

ANOTHER DOLPHIN FOUND SHOT DEAD IN THE ISTANBUL STRAIT

An adult male bottlenose dolphin stranded on Tarabya coast of Istanbul Strait (Bosphorus) on June 4. Marine mammal specialists found that the animal was killed with a shotgun from a very close range that there were more than 100 pellets found in the head. Turkish Marine Research Foundation (TUDAV) notified the authorized bodies in order to pursue the subject legally.

Every spring-early summer, we see many dolphins in the Istanbul Strait (Bosphorus). They visit this area for hunting fish, passing to the Marmara Sea / Black Sea, or just playing around. This year, in particular, we see them almost every day in the Strait when we are crossing the strait by boat, from the restaurants and cafes on the water front.. This means our sea is still surviving because dolphins are the symbol of a healthy sea. But, just, then a heart-breaking news arrived...

A male bottlenose dolphin (body length 241 cm) stranded on Tarabya, the European side of the Istanbul Strait, in the evening of June 4, 2017. It was carried to Beykoz and necropsy was made on the following day by the experts of Turkish Marine Research Foundation (TÜDAV).

It was found that the dolphin was shot by a hunting shotgun, as there were more than 100 pellets found in the head. It seems that he had been shot in the head earlier as shown by many pellets buried in the blubber. The wound was healed and he had survived until this age. But the second shot in the left lower jaw was fatal. A 'wad', a plastic capsule which holds lead pellets inside when fired, was also found in the wound, suggesting that he was shot from a very close range, probably 1.5 - 2m.

Besides the wound and pellets, this dolphin looked healthy and normal, with stomach full of fish. He was probably shot in the Black Sea or northern part of the Istanbul Strait and carried into the Strait through upper current flowing to the Marmara Sea.

TUDAV notified the authorized bodies through BIMER (Prime Ministry Information and Communication Center) about the death of this dolphin, and called out to fishery and port authorities to control the possession of such shotguns and rifles on boats. TUDAV also demanded Turkish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock to forbid all kinds of licensed/unlicensed guns/rifles on fishing vessels by adding this article to amateur/commercial fishing regulations as soon as possible. Furthermore, TUDAV urged relevant authorities to put a reward for finding assailants for intentional killing of endangered animals, as well as to increase the fine for all kinds of cruel acts against marine mammals.

Sadly, this is not the first dolphin found shot dead in the Istanbul Strait. On May 26, 2015, a female bottlenose dolphin was found on the coast of Bebek. This dolphin was determined to be shot dead by at least a single fire sidewise. Six shot holes with smooth edges were identified on the body and one pellet was found during the necropsy. Her assailant has not yet been apprehended (<http://www.tudav.org/index.php/en/cetacean-and-monk-seal-researches/354-bogaz-da-yunus-vahseti>).

There are three dolphin species in the Black Sea, namely the common dolphin, harbour porpoise and bottlenose dolphin. All three species are protected by the Turkish Law. However, they have been facing serious threats such as bycatch in fishing gear, prey shortage due to overfishing, pollution, heavy and noisy marine traffic. On top of that, they suffer direct killing by humans like these cases.

We must stop this cruelty. After all, dolphins were here at seas before humans. We need to learn to coexist with other species... If you see any dead dolphins or wounded dolphins, please call or send message to TUDAV.



TUDAV calls out to public for their support of the change.org campaign aiming to ban all kinds of licensed/unlicensed guns/rifles on vessels, including fishing vessels. <https://www.change.org/silahsizbalikcilik>

Dolphins and TUDAV appreciate your help.