

## Fishery closure in French waters during winter 2024



Common dolphin, Belle-Ile en Mer, 30/12/2023 ©RNE

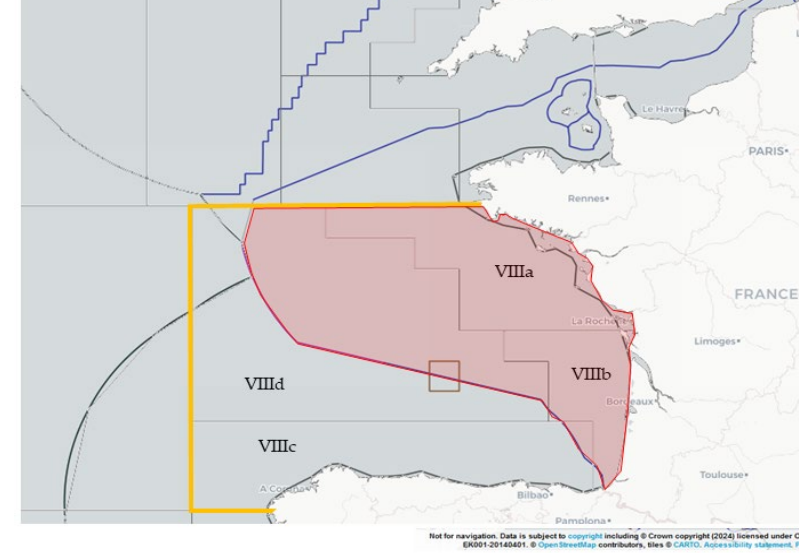
- H. Peltier, M. Authier, W. Dabin, C. Dars, F. Demaret, Meheust E., Mendez-Fernandez, O. Van Canneyt, S. Wund, J. Spitz

# Previously, in the Bay of Biscay...

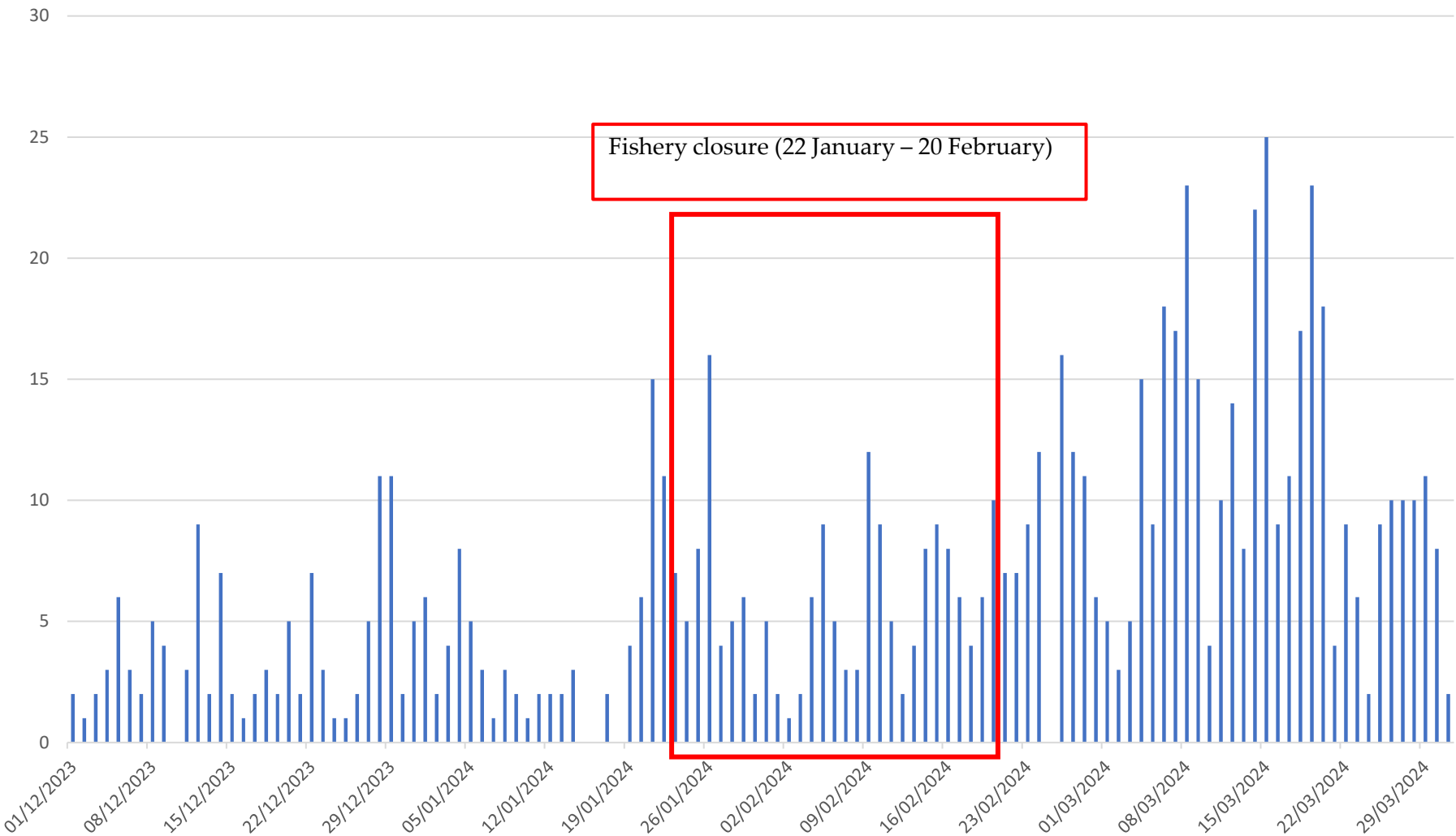
- High levels of winter strandings of common dolphins in the Bay of Biscay (France), especially since 2017
- Infringement procedure underway with the European Commission (failure to comply with the Habitat Directive) since 2020
- Several decrees to reduce bycatch contested alternatively by the fishing industry and NGOs
- The latest decree imposed 1-month fishing closure for high-risk gears, but many exceptions. Derogations annulled in December 2023 by the Council of State, following a referral from NGOs.

