

WISSENSCHAFTLICHE KURZMITTEILUNG

**An unusual record of Hooded seal (*Cystophora cristata*)  
in SW Spain**

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The Hooded seal, *Cystophora cristata*, is a typical Arctic species from the central and western areas of the northern Atlantic. Its distribution extend from Newfoundland and Labrador to Greenland, Iceland, Bear Island and Spitsbergen (REEVES and LING 1981; KOVACS and LAVIGNE 1986). In very rare occasions, wandering solitary individuals have been reported on both sides of the Atlantic as far south as Florida (USA) and Portugal (KING 1983).

On February 26, 1983, a specimen of Hooded seal was found dead on the beach near Torre Zalabar in Doñana National Park, 10 km NW of the mouth of the Guadalquivir river in the Province of Huelva, Spain (36° 54'N, 6° 24'W). The specimen was a pregnant adult female and showed a deep wound, measuring approximately 20 cm, on its right side. The death was recent as the animal was well preserved except for the eyes which had been eaten. The skin, the skeleton and the foetus are deposited in the collection of the Estación Biológica de Doñana (CSIC, Sevilla).

External and cranial measurements (in millimeters), the latter taken according to WIG and LIE (1984), and the weight (in kilograms) of the specimen were as follows: total length (nose-tail), 2010; tail length (from anus), 155; posterior extremity length (with cartilage), 350; anterior extremity length, 303; condylobasal length, 2411; basal length, 225; palatal length, 134; upper tooth-row length, 78; zygomatic width, 185; auditory meatus width, 157; palatal width, 60; orbital width, 33; mandible length, 158; weight (with foetus), 116. Except for the weight, which was greatly inferior to that considered normal for an adult female (REEVES and LING 1981; KOVACS and LAVIGNE 1986), these measurements are among the highest reported for the species, corresponding to an age well over 20 years (WIG 1985). The total length of the foetus was 75 and the weight 9.5.

The nearest localities to Doñana where the species has been reported are two in France (I. Oléron, in Charente-Maritime, and Bidasoa) (POUVREAU et al. 1980) and three in Portugal (Buarcos, Algarve and Peniche) (REINER 1979, 1980). All these cases dealt with young individuals, observed between June and August. Although the reports from Bidasoa and Algarve are close to the Spanish coast, this is the first concrete record for Spain and the furthest from the habitual range of the species. The importance of this new record, however, lies in the fact that it deals with an adult individual, as opposed to the others in these latitudes which were undoubtedly related to juvenile dispersion.

Although of advanced age, this specimen cannot be considered senile, as it presented normal reproductive activity. At the time of death, it was in poor physical condition. The subcutaneous layer of fat, which reaches a thickness of 4.8 cm at this time of year (REEVES and LING 1981), was reduced to 1 cm and the specimen's weight was, as previously mentioned, well below normal. The evidence would indicate the seal died after depleting

its reserves, perhaps as a result of the wound in its side which made it incapable of obtaining food. The decrease in its faculties probably led to its being swept by the ocean streams to the Spanish coast.

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