

VIGIA  
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June'16

NEWSLETTER

  
museudabaleia  
CANIÇAL | MADEIRA

museology

Object of the month: Cutting Spade.

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Short Fined Pilot Whales in the Madeiran seas.

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# museology

## OBJECT OF THE MONTH



The cutting spade, or “espeiro” how it was called by whalers, was a tool used to butcher sperm whales. It consisted of a cutting blade and a long wood cable, whose usefulness was known in the butchering platform, where the different animal body tissues were taken apart in order to maximize the processing and extraction of these animal's products.

**Denominação**

Cutting Spade

**Material**

Iron

**Property**

Madeira Whale Museum

**Inventory number**

MBM0036

**Location**

Madeira Whale Museum

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# history

## The daily life of whalers

Hunting large cetaceans, like the sperm whale, was not an easy job. After many hours of labor at sea and after the animals being captured, they were towed to the fabric, in Caniçal, where they were prepared for dismantling. The dismantling process began although that it doesn't present a dangerous job as whaling did.



Whalers, even though tired of the many hours at sea, had to continue their job in land, since only this way they could take maximum advantage of the hunted animals and provide for the many of Caniçal's families. The animals were hooked by a large steam winch through a ramp that led them to the slaughtering platform. There, the animal was dismantled with help of smaller winches and cutting spades, how it was known among whalers.

This tool was fundamental in the dismantling process, because of the cutting blade it possesses allowed the separation of the many body tissues of the sperm whale, enabling the full profit of the products extracted from these animals.

The whaling profession was hard and the resting time was little. Killing a whale is followed by the butchering, without stipulated scheduled. The journey started with the first daylight hours and prolonged sometimes until dawn.

## Short Finned Pilot Whales in the Madeiran seas

After 12 years of studies done by the Madeira Whale Museum (MBM), we know a lot more about the life of the pilot whales in the Madeiran seas. From the data analyses of the nautical censuses and photo-identification, we concluded that, in average, about 350 animals use the costal waters of Madeira. About half of these animals use this waters regularly and are associated to the islands.

A substantial part the Short-finned Pilot Whales are passers-by, doing large dislocations in the Atlantic ocean, moving, possibly, from Madeira do Canarias, to the offshore waters of Portugal mainland and others stops.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Short-finned Pilot Whales have been spotted in the costal waters surrounding the Madeiran archipelago, mostly between 1000 and 2500 meters of depth, with a greater preference for the south, southeast and northeast of Madeira (Figure 1).

This specie uses this waters for socialization, resting, feeding and reproduction. The Short-finned Pilot Whale is one of the cetacean species target of the whale and dolphin spotting and their principal distribution is in the south cost of Madeira, where they become more vulnerable to anthropogenic impacts.

# education

## Marine Pollution

Marine pollution is a problem that affects not only the marine life but also mankind. Recent studies by The Madeira Whale Museum in the scope of the CETACEOSMADEIRAII project (2009-2013) allowed the identification of plastics as the main common garbage at the sea, representing 65% of the total founded garbage. Besides the high quantity of plastic, the situation is aggravated due to their high durability at sea, which may result, in the case of a simple plastic bottle, the reach of 450 years and in the case of fishing lines up to 650 years.



This problem has inspired the development of educational activities that sensitizes students and involves them in its resolution. Between the several initiatives, we highlight the cleaning activities of Machico's beaches.



So, we counted with the collaboration of teachers and students of Porto da Cruz EB1,2,3, Machico's Secondary school and in Caniçal the Madeira Whale Museum counted with the collaboration of Caniçal's EB1/PE, Caniçal's EB2,3 and with the Day Center.

Everyone participation in problem resolution is a value to the environment and must be instilled in all ages.