Karen Fox, *Ovid's Orcastrated Exile*

University of Leeds, ll13kf@leeds.ac.uk

The Fishue

(Figure 1. A map of the Black Sea and the Bosporus Strait connecting it to the Mediterranean Sea, the Greek colonies are labelled. Available from: https://oxfordre.com/classics/page/3991)

In exile, Ovid wrote the *Tristia,* meaning 'sadness' in Latin. The experience of exile on the Black Sea Coast is told through five books of poetry that he wrote for his audience in Rome. Ovid Specifically refers to the climate, the weather, and an animal in the Black Sea region in *Tristia* 3. 10. 43-44:

tum neque se pandi possunt delphines in auras tollere; conantes dura coërcet hiems;

[At such times the curving dolphins cannot launch themselves into the air; if they try, stern winter checks them;]

The mention of dolphins in this line of the *Tristia*, is not unsurprising considering that the dolphins that inhabit the Black Sea have no known predators and therefore, the cetaceans dominate the food chain. The Black Sea will have been, and continues to be, a relatively safe space for their species.[1] The interesting aspect of this line stems from Ovid's comment on the dolphins not jumping out of the water, a behaviour known as breaching, surfacing behaviour or porpoising, and if they do try, the climate prevents them.[2] I propose that Ovid's use of the dolphin in this paratactic line, is reflective of an observation of the different species of cetacean in the Black Sea and I will demonstrate this by exploring the characteristics, behaviours, and the habitats of the Bottlenose, Common Dolphin and Harbour Porpoise. I will show that by ecocritically evaluating this line, a specific subspecies of Cetacean was first recorded in Ovid's Tristia.

The Dolfins

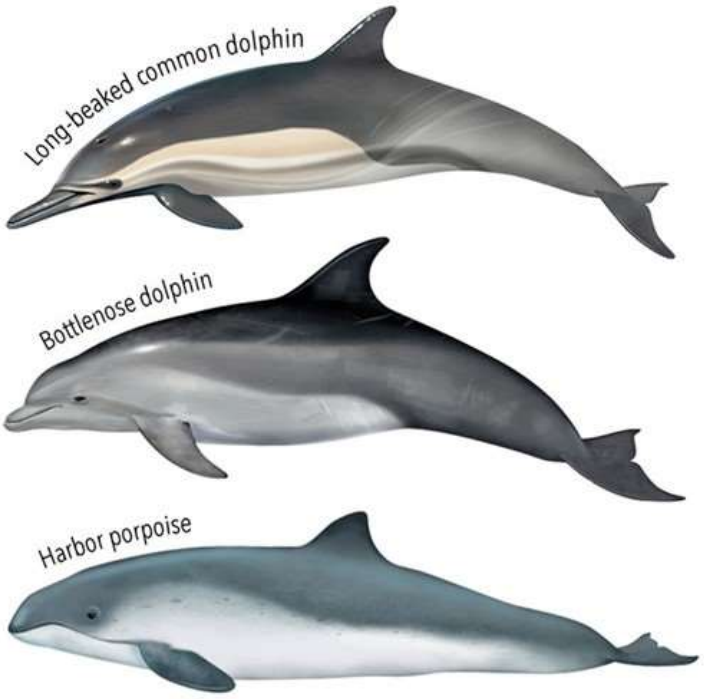
The Common Dolphin (*Delphinus Delphis* [**DD**]) is one of the most recognised dolphins in the Black Sea. The Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops Truncatus* [**TT**]) also appears in large numbers as does the Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena Phocoena* [**PP**]).[3] Although the latter is not technically a dolphin, the difference between a dolphin and a porpoise is in their

[1] Sanchez et al 2017: 217-218. A Shark was once introduced to the Black Sea but due to the high salinity levels it very quickly left.

[2] Hunt 2017: Online.

