

Recent Occurrence of Marine Mammals off Angola & First Report of Right Whales Since Whaling Era

Amy D. Whitt^{1*}, Ann Warde^{1,2}, and Lenisa Blair¹

(1) Azura Consulting LLC, Garland, Texas, USA; (2) Zsonics, Ithaca, New York, USA; *Corresponding Author: amy@azuraco.com

Purpose

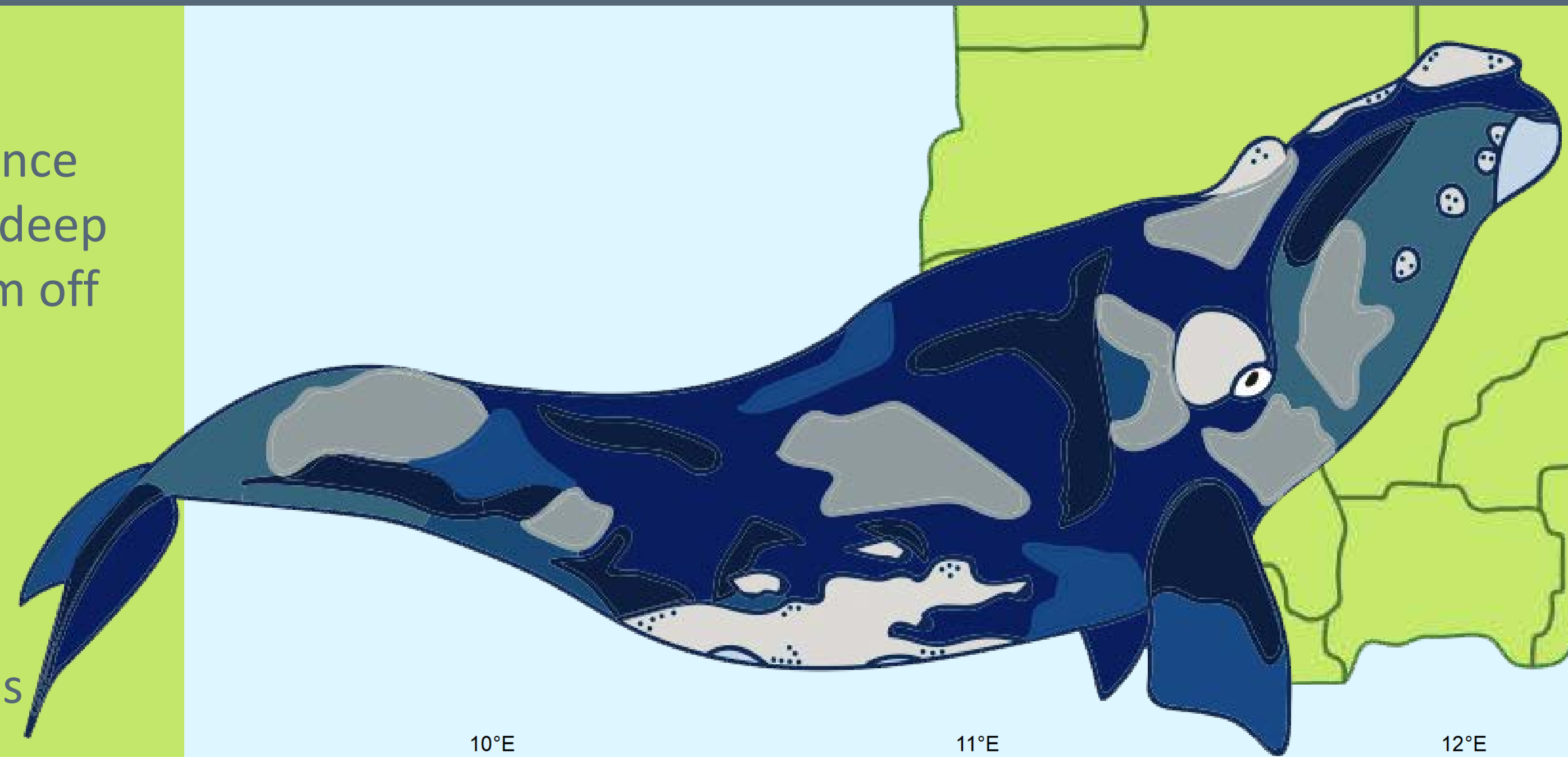
To assess the baseline occurrence of marine mammal species in deep waters (2,350-3,850 m) 400 km off Angola