# The order concerns:

- ICES VIII abcd
- Vessels >8m: OTM, PTM, PTB, GNS, GTR, PS
- The use of the gear identified [above] is prohibited in the Bay of Biscay from January 22 to February 20 inclusive for the years 2024 to 2026.
- French waters, all flags (emergency measures of the Common Fisheries Policy)
- Financial compensation



# Strandings during winter 2024



Common dolphin stranded alive, L'Epine, 21/01/2024 ©RNE

Strandings of small cetaceans along the French Atlantic coasts during winter 2024 (*Delphinus delphis*, *Stenella coeruleoalba*, *Phocoena phocoena*, *Tursiops truncatus*, *delphinids* sp)

# Strandings during winter 2024

## 1 December 2023 – 31 March 2024



Common dolphin stranded alive, L'Epine, 21/01/2024  
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Table 1 : Summary of strandings of small cetaceans and common dolphins during the winter period (01/12/2023 to 31/03/2024). The column containing all cetaceans also includes live stranded individuals. Strandings with bycatch evidence are counted from dead animals only.

Winter 2024	Small cetaceans		Common dolphins	
	All	Dead	All	Dead
Strandings Atlantique + Channel	938	851	693	624
Strandings South 48°N	653	611	470	435
Strandings North 48°N	285	240	223	189
Strandings bycatch evidence Atlantique + Channel		186		176
Strandings bycatch evidence South 48°N		140		131
Strandings bycatch evidence North 48°N		46		45

