



Distribution and habitat use of common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) in the Northern coast of Continental Portugal

Cláudia Oliveira-Rodrigues^{1,2,*}, Ana Mafalda Correia^{1,2}, Raul Valente^{1,2}, Ágatha Gil^{2,3,4}, Luís Afonso^{1,5}, Marieta Mihova^{1,2}, Isabel Sousa-Pinto^{1,2}

Oliveira-Rodrigues C

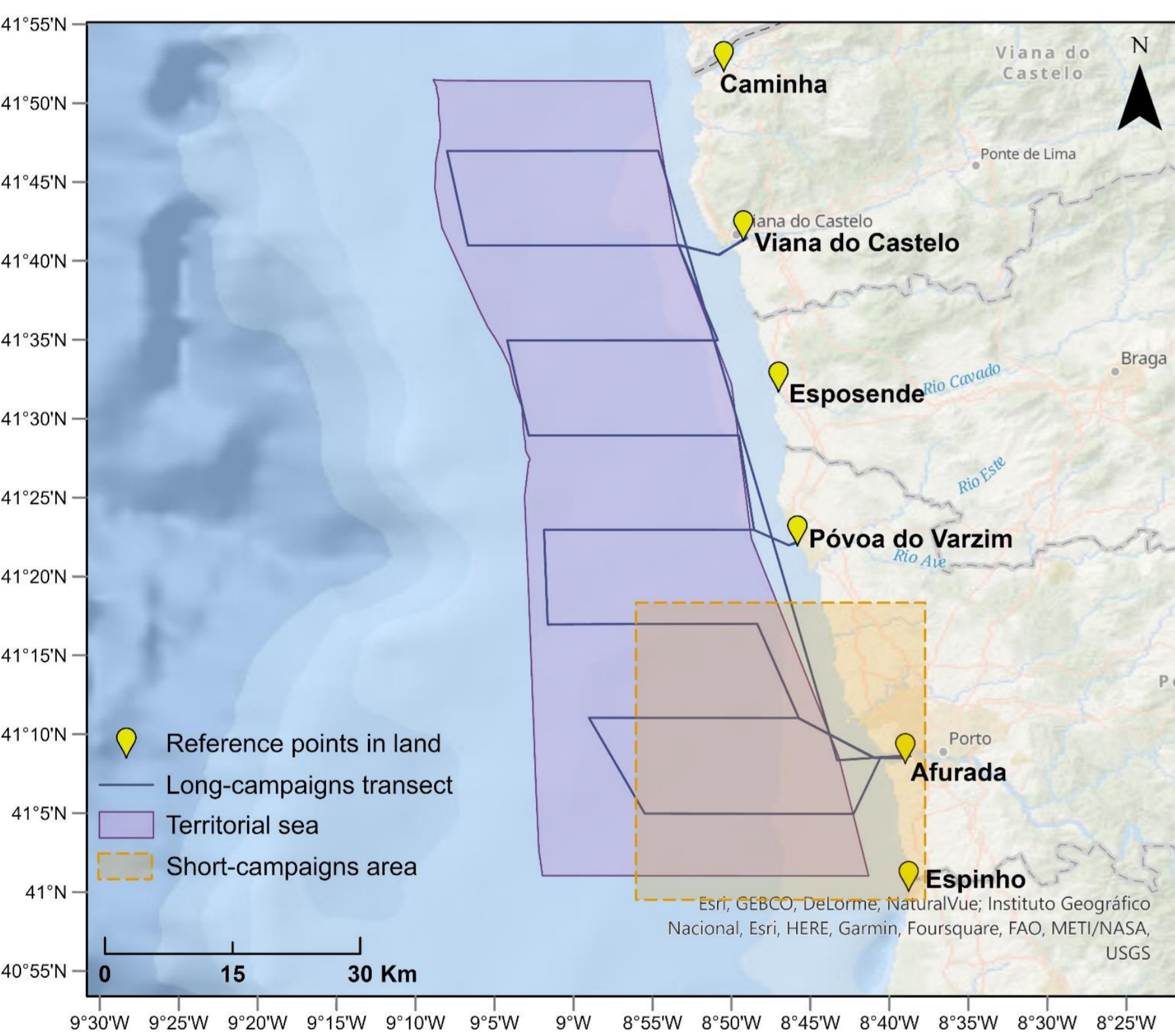
¹CIIMAR. ²FCUP. ³CITAB. ⁴CSIC. ⁵University of Aveiro. | *claudiasofiarodrigues1999@gmail.com