Methods

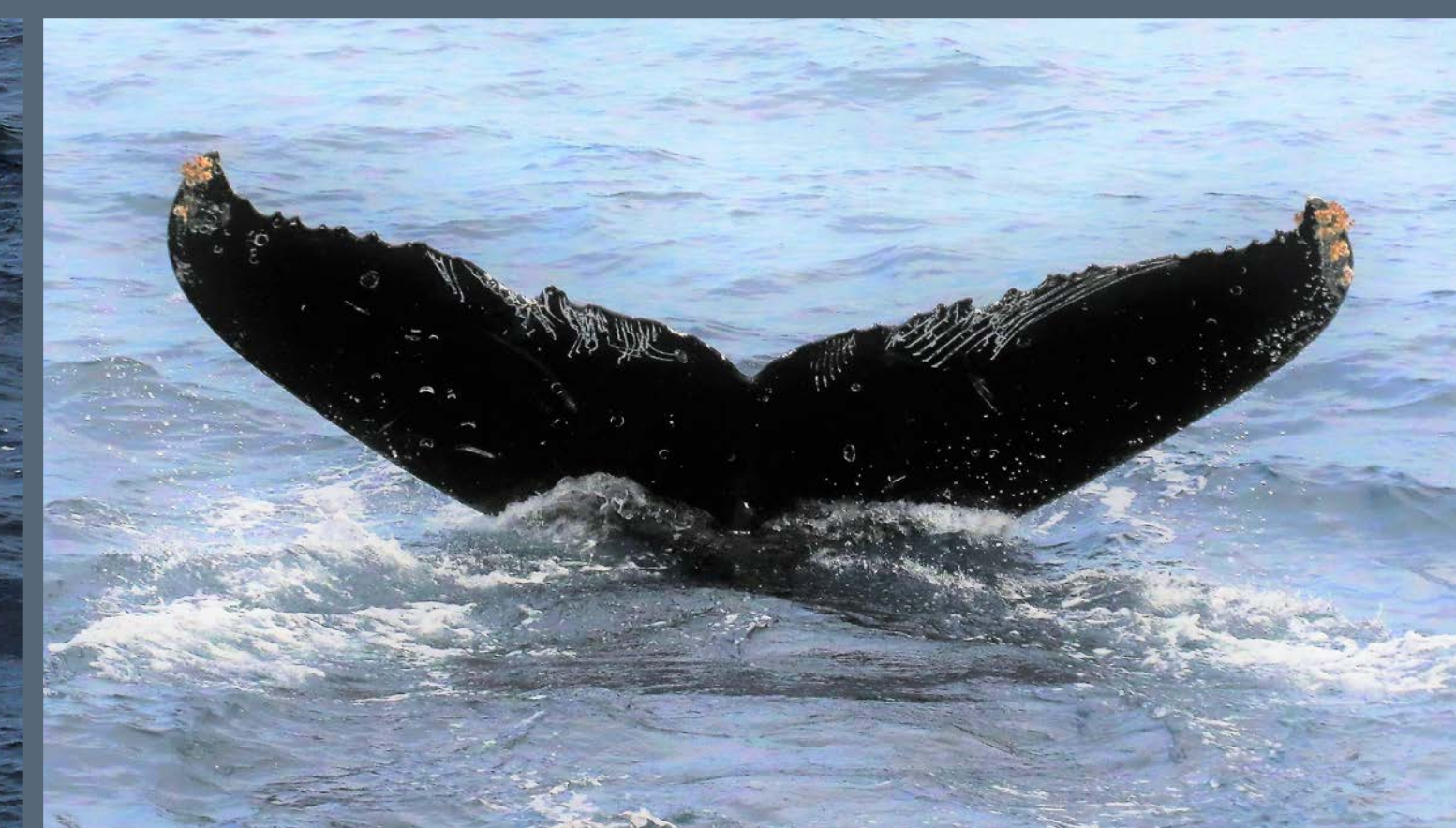
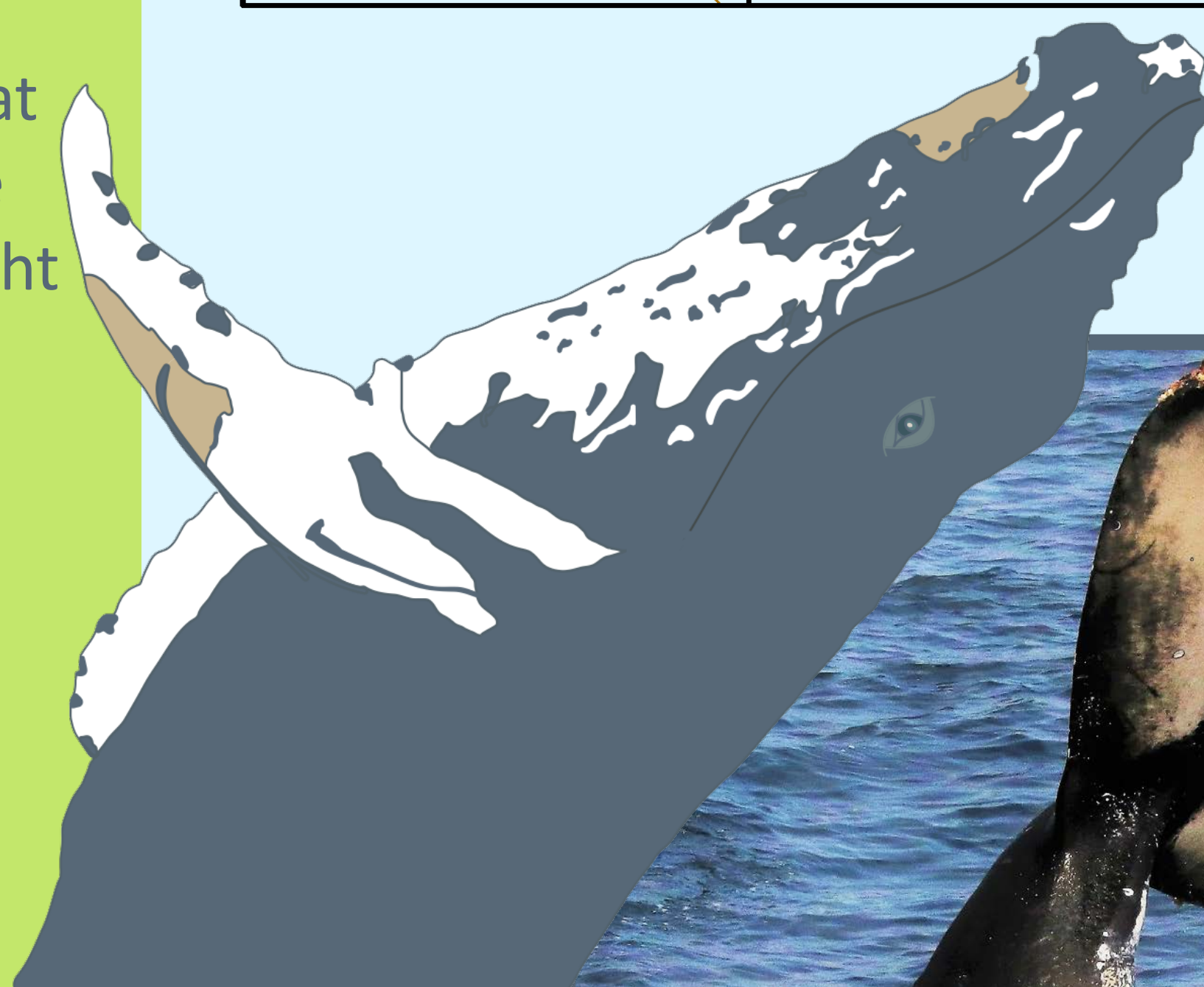
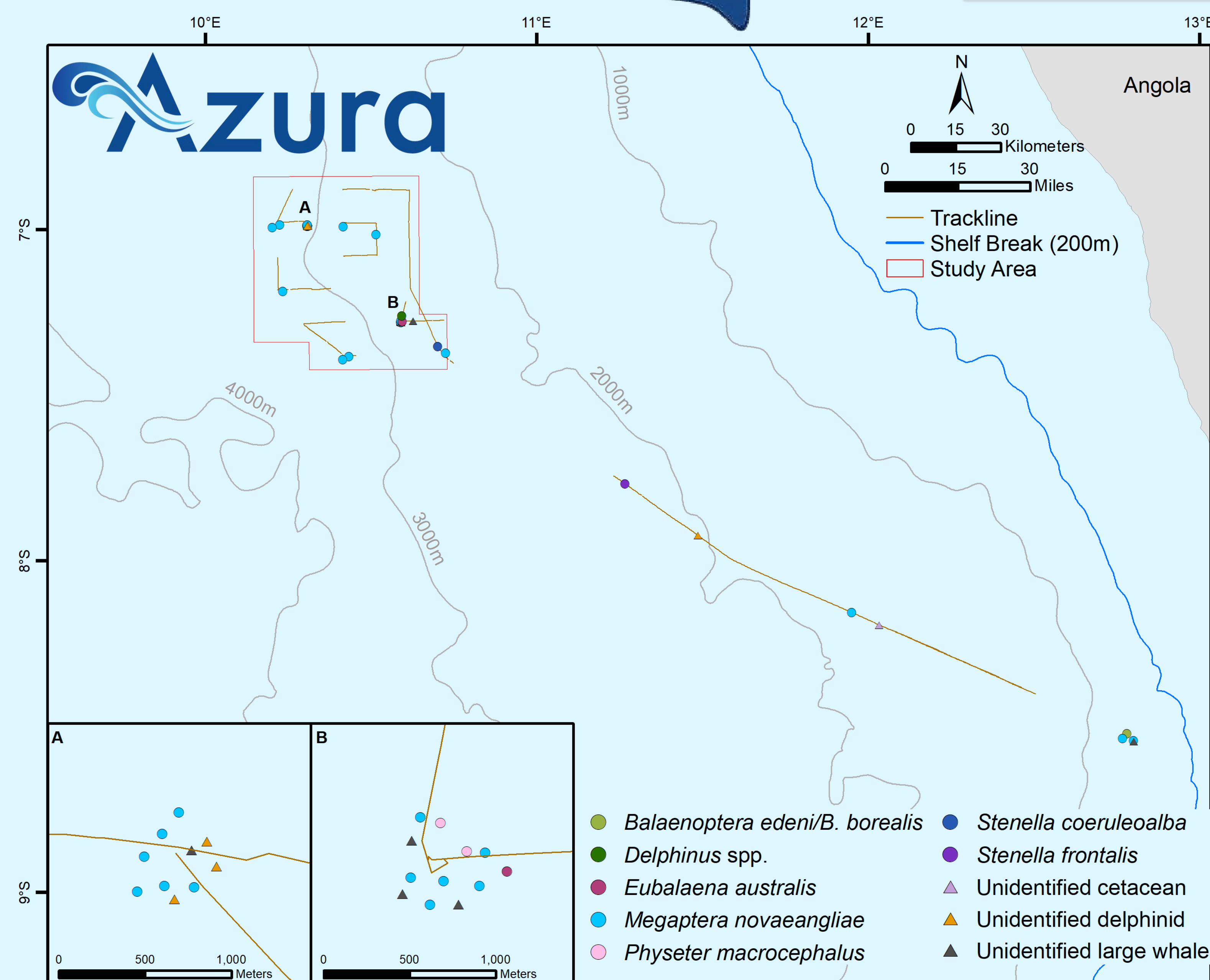
- Shipboard survey:
6-17 September 2018
- Daytime visual observations during transit and benthic sampling (stationary) via 2 observers
- Nighttime passive acoustic monitoring during benthic sampling via C57 hydrophone and TASCAM DR-100mkIII recorder set to a 96-kHz sampling rate at a 24-bit resolution so that both low and high frequency marine mammal vocalizations could be recorded