# Strandings during fishery closure 2024

## 22 January 2024 – 22 February 2024



Common dolphin stranded alive, L'Epine, 21/01/2024  
©RNE

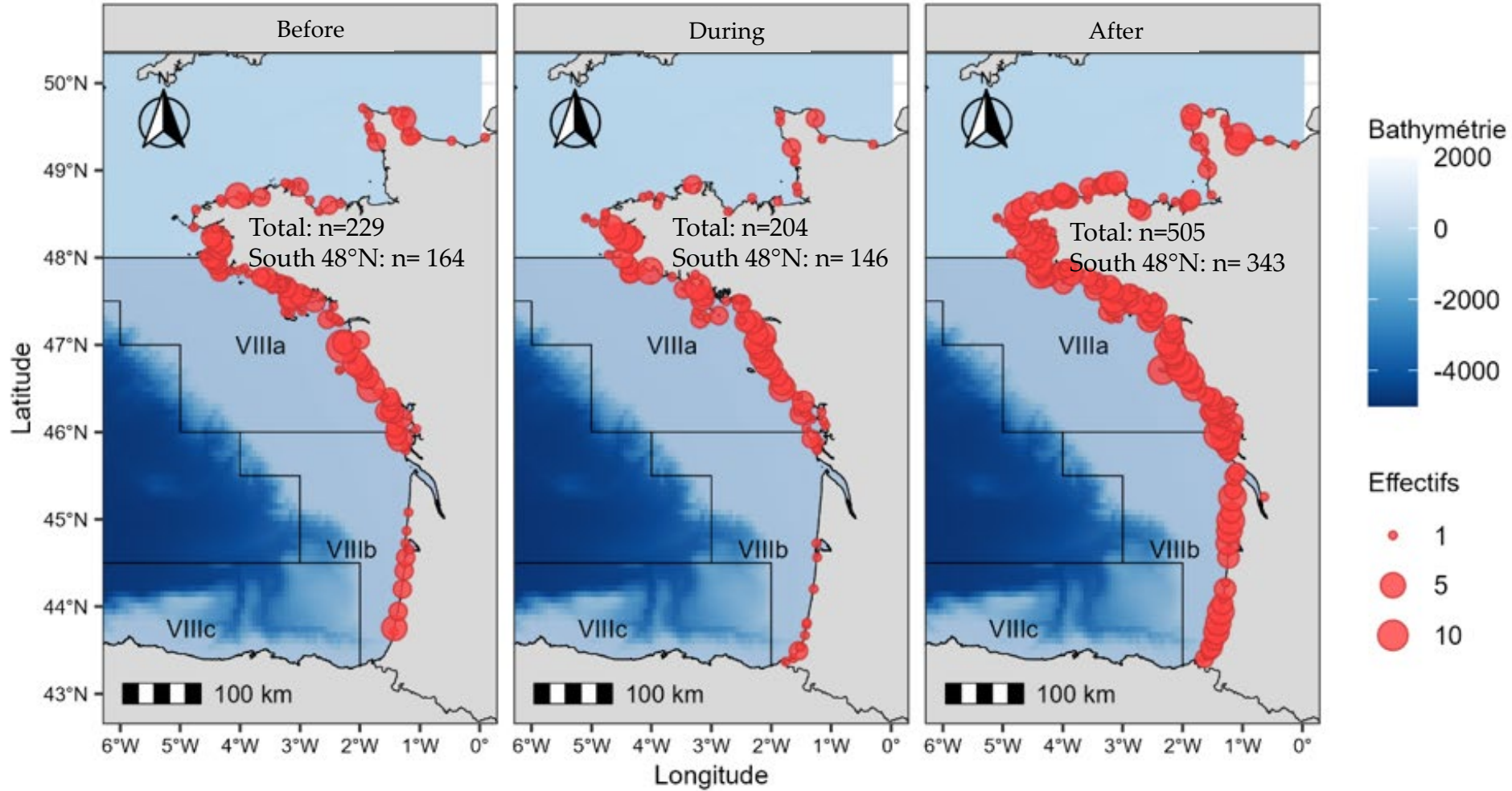
Table 2 : Summary of strandings of small cetaceans and common dolphins during the fishery closure period (22/01/2024 to 20/02/2024). The column containing all cetaceans also includes live stranded individuals. Strandings with bycatch evidence are counted from dead animals only.

