

A cohort of stakeholders established to collaborate on the protection of biodiversity, and explore solutions to strikes and collisions in the boating sector

INTRODUCTION

Collisions between sailing boats and marine megafauna (including Cetaceans, sharks and Mola mola) can have fatal consequences for marine life, and pose a serious danger to sailors and boats.

Comparing historical data¹ with recent surveys shows a marked increase in the number of global marine strikes with sailing vessels. Approximately 50% of all strikes result² in an injured or dead marine species.

The reason for the increase of strikes over the period 1960 – 2023 can be interpreted as:

1. Historical amnesia – The absence and/or loss of information associated with past events.
2. The worldwide web making global information available after the year 2000+.
3. An increase in the number, and size of high speed sailing vessels capable of over 30 kts, often configured with twin rudders and foils.
4. An increase in the number and scale of sailing events and races.
5. A number of these events sailing through areas of high biodiversity.

These last **three points** are of primary concern.



¹ Including incidents from the International Whaling Commission global ship strikes database
² Reference Marine Strike Log
³ Though possibly the most comprehensive dataset to date of marine strikes from the sailing sector, this is still an incomplete and ongoing work, currently representing but a fraction of the annual strikes caused by sailing vessels.

SAILING & BIODIVERSITY

The growing issue of marine mammal strikes

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HISTORICAL EXAMPLE

May 2016, 14 ocean racers started a return Transatlantic race from New York to France. Within 36 hours of the start, 8 of the boats had experienced 16+ strikes.

Despite significant damage to the trailing edges of the appendages (Keel, rudder, daggerboards) on many of the boats, the absence of any hard impact damage on the leading edge of the appendages indicated ‘soft’ strikes with marine megafauna.

MARINE STRIKE LOG

There is a systemic absence of marine strike reporting from the sailing sector:

1. Given the reputational risk there is a culture of ‘ostrich head in the sand’ saying nothing.
2. The absence of a formal reporting protocol for the sailing sector.
3. Few sailors know about the IWC global strike database, or the fact it is a confidential protocol.

MMAG have collaborated with IWC and other sources including 1:1 interviews with sailors to compile an updated Marine strike log³ for the sailing sector.

HAZARD REPORTING

MMAG implemented a hazard reporting platform for The Ocean Race 2023, enabling ‘LIVE’ reporting of strikes experienced, hazards to be avoided, and citizen science observations

Phase 2 development brings together a broad group of stakeholders from the marine safety and marine mammal sector to establish a global hazard reporting system by 2024. Thereby enabling systemic ‘LIVE’ reporting, informing the Marine strike database, with Geo specific data, providing high resolution information for risk assessments.