Results

- 37 cetacean sightings; 5 species
- 62% of sightings were of humpback whales – very active
- Fluke photos of 3 humpbacks (right) were sent to regional catalogs but no matches made
- 2 right whales (possible mother-calf pair) recorded as southern right whales (*Eubalaena australis*) based on the fact that they were sighted south of the equator, and North Atlantic right whales (*E. glacialis*) are not known to move south of the equator in the eastern North Atlantic.¹
- Ultrasonic click bouts and buzzes associated with odontocete vocalizations but not identified to species



This sighting appears to be the first confirmed right whale sighting in Angolan waters since an individual was landed in southern Angola in 1913.^{2,3} Prior to our 2018 sighting, the most recent sighting of a right whale this far north in the eastern Tropical Atlantic was off Gabon at 1°S, 8°30'E on 29 July 1999. This individual was designated as “likely a southern right whale” (New England Aquarium unpublished data).



Acknowledgments: Thanks to Total E&P Angola and Creocan for providing this opportunity to collect critical data on marine megafauna during the benthic surveys.

References: ¹Reeves, R.R. 2001. Overview of catch history, historic abundance and distribution of right whales in the western North Atlantic and in Cintra Bay, West Africa. *Journal of Cetacean Research and Management* (Special Issue 2):187-192.

²Olsen, Ø. 1914. Hvaler og hvalfangst i Sydafrika. *Bergens Museums Aarbok* 15:1-56.

³Best, P.B. and G.J.B. Ross. 1986. Catches of right whales from shore-based establishments in southern Africa, 1792-1975. *Reports of the International Whaling Commission* (Special Issue 10):275-289.