Fishery closure (22 January – 20 February)	Small cetaceans		Common dolphins	
	All	Dead	All	Dead
Strandings Atlantique + Channel	204	188	148	134
Strandings South 48°N	146	134	100	89
Strandings North 48°N	58	54	48	45
Strandings bycatch evidence Atlantique + Channel		33		31
Strandings bycatch evidence South 48°N		20		18
Strandings bycatch evidence North 48°N		13		13

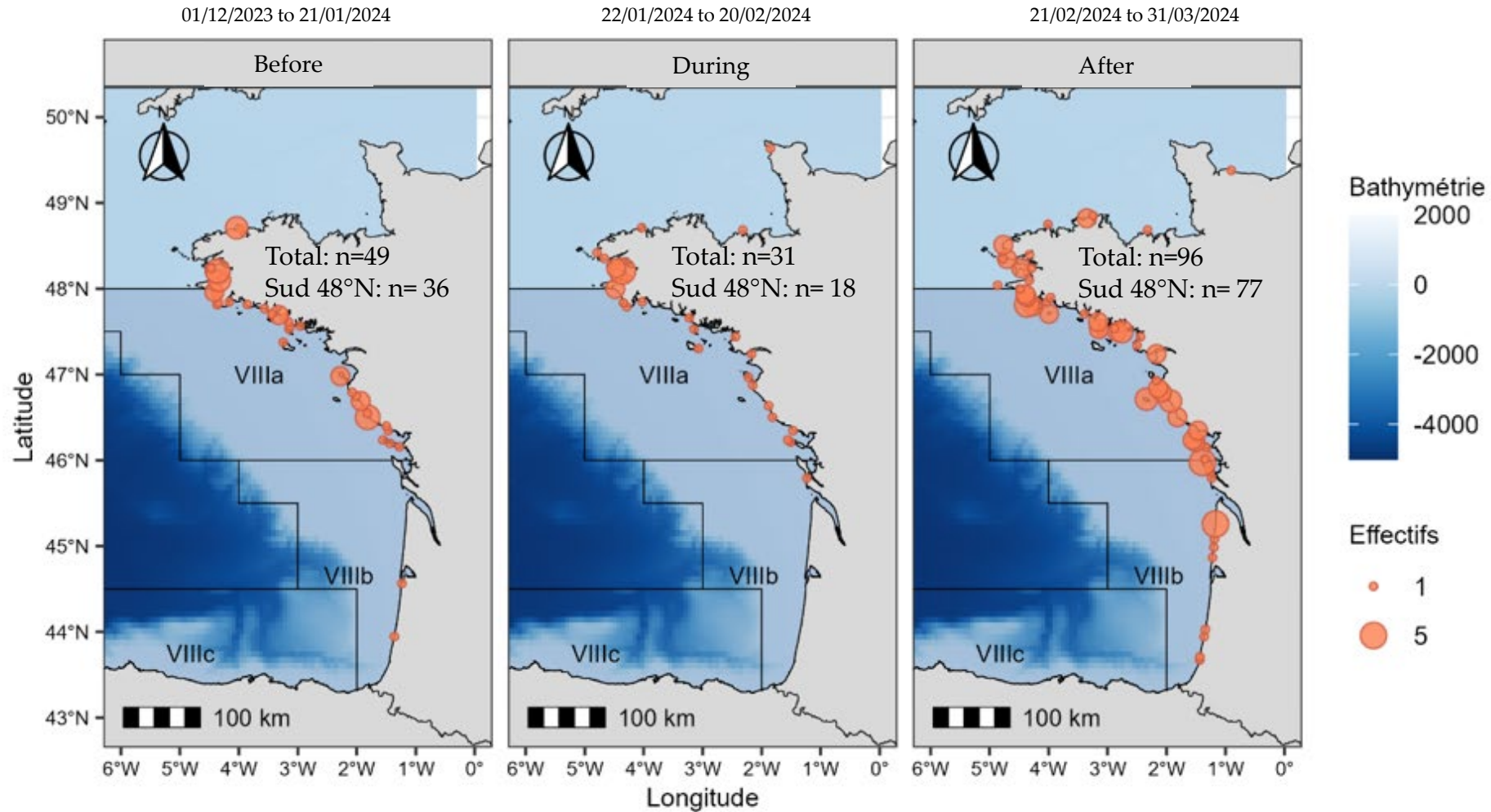
01/12/2023 to 21/01/2024

22/01/2024 to 20/02/2024

21/02/2024 to 31/03/2024



Small cetaceans strandings before, during and after the fishery closure.