[3] ACCOBAMS 2021: 14; Birkun Jr et al. 2014: 288-289 who estimates cetaceans that occupy the numbers to be somewhere in the range of 200,000 and 600,000 from a number of surveys conducted with different methods.

appearance as ‘dolphins have longer snouts, bigger mouths, more curved dorsal fins, and longer, leaner bodies than porpoises’. [4] Figure 2 shows the differences in features among all three cetaceans, and they are distinctive differences, but they do look very similar to the untrained, or indeed the uninterested, eye. The DD has a unique yellow stripe that starts at its melon,[5] and runs down the sides of its body. The TT is recognised generally through its falcate dorsal fin and is coloured grey to black with a light underside.[6] The PP objectively looks very similar in colouring to the TT, but it is seemingly less lean without the defined dolphin rostrum,[7] and as mentioned earlier, this is why the PP is not classed as a dolphin.



(Figure 2. An illustration of the three cetaceans that inhabit the Black Sea demonstrating their

[4] WWF 2022: Online

[5] The protruding part of a dolphin’s head.

[6] Wursig and Perrin 2009: 250

[7] Coming from the Latin to mean beak. The rostrum is sensitive and is used by dolphins to feel objects.

different physical characteristics. Available from: Rurik 2020 https://keypennews.org/stories/dolphin-pays-a-rare-visit-to-the-kp,3605)

TenanSea

The DD's preferred habitat covers the entire Black Sea, its Bosporus strait, and the Marmara Sea and while this may, at first glance, seem to cover all the Seas in the Pontic region, the DD does not go into the Sea of Azov located in the upper northeast part of the Black Sea.[8] The TT is similar in geographical population to that of the DD except it has been known to populate the Kerch strait that leads to the Azov Sea.[9] PP, however, has been known to populate all known areas of the Black Sea, the connecting straits, the Azov and Marmara Sea, the North Aegean.[10] While all three Cetaceans have been sighted in quite broad geographical areas, PP has more area coverage than the dolphins indicating that they are more readily adaptable to populate the Black Sea and its connecting marine topographies as seen in Figure 3 above. Nevertheless, the likelihood of which cetacean are spotted can be narrowed down further as they have certain habitat preferences. The DD has a principal habitat of open sea which is more than 200m deep,[11] and this is further evidenced by the low recordings of DD stranding off the Bulgarian coast.[12] Whereas the TT and the PP prefer the 'circumlittoral area

[8] Birkun Jr et al. 2014: 132

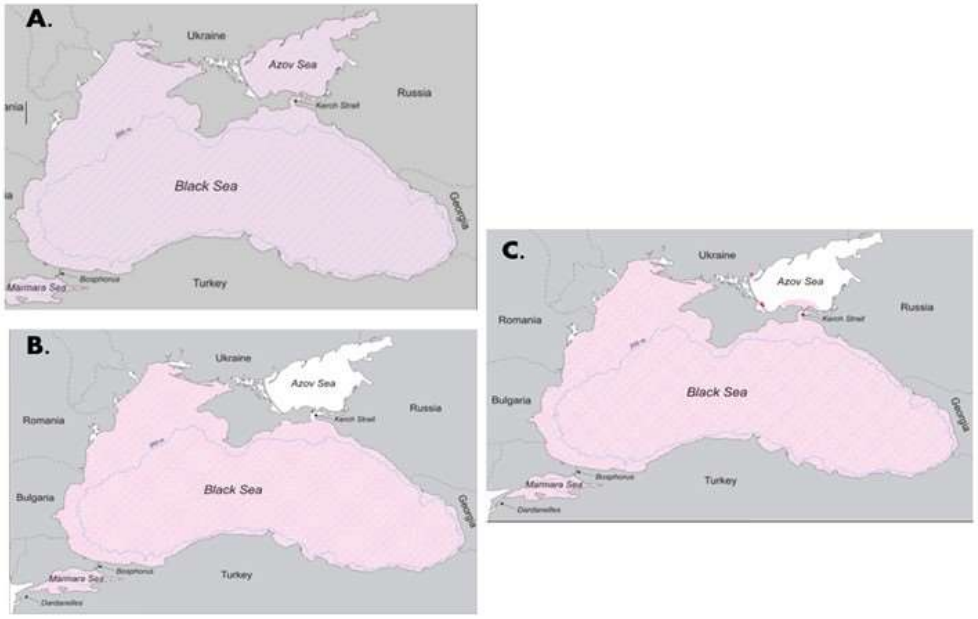
[9] Birkun Jr et al. 2014: 137

[10] Birkun Jr et al. 2014: 128

[11] Birkun Jr et al. 2014: 132; Sánchez-Cabanes et al. 2017

[12] Raykov and Panayotova 2012: 1824 who state there was only three sightings of this from 2006-2010.

