



Digestive parasitofauna of a Sowerby's beaked whale (*Mesoplodon bidens*) stranded on the Galician coast

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Saldaña, A.¹, Martínez-Calabuig, N.¹, García-Dios, D.¹, Remesar, S.¹, Díaz, P.¹, López, C. M.¹, Morrondo, P.¹, Díez-Baños, P.¹, Covelo, P.², López, A.^{2,3}, Alemañ, N.⁴, Panadero, R.¹

1. INVESAGA Group, Facultade de Veterinaria, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 27002, Lugo, Spain.
2. CEMMA Coordinadora para o Estudo dos Mamíferos Mariños. Rúa Ceán 2, 36350 Nigrán, Spain.
3. Departamento de Biología & CESAM, Universidade de Aveiro, 3810-193, Aveiro, Portugal.
4. Department of Anatomy, Animal Production and Veterinary Clinical Sciences, Faculty of Veterinary Sciences, University of Santiago de Compostela, 27002, Lugo, Spain.



1. INTRODUCTION

Although they often go unnoticed, parasites are very interesting animals, both on themselves and for their relationship with their host. This becomes even more important when dealing with animals as elusive as the Sowerby's beaked whale (*Mesoplodon bidens*), recorded in Galicia only a few times in the last 30 years.

The **main objective** of this study was to identify the parasites found in the digestive tract of this species.

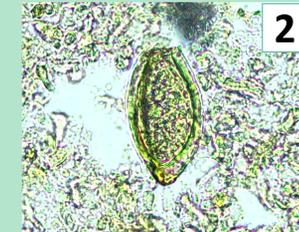
2. MATERIALS & METHODS

On the 20th of October 2022 a moribund beaked whale was found in Xove (Northwestern Spain). It was a *Mesoplodon bidens* juvenile male with a total body length of 450 cm.



After being euthanized, we did the necropsy and examined the organs in search of parasites. We recovered all the parasitic forms and made the morphological classification of the digestive parasites. Fecal samples were analyzed by the sedimentation and sucrose flotation techniques.

3. RESULTS



In the liver, we found calcification of the bile ducts and a total of 31 adult trematodes of the Family Brachycladiidae (**Fig 1**). The flotation turned out negative, but in the sedimentation fluke eggs were observed (**Fig 2**). In the intestine we collected 20 nematodes of the Family Anisakidae (**Fig 3**), 6 acantocephalans of the *Bolbosoma vasculosum* species (**Fig 4**) and 3 tapeworms of the Family Tetrabothriidae (**Fig 5**) that were attached to the intestinal mucosa.

4. CONCLUSION

Beaked whales harbor a wide variety of parasites in their digestive tract, however these are preliminary results, so further molecular studies are needed to fully identify the parasites, as well as to investigate their effect on the host.

Agradecimientos:

