

Summary of research activities carried out by the IFCN, IP-RAM on board of the Yersin, 28-31 August 2017: Location and characterization of the caves with interest for the monk seals in Madeira in the scope of the LIFE Madeira Monk Seal Project

IFCN team: Rosa Pires, Técnica Superior and Sérgio Pereira, Nature Warden

Sucubadiving was supported by Pedro Vasconcelos.

Navigation on the semi-rigid inflatable boat was conducted by the Yersin crew.

Objective

The work done within the support of the Monaco Explorations makes part of one of the preparatory actions of the LIFE Madeira monk Seal project.

The objective it is to identify and characterize submarine caves that have potential to be used by monk seals – caves that conduct to beaches or air cameras where monk seals can rest or breed, in order to know better the habitat use by this species in Madeira and Desertas islands.

Method

From 28 to 30 august the north coast of Madeira was inventoried, from Ponta do Pargo to Ponta do Espigão Amarelo, located at Ponta de São Lourenço. First navigating close to the coast line within a semi-rigid inflatable boat to check for any areas where the coastline could have conditions to present caves – rocky coastline. In this areas navigation underwater it was made by two people with the support of scooters. Since the areas where not deeper than 5 m this work it was done by apnea.

The work was not continued due to the strong marine agitation that began to increase in the north coast. So it was decided to move to Desertas Islands in order to do same job in the east coast , but also there the sea conditions did not allow to do it.

In another mission the west coast of Desertas, was already inventoried. During this inventory it was marked a cave, near Pedregal, to be visited in the future. So, having favourable sea conditions in the west coast, this cave was visited on the 31 august by

scuba divers (Pedro Vasconcelos and Sérgio Pereira) that were well equipped with strong lights to illuminate and cameras to document the cave.

Results

Madeira

Much of the coast consists of long and narrow pebble beaches. There are some rocky tips where the navigation it was made underwater by scooter – at Porto Moniz, Ponta do Poiso, Muralha do Arco, Ponta de São Jorge, Ponta do Clérigo e Ponta do Espigão Amarelo.

Some holes and caves were detected in these tips, but after entering on them it was confirmed that they did not presented any beach or air camera and were considered to be without interest. In Seixal a cave with a long corridor on the 6m depth was detected and needs to be visited by scuba divers to confirm if is or not of interest.

Desertas

On the Desertas, the visit of the cave allowed to confirm that has no conditions to be used by monk seals - there is no beach or air camera.