Moving in concert: Social and migratory behaviour of dolphins and whales in the North Atlantic Ocean

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Citation for published version (APA):
Acknowledgements

Those of you wondering about how one could end up with a PhD like mine, I will take back a couple of years to one of those birthdays on a Sunday afternoon where it is customary for Dutch families to gather around a small table laced with pairs of apple pies and coffee cups, themselves neatly organised around the sugar bowl. Our family was slightly different in respect to most others, in that my grandmother used to bring all the newspaper clippings she deemed relevant for specific members of her clan, collected over the interval since the last birthday. One of those, describing dolphin research in the Azores, had my name on it and marked the beginning of my research into whale behaviour, and later, this PhD.

It turned out later that ‘uncustomary’ would not only apply to the starting point of my thesis, but would typify its full trajectory (if you lacked a rode draad in this thesis: here it is). Finalising it would therefore never have been possible without the inventiveness, flexibility, patience and support of the many people that have contributed along the way.

Thank you all very much, what a great time!

If you enjoy looking for the resemblance between dogs and their owners, you may have noticed the migratory pathway of this thesis, northbound, not unworthy of a baleen whale, and the presence of many long-term stable associations, essential also to social cetaceans. I am very grateful to my supervisors, Jef and Graham, who have provided knowledge and guidance from day one, to a project outside of their direct area of expertise, outside of regular trajectories and to a PhD-student who was mostly out of the country. Jef, I have greatly enjoyed learning from your highly inventive scientific mind, your precision, and from our chocolate-laden manuscript-writing sessions (they will be dearly missed). Graham, you have provided key support at many essential stages of this project, from accepting me as an external PhD-student, to finding creative funding opportunities (in Greece!), collaborators and statistical solutions. Thank you for your many insights, and for providing support whenever it was needed.
The migration from the Azores to Norway was initiated by Kees den Hollander, who decided to make me part of his team to study the behaviour of terrorists, unknowingly opening the door to cetacean research in the Arctic. Kees, thank you for inventing this highly creative match of research topics. I have greatly enjoyed our cooperation and look forward to seeing you again in the field. Frans-Peter Lam, Jim Eckman, René Dekeling and Mike Weise, this part of the project also would not have commenced and succeeded without your dedicated (and creative) support. Thank you for your enthusiasm, and your willingness to cross some unexpected hurdles.

Dear members of the 3S project – so many of you! Our time during the research cruises has been such a pleasure, whether it was spent bobbing around on a small rhib, accompanying old sailors on the Strønstad, or enjoying the bounty of Sverdrup. I have greatly enjoyed working with all of you, and made many new friends along the way. Thank you for making such great memories, and I hope to make more in the future! Peter, I can not thank you enough for your confidence and support; it has opened many new doors and research opportunities. Petter and Patrick, thank you for sharing your scientific minds, and for accepting me as a ‘rogue’ post-doc in the 3S Project. I have learnt a lot from both of you, and I would be very happy to continue our collaboration. Thank you Brandon, and everybody at SOCAL for making me part of your project, it has been very inspiring, and fun.

To all my colleagues at the university of Amsterdam I probably owe an apology for being a not too ‘gezellige’ colleague who was usually not around. However, it never felt that way! It was very special to be able to come back after a couple of months and immediately feel like part of the group again. Thank you, also, for sitting through presentations which had very little to do with your own research - and making useful comments - and for being such great colleagues for over the past ten years. I will certainly miss being around. My new colleagues at Leiden University, especially Hans and Carel, I am very happy to have become part of your group. Thank you for all the new insights from the world of birds and fish. Mark, Sander en Sander, thanks for all the great times we had at TNO. Thonie, I have greatly enjoyed all our TNO roof-top chats about biology and the future. I also want to thank all my students who have assisted in the fieldwork and data analysis over the years. You all know it is not only ‘fun’
to look at dolphins (well, actually it is 😊), but may also entail long hours spent behind binoculars while trying to keep the tent from blowing off the cliff, or entering data on a computer on a small boat while being sea-sick; rain or no rain. It was great to have you as part of the team, thank you for your enthusiasm and I hope to see you on the water in the future!

Lieve papa, mama. Bedankt voor alle steun en vrolijkheid, ongeacht welk plan er nu weer op tafel lag. Er was altijd een thuis, met het lekkerste eten en een warm bad, precies wat ik nodig had! Lieve Loes, bedankt dat je zo’n fantastische zus bent, er zijn weinig mensen met wie je zo goed zo veel thee kunt drinken en met een garderobe waar voor elke presentatie de perfecte outfit uit tevoorschijn getoverd kan worden. Bar, Suus, Daan, Mieke, Marijne, Ente, Nicolette en Derk, mijn geweldige vrienden, er zijn te veel dingen om jullie voor te bedanken. Het is altijd een feest om weer thuis te komen en avonturen uit te wisselen (en natuurlijk om de groeispurten van de nieuwe generatie te bewonderen). Zonder jullie goede raad en hilarische emails was al die tijd op een zwarte rots waarschijnlijk veel minder goed afgelopen. Bar en Suus, ik had me natuurlijk geen betere paranimfen kunnen wensen. Daan, bedankt voor alle statistische adviezen, ik hoop dat we nog lang door blijven discussiëren! Charlotte, Ricardo, Lise, Paul, Christian, Charlotte, Erin, Katy, Lars and Ruth, it has been such a pleasure to find new friends along the way, I hope to see you all very often in the future! Aan mijn familie en de familie Oudejans, bedankt voor alle enthousiasme en steun -van het adopteren van Risso’s tot het opslaan van de inboedel- en voor alle goede feestjes! Lieve Machiel, je was er altijd. Met elke ochtend een kopje koffie en ontbijt om me op tijd op mijn werk te krijgen... Wellicht is dit eindelijk het eind van ons nomadenbestaan, tijd om een huis te gaan opknappen in je geliefde Ierland!