over the continental shelf (usually more than 6 m but less than 200 m deep)'.[13] Coupled with the PP's preference for the shallow shore side of the sea over the straits, it has been known to enjoy fluvial and estuarine environments, and seeks out brackish waters and lagoons visiting rivers at warmer times of the year.[14]



(Figure 3. A habitat map detailing the common areas the three cetaceans of the Black Sea have been known to occupy. Map A shows the geographical range of the Harbour Porpoise; Map B for the Common Dolphin; Map C for the Bottlenose Dolphin. Available from: Birkun Jr et al. 2014)

The habitat preferences of the Cetaceans can vary depending on migration and breeding patterns. As the DD prefers deeper waters, their migration patterns tend to be either in or out of the Black Sea with no seasonal consistency. The TT has been observed to seasonally migrate towards the Bosporus Strait and the southern sea area during the colder months and Uluduz et al noted in his study in 2020, that during winter no

[13] Birkun Jr et al. 2014: 138;.128; Reeves and Notarbartolo di Sciara 2006; Uluduz et al. 2020

[14] Birkun Jr et al. 2014: 128

TT calves were sighted on the southern black Sea littoral.[15] Contrastingly, the PP cetacean had the highest number of calves spotted during the winter months as seen below in figure 4.[16] This indicates a high level of activity from the PP during winter on the littoral of the Black Sea.

Season	*Phocoena phocoena*		*Tursiops truncatus*		*Delphinus delphis*	
	Calf	Juvenile*	Calf	Juvenile	Calf	Juvenile
Winter	5	NA	0	3	0	1
Spring	4	NA	7	3	1	0
Summer	2	NA	3	2	4	0
Autumn	0	NA	0	4	0	0

(Figure 4. Number of sightings of young animals during the land-based observations. * Only one category of young animals (calves) was recorded for the harbour porpoise because the remaining age categories are difficult to distinguish reliably from the shore. Available from: Uluduz et al. 2020 p.435)

To Sea, Or Not Too Sea

Behaviourally, all three of the Cetaceans do display some degree of surfacing behaviour, which is why aerial and vessel surveys are the favoured, and the recommended, method of observation in the majority of population studies and censuses.[17] The DD can breach the water, but much prefers the agility involved in acrobatic bow rides,[18] and can usually be found doing this alongside vessel surveys which makes them somewhat

[15] Uluduz et al. 2020: 435

[16] Uluduz et al. 2020: 435

[17] ACCOBAMS 2021:7-11; Birkun Jr et al. 2014 :144 for details of the methods used on the largest scale surveys.

[18] This is where the dolphin will ride alongside a vessel and start jumping at the front. They appear to swim in line with the bow of the vessel to perform in this way.

harder to count.[19] The TT fully breaches the water and in the first study of its kind, Lusseau 2006 looks at why they do and concludes that it is a combination of non-vocal communication and a feeding patterns,[20] but this conclusion does not take into consideration the full scope of theories in place for the TT breaches such as the suggestion of ectoparasite removal, simply play behaviour and the ironic, human observation.[21] Crucially, the PP does not breach the water at all.[22] The PP is extremely shy and while it may exhibit a behaviour known as 'porpoising', in which the porpoise breaks its head above the water,[23] it never fully breaches the water. This may be because of the preferred habitat of the PP is shallow waters, lagoons and rivers which would not be able to accommodate the force of impact a full breach would cause.[24]

Fin

The PP's preference for these shallow areas for habitat and breeding, especially during the winter months, indicate that this cetacean would have been the animal Ovid is referencing in line 44. This is further enhanced by the geographical positioning of Tomis as seen in figure 1, which is mainly a

[19] Wursig and Perrin 2009: 10; 256.

[20] Lusseau 2006 :263, Lusseau states that this non-verbal communication is used as a defensive measure against prey but as the dolphin has a limited number of prey and is at the top of the food chain in the Black Sea, this does not encompass all the reasons they may breach the water.