Small cetaceans strandings with bycatch evidence before, during and after the fishery closure.



# Strandings during winter 2024

## 1 December 2023 – 31 March 2024

- Apparent bycatch rate =  
common dolphins fresh or slightly decomposed with bycatch evidence /  
all common dolphins fresh or slightly decomposed examined

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	Before closure	During closure	After closure
<b>Apparent bycatch rate South 48°N</b>	52%(n=66)	29%(n=49)	53%(n=126)
<b>Apparent bycatch rate North 48°N</b>	39%(n=31)	41%(n=29)	25%(n=59)

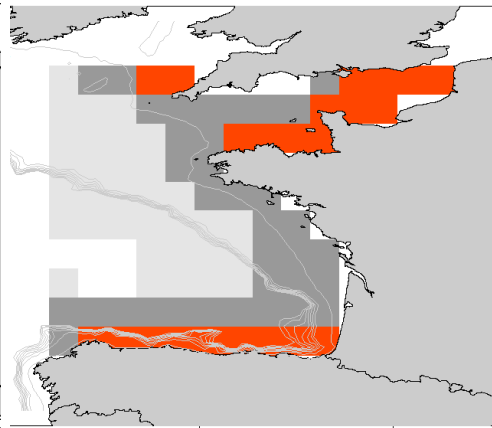
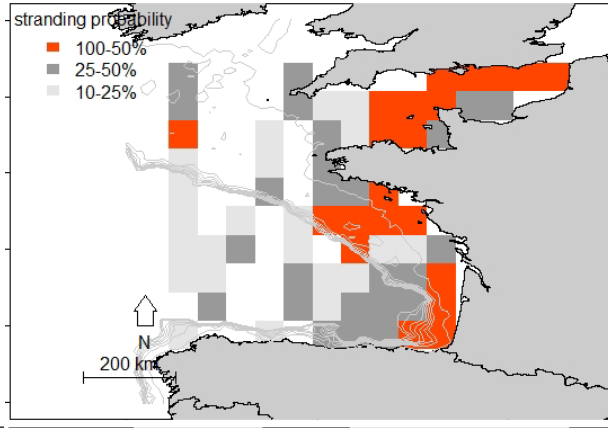
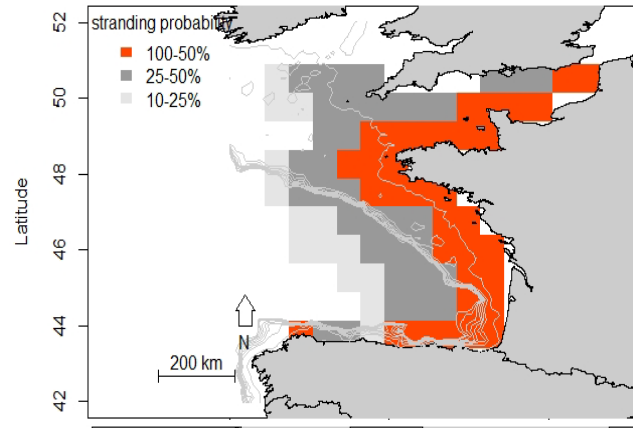
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2021