Image: 2016 Transatlantic race - Weather routing

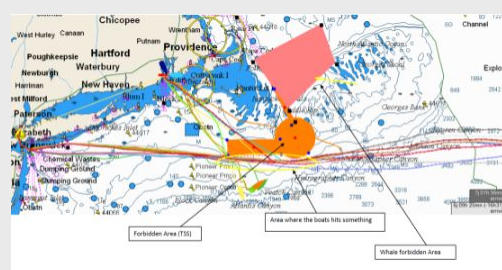


Image: 2016 Transatlantic race - Zone of strikes



Image: Fixing a damaged rudder

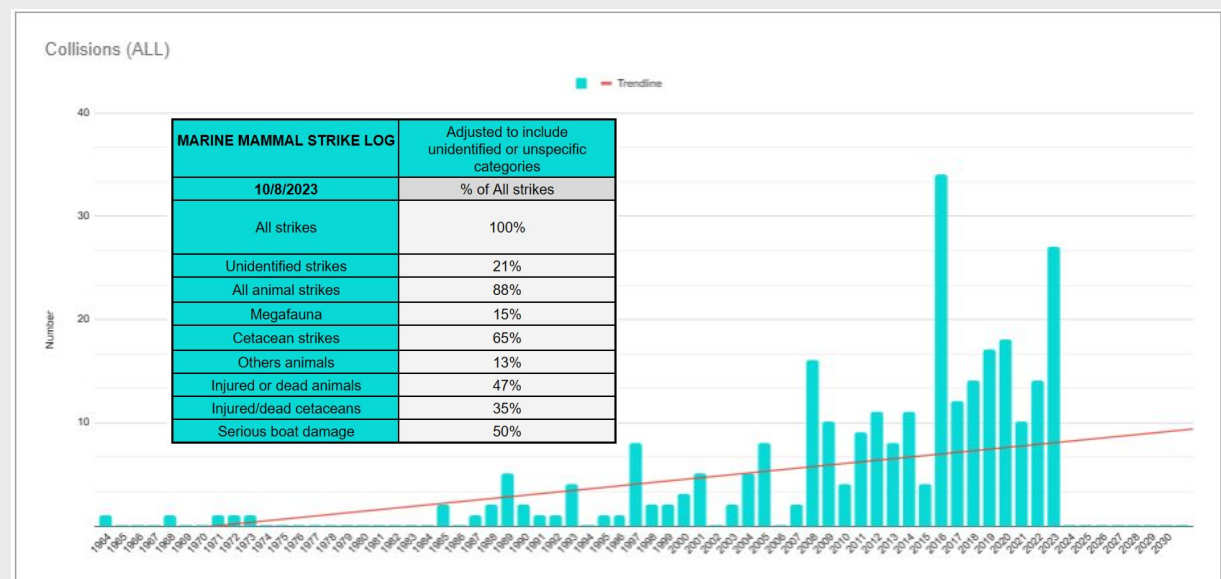


Image: Marine Strike Log extract - Annual marine strikes.
 Inset table - Extrapolated breakdown of marine strike by type

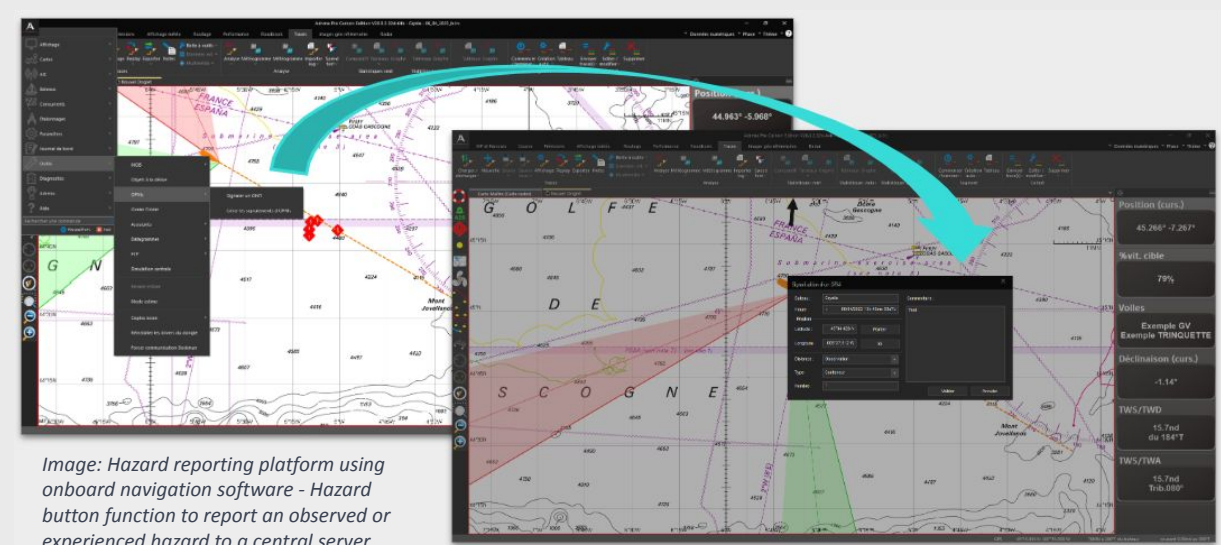


Image: Hazard reporting platform using onboard navigation software - Hazard button function to report an observed or experienced hazard to a central server which is then forwarded on to the fleet on the water.