[21] Wursig and Perrin 2009: 6 &10. Wursig and Perrin explain that there are a multitude of reasons for breaching that are hard to define into a simple cause and reason. The reason for the human observation being ironic is that by breaching the water, humans can, in turn, observe the dolphins by their breaching.

[22] Breach in this context is defined as at least 50% of the dolphin leaving the water.

[23] NOAA 2022 : Online explains that this is much different to the way the dolphins break the water as the Harbour Porpoise only touches the surface to breathe and this can be heard more than seen.

[24] NOAA 2022 : Online states that the Harbour Porpoise is more likely to roll on the surface of the water rather than break and splash on the water.

coastal town that is south of the Danube River and has many inlets surrounding the town from the Danube to the Black Sea. These shallow, oxygenated areas of connection across land would have been the first to freeze during the winter months and this, in combination with the breeding activity observed from Uluduz et al. 2020 in the same season, and the behavioural trait that the PP does not breach the water, provides strong evidence that Ovid was observing the behaviour of the Harbour Porpoise, not a dolphin. It is a logical conclusion for Ovid to state, with the high activity of the Porpoise during this time, that the reason the assumed dolphin is not demonstrating breaching, a characteristic associated with dolphin behaviour, is due to ice forming in the water. It does not seem reasonable for a poet to be able to distinguish that this is a different animal altogether from the dolphin and furthermore, the assumed dolphins' behaviour promotes, and further enhances, his argument in this section of the *Tristia*; that it is too cold to be authentic to one's nature and one cannot exist as one is meant to in the environmental conditions of Tomis.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Ovid. Tristia. Ex Ponto. tr. L., W.A. 1924. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Secondary Sources

ACCOBAMS. 2021. *Estimates of abundance and distribution of cetaceans in the Black Sea from 2019 surveys.* Monaco: ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative/CeNoBS Projects. pp.4-52.

Birkun Jr, A., Northridge, S., Willsteed, E., James, F., Kilgour, C., Lander, M. and Fitzgerald, G. 2014. *Studies for Carrying Out the Common Fisheries Policy: Adverse Fisheries Impacts on Cetacean Populations in the Black Sea. Final report to the European Commission, Brussels, 347p.* . Project.

Hunt, N. 2017. *Making a splash- Why do Ceteceans Breach?* [Online]. [Accessed 09 May 2022]. Available from: https://www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk/making-a-splash-why-do-cetaceans-breach/

Lusseau, D. 2006. Why do dolphins jump? Interpreting the behavioural repertoire of bottlenose dolphins (Tursiops sp.) in Doubtful Sound, New Zealand. *Behavioural Processes.* **73**(3), pp.257-265.

NOAA. 2022. *Harbor Porpoise.* [Online]. [Accessed 11 July 2022]. Available from: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/harbor-porpoise

Raykov, V.S. and Panayotova, M. 2012. Cetacean sightings of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast over the period 2006-2010. *J. Environ. Prot. Ecol.* **13**, pp.1824-1835.

Reeves, R. and Notarbartolo di Sciara, G. 2006. The Status and Distribution of Cetaceans in the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea: Workshop Report-Monaco 5-7 March 2006.

Sánchez-Cabanes, A., Nimak-Wood, M., Harris, N. and de Stephanis, R. 2017. Habitat preferences among three top predators inhabiting a degraded ecosystem, the Black Sea. *Scientia Marina.* **81**(2), pp.217-227.

Uluduz, N., Yanchukov, A. and Sözen, M. 2020. Seasonal dynamics of occurrence and group size of three species of cetaceans (Delphinidae and Phocoenidae) on the southwestern coast of the Black Sea. *Scientia Marina.* **84**(4), pp.431-439.

Wursig, B. and Perrin, W.F. 2009. *Encyclopedia of marine mammals.* Academic Press.

WWF. 2022. *Dolphins and Porpoises.* [Online]. [Accessed 15/06/2022]. Available from: https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/dolphins-and-porpoises#:~:text=All%20are%20air%2Dbreathing%2C%20warm,longer%2C%20leaner%20bodies%20than%20porpoises.

Copyright and Licensing Terms

ISSN: 2754-2408