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Ethogram of selected behaviors initiated by free- ranging short- finned pilot whales (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*) and directed to human swimmers during open water encounters

Michael Scheer*, Bianka Hofmann and Itay P. Behr

easi GbR, Project easi Cetacean Field Studies

*Author for correspondence:

mscheer@uni- bremen.de

Abstract

In order to establish an ethogram of interactive behaviors initiated by free- ranging short- finned pilot whales (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*) and directed to human swimmers, we initiated encounters with non- habituated pilot whale groups during open water encounters southwest of Tenerife, Canary Islands, over two field seasons (1996 and 2001). Human swimmers followed a precautionary set of rules during approaches. Encounter durations ranged from 3- 44 min (mean 14.14 ± SD 7.62 min; n = 35). We describe 11 interactive behaviors and compare them with previously described interactive behaviors reported in the scientific literature on the same and other toothed whale species. In contrast to other researchers focusing on reports of aggressive behaviors initiated by free- ranging as well as captive short- finned pilot whales, we observed with one exception (,headshake') apparently affiliative and non- aggressive behaviors during this study. Several interactive behaviors were found to match descriptions from other researchers observing the same as well as other toothed whale species. During this study swimmers behaved carefully and swimmer number was low. We do not know how pilot whales might react when swimmers behave less careful (e.g. initiate contact which we strongly recommend to avoid) and/or far more people are in the water.

Keywords

ethogram, *Globicephala macrorhynchus*, human- dolphin interactions, short- finned pilot whales, whale- watching