *Delphinus delphis*
  Criterion C2

Cape fur seal - *Arctocephalus pusillus*
  Criterion C2

Marine Mammal Diversity (D2)

*Sousa plumbea, Balaenoptera edeni, Tursiops aduncus, Delphinus delphis, Arctocephalus pusillus, Megaptera novaeangliae, Eubalaena australis, Orcinus orca*

Figure 1 – Indian Ocean humpback dolphins (*Sousa plumbea*) surfacing near the beach. Photo: Brigitte Melly and Stephanie Plön
A number of marine predators, such as common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*; Ambrose et al., 2013), Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus* Cockcroft et al., 1990; Caputo et al., 2017), and Bryde’s whales (*Balaenoptera edeni*) follow and feed on the migrating schools of sardine (Penry et al., 2011; Penry et al., 2016). In addition, Cape fur seals (*Arctocephalus pusillus*) feed in the ‘Sardine Run’ (Huisamen et al., 2012).

**Criterion D: Special Attributes**

**Sub-criterion D2: Diversity**

The IMMA contains habitat that supports an important diversity of species. The following species have been documented from within the area: Indian Ocean humpback dolphin (*Sousa plumbea*; Plön et al., 2016), the inshore form of Bryde’s whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*; Penry et al., 2016), Indian Ocean bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops aduncus*; Cockcroft et al., 2016), common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*; Plön and Cockroft, 2016), Cape fur seal (*Arctocephalus pusillus*; Kirkman et al., 2016), humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*; Peters and Barendse, 2016), killer whales (*Orcinus orca*), and southern right whales (*Eubalaena australis*; Barendse and Carvalho, 2016).

**Supporting Information**


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