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Primary Contact:

Dan Engelhaupt , HDR Inc.
Virginia Beach , United States

All Authors:

Dan Engelhaupt, HDR Inc. **(Primary Presenter)**
Amy Engelhaupt, Amy Engelhaupt Consulting
Jessica Aschettino, HDR Inc.
Joel Bell, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Atlantic

Title:

Diving Behavior and Movements of a Sowerby's Beaked Whale Tagged near Norfolk Canyon

Abstract:

The Virginia Capes (VACAPES) Operating Area offshore of North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland plays a vital role in the U.S. Navy's training and testing operations given its complex bathymetry and proximity to the world's largest navy base, Naval Station Norfolk (NSN). Advancements in satellite-monitored tagging technology allow scientists to improve their understanding of marine species including cryptic beaked whales that occur in these waters. In September 2018 during a multi-year U.S. Navy-funded survey to provide a more detailed assessment of species occurrence, diversity, and habitat use near the continental shelf break and Norfolk Canyon, a group of three Sowerby's beaked whales (*Mesoplodon bidens*) was sighted 125 km from shore in 1,219 m of water. During the encounter a Wildlife Computers SPLASH10 dive/location LIMPET-configured tag designed to collect medium-scale movements and dive behavior was deployed on an adult Sowerby's beaked whale. This was the first 'dart' tag deployed to date on this species across all oceans. Over the course of the 14-day tag duration, the individual travelled primarily over deeper (>1000m) waters east of the outer continental shelf break to the north approximately 135 km from the original tagging location near Norfolk Canyon. A total of 123 dives were recorded with 52 considered foraging deep dives (mean dive depth = 738 m) and 71 classed as non-foraging shallow to mid-water 'bounce' dives (mean dive depth = 220 m) based on strong similarities in diving patterns to other species of beaked whales. Mean foraging dive duration was 30 min, mean bounce dive duration was 14 min, and mean surfacing event was 6 min. Information gathered to date provides researchers and regulators with a vital glimpse into multi-day movement and dive behavior by such a challenging to study species.

Abstract Tweet:

First LIMPET-configured Wildlife Computers SPLASH10 dive/location tag deployed on an adult Sowerby's beaked whale.

Preferred Presentation Format:

Speedtalk

2nd Preference for Presentation Format:

Oral

Theme:

Habitat and Distribution

Has this abstract been previously presented or published?:

No

Are you a student?:

No

Do you wish to apply for an international (low income) country travel grant?:

No

Do you conduct research in Asia and wish to be considered for a regional award?:

No