

Field Report – Maubydick 2014, Mauritius

In collaboration with Maubydick and Marine Megafauna Conservation Organization (MMCO).

Team:

Michel Vély – Chairman of MEGAPTERA, France

Denise Vély – Project Logistics Manager

Sabrina Fossette – Scientific Advisor, MEGAPTERA

Daniel Jouannet – Operating Director of Quality, Exagone, Main Sponsor

Nils Bertrand – Tagging pilot, Sea Blue Safari, Mayotte

Mikkel Villum Jensen – Tagging Specialist, Mikkel Villum, Denmark

In collaboration with Mads Peter Heide-Jørgensen - Professor in Marine Biology

Hugues Vitry – Chairman of Marine Megafona Conservation Organisation (M2CO)

Laetitia Muth – Project Co-sponsor, Photo ID specialist, MEGAPTERA.

Nicolas Kiechel – Film Photographer

Rene Heuzey - Film Photographer, Label Bleu productions

Yukimi Yamamoto – Logistics manager for Label Bleu productions

Hussein Al Qallaf – Photographer, Chairman of Senyar Dive Team Kuwait

Alain Dubois – Director, Dolswim

Clovis Quierville – Pilot, Dolswim

Navin – Pilot, Blue water Divers Center

Ravi Mohit – Mauritius Ministry of Fisheries

Meera Koonjul – Mauritius Ministry of Fisheries

Vikash Munbodhe - Mauritius Ministry of Fisheries

MMCO

November 22nd 2014

Arrival Mauritius, M. Vély

November 26th 2014

Arrival Mauritius, D. Jouannet, N Kiechel

November 27th 2014

Arrival Mauritius, N. Bertrand

November 28th 2014

Mikkel Villum Jensen arrival at Mauritius Airport and picked up by M Vély and N Bertrand

Went to workshop to check status of Crow's nest and Dolswim boat.

First meeting of the scientific team in the evening.

Information from M Vély that the boat "Flipper" was confirmed available for the tagging mission today, and that reports says that no sperm whales have been observed in the area lately.

Finally the weather forecast announces that a tropical depression is on it's way straight towards Mauritius.

Not a very good start for the Maubydick project.

November 29th 2014

Meeting with Alain Dubois from Dolswim at Rivière Noire. Preparation of the boat with crew's nest and other practicalities.

Weather information's are predicting that the tropical depression has turned before reaching Mauritius and will not impact badly weather conditions after the week end.

Dinner with all participants of the mission at Hotel Recif Attitude. Welcoming by H. Vitry, Chairman of M2CO and meeting of the film crew and the scientific crew Social gathering exchange with Mr Ravi Mohit, officer at the Ministry of Fisheries

November 30th 2014

Last check for the tagging boat at Rivière Noire with A Dubois by the scientific team, Mikkel Villum Jensen, Michel Vély and Nils Betrand.

Meeting at Hotel Recif Attitude at 16:00, tagging team, film crew with M2CO team to prepare any detail on the forthcoming fieldwork.

Weather information's predicting reasonable working conditions tomorrow and perfect conditions for coming Tuesday and Wednesday

December 1st 2014

Meeting on the morning with the representative of the Ministry of Fisheries, Mr Vikash Munbodhe. The trip with the support vessel is cancelled due to weather conditions. Green light from the officer Mr Vikash Munbodhe to deploy tag in the afternoon if the weather is permitting. Weather on the border of working conditions for the tagging boat departing from Black River. Two sperm whales tagged, among them a reproductive big male. See Deployment Sheet.

December 2nd 2014

Brilliant working conditions (Beaufort 0). Four sperm whales tagged. See Deployment Sheet.

December 3rd 2014

Good working conditions in the morning, but wind and waves slowly building up during the day. Vikash Munbodhe from Ministry of Fisheries participated on tagging boat for biopsy training. Two sperm whales tagged. See Deployment Sheet.

December 4th 2014

Diving and filming on the big male sperm whale, tagged with SPOT5 Swing #6963 on Tuesday Dec 2nd 2014. The animal behaviour is similar to normal and the tag well implanted doesn't seem to produce any impact on his behaviour

December 5th 2014

Departure Laetitia, Nils, Denise, Michel, Daniel, Nicolas.

Mikkel installed in small apartment at Bluewater Divers.

Paperwork on Field Report and Deployment Sheet.

Scientific tour for filming tagged whales planned for December 6th.

December 6th 2014

Scientific tour for filming tagged whales, Hugues, Yukimi, Rene, Hussein, Mikkel and driver of Dolswim boat.

We went by car to the Dolswim station at Rivière Noire, from where we went out to film the whales. The weather conditions were reasonable in the first part of the day, but the wind increased during the day to difficult working conditions. Three to five whales were seen and approached with one attempt from Rene, and only poor quality results. The whales were not very cooperative, but one whale with a tag was seen from another Dolswim boat.

We continued further south and found more whales, all difficult to get close to. But a little filming was done, although with poor results due to poor visibility.

December 7th 2014

Final wrap-up of filming with interviews.

Hussein Al Quallaf departure back to Kuwait.

December 8th 2014

Final wrap-up of Field Report and other paperwork.

Mikkel Villum departure for Paris and Denmark

December 9th 2014

Mikkel Villum arrival at Copenhagen Airport

Summary

Given the fact that the start of the mission was met with a tropical storm on it's way, trouble getting a boat and information's of absence of sperm whales in the area, I think that we can conclude that we have been very lucky to be able to deploy all our tags – all of them placed very well on the whales, and all of them seemingly working fine, as well as getting the opportunity to film them under water afterwards.

But luck doesn't come by itself – this mission could not have been conducted, nor succeeded without the tireless preparation work of the MMCO team, local authorities and private supporters on Mauritius, as well as the team of MEGAPTERA's involvement and support.

The scientific team thank everybody for a tremendous tagging mission on sperm whales on Maubydick 2014, in Mauritius.

The data received on the movements of the tagged sperm whales by Argos system are ready to be posted on the www.seaturtle.org web site with a proposed delay of 24 hours.

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of the scientific team, Mikkel Villum Jensen

