



Improving the monitoring value of marine mammal stranding data: determine the drift and discovery rates of small cetaceans.

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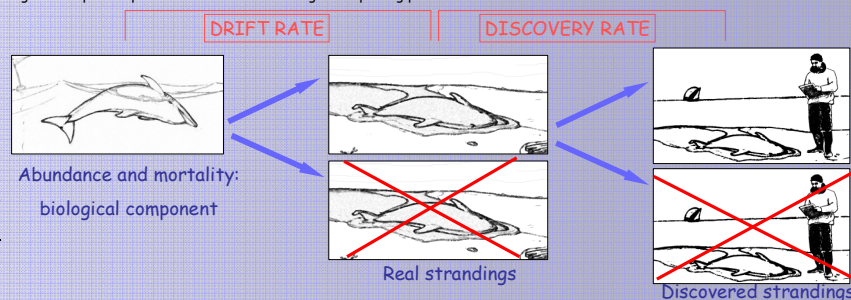


INTRODUCTION

Stranding of marine mammals is an important source of information to help assessing the state of conservation of cetacean populations. It is also the most important source of biological sampling on these protected species. Nevertheless, obtaining stranding data and samples remains mostly opportunistic.

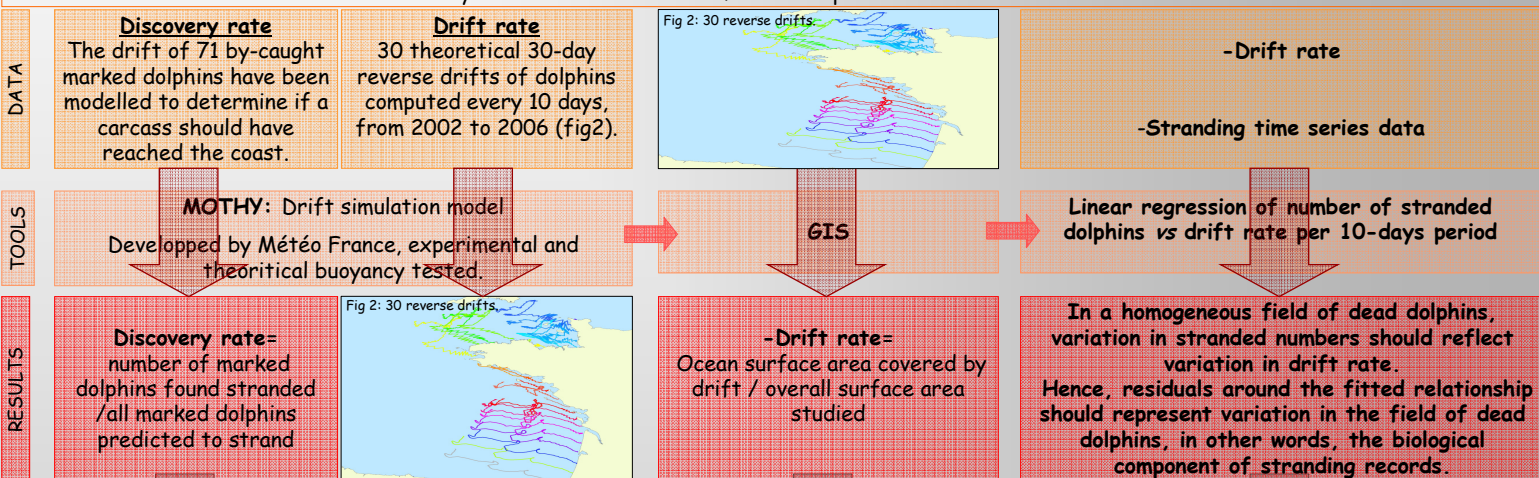
Stranding time series data result from the combination of biological (relative abundance and mortality fields) and non biological (drift condition and reporting system) factors (fig 1). The aim of this study was to determine the discovery and drift rates, in order to determine the biological component of stranding records.

Fig 1: Conceptual representation of the stranding and reporting process.

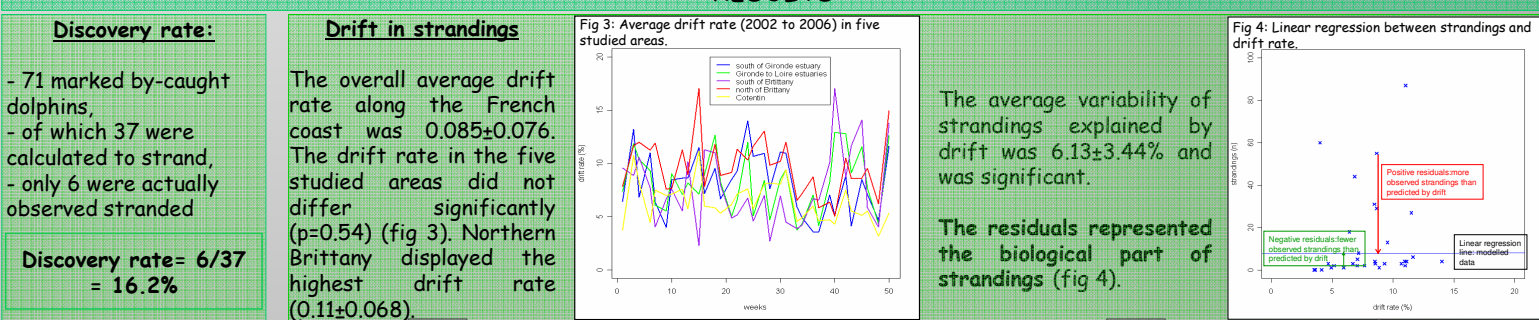


EXPERIENCE PLAN/MATERIALS AND METHODS

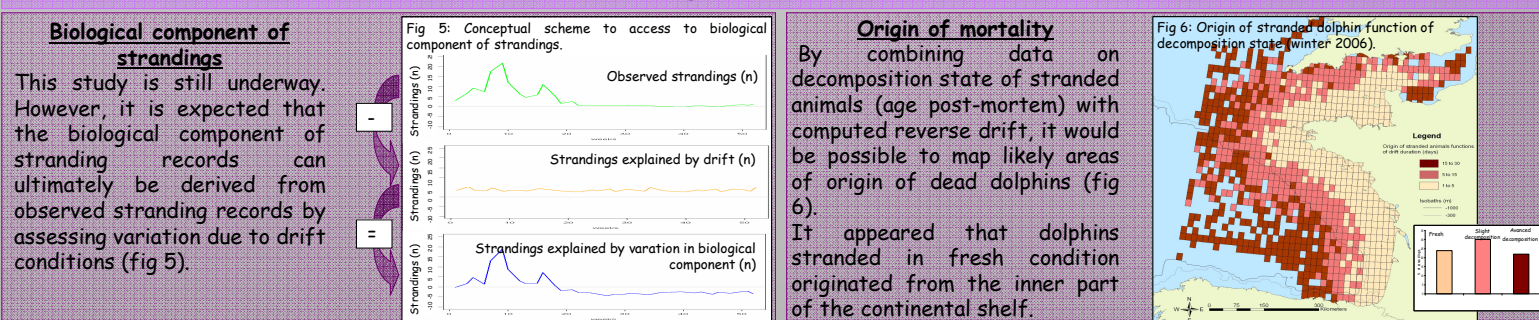
The study site is the French coast from the Spanish border to western Channel.



RESULTS



DISCUSSION



CONCLUSION

MOTHY model appeared to be an efficient tool for modelling dolphin drift. The low discovery rate highlighted that only a small proportion of dead animals is actually reported. A precise knowledge of decomposition kinetic could allow one to locate the origin of dolphin mortality.

Further understanding drift and reporting conditions of stranded cetaceans would help evaluating how stranding data can contribute to population monitoring strategies along with other approaches such as visual censuses, acoustic monitoring and data from platforms of opportunity.