BACKGROUND

The common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) is the most abundant cetacean species in Portugal, however, its ecology in the Northern Continental Portuguese waters is poorly studied. Year-round surveys are essential to assess the distribution, seasonality and habitat use of common dolphins in the region.

METHODS

Under the ATLANTIDA Project, at-sea surveys are being carried out for dedicated cetacean monitoring, covering the area from Espinho to Caminha (Portugal) up to 12 nautical miles offshore.



Here, we focused on data collected from *D. delphis*, more specifically:

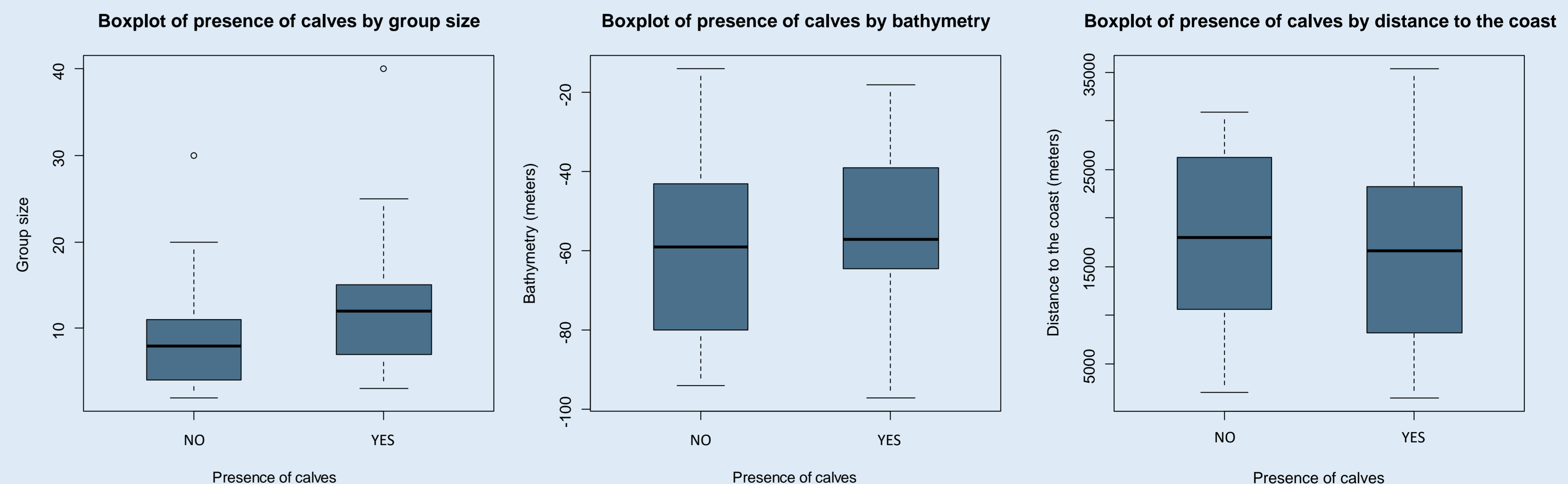
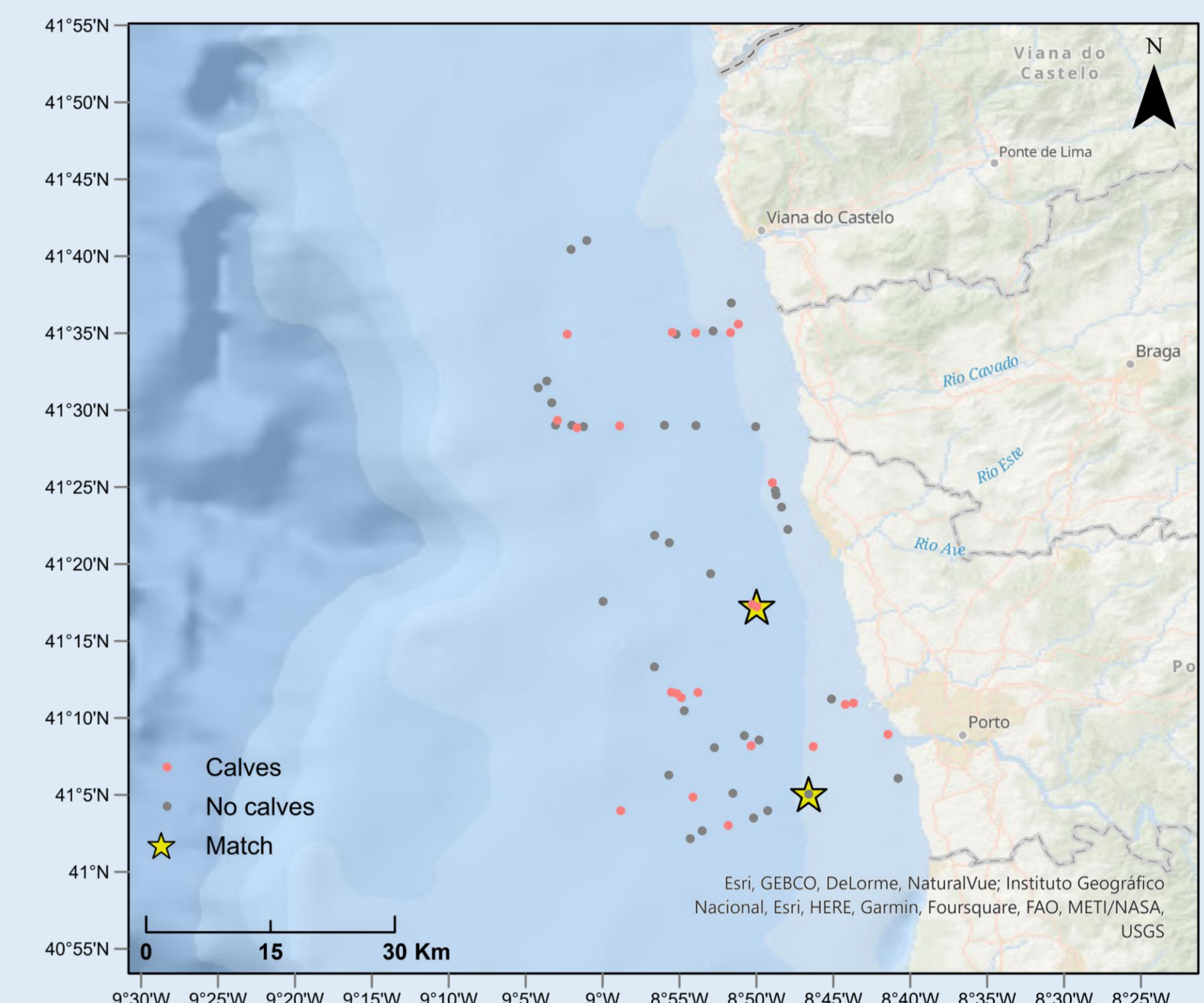


RESULTS



*SPUE: sightings per surveys, by season

- *D. delphis* occurrence data was collected between June 2021 and September 2022.
- In total, we had 59 encounters with higher SPUE between July and September.
- Group size ranged from 2 to 40 individuals with an average of 10 individuals per group.
- With photo-ID techniques, we have identified one re-sighting (between March and August 2022).



- We have recorded several mother-calf pairs year-round, with the presence of calves in **39% of the sightings**.
- Overall, calves occurred in larger groups, in less deep areas and slightly closer to the coast.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

These results suggest that the Northern coast of Continental Portugal is an important breeding area with some degree of residency for common dolphins on the Iberian coast. Further dedicated monitoring is needed to track changes in distribution patterns over space and time and identify potential threats to populations.