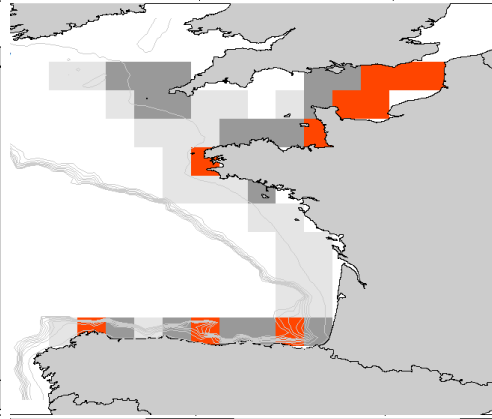
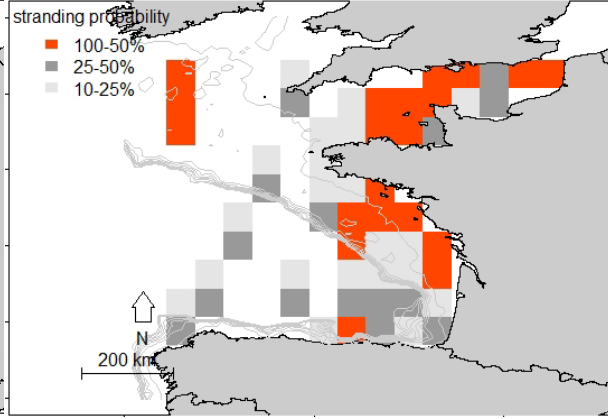
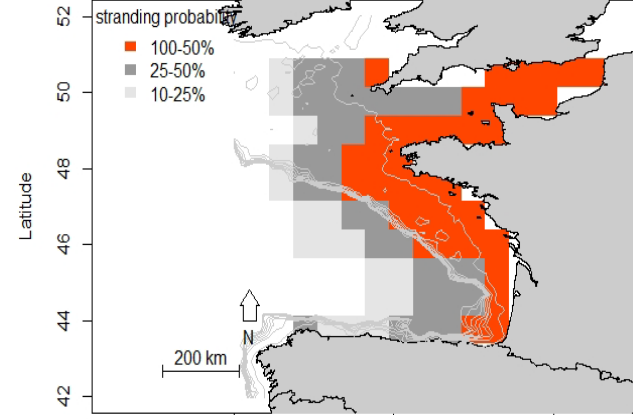
2022

2023

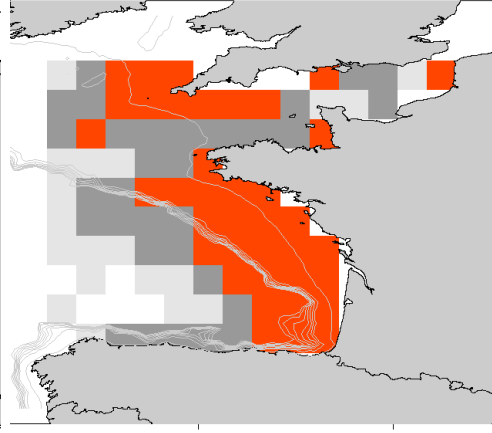
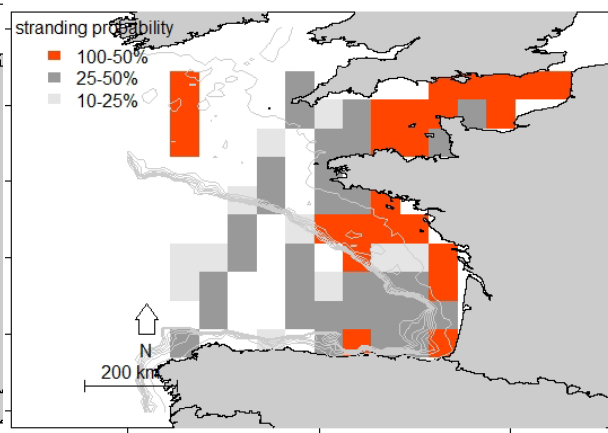
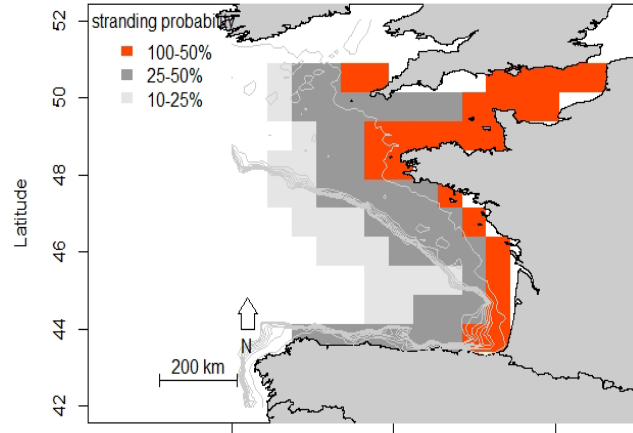
January



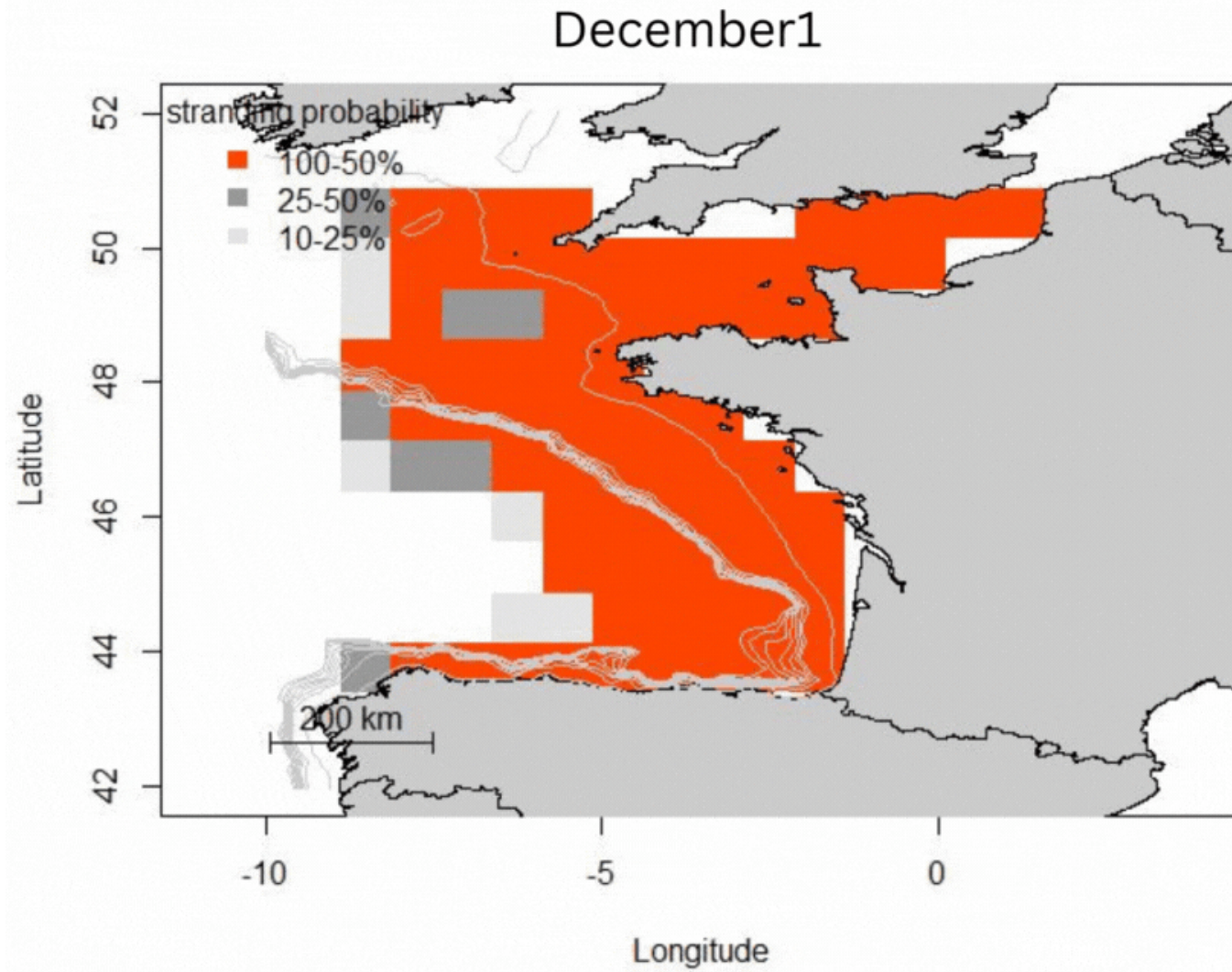
February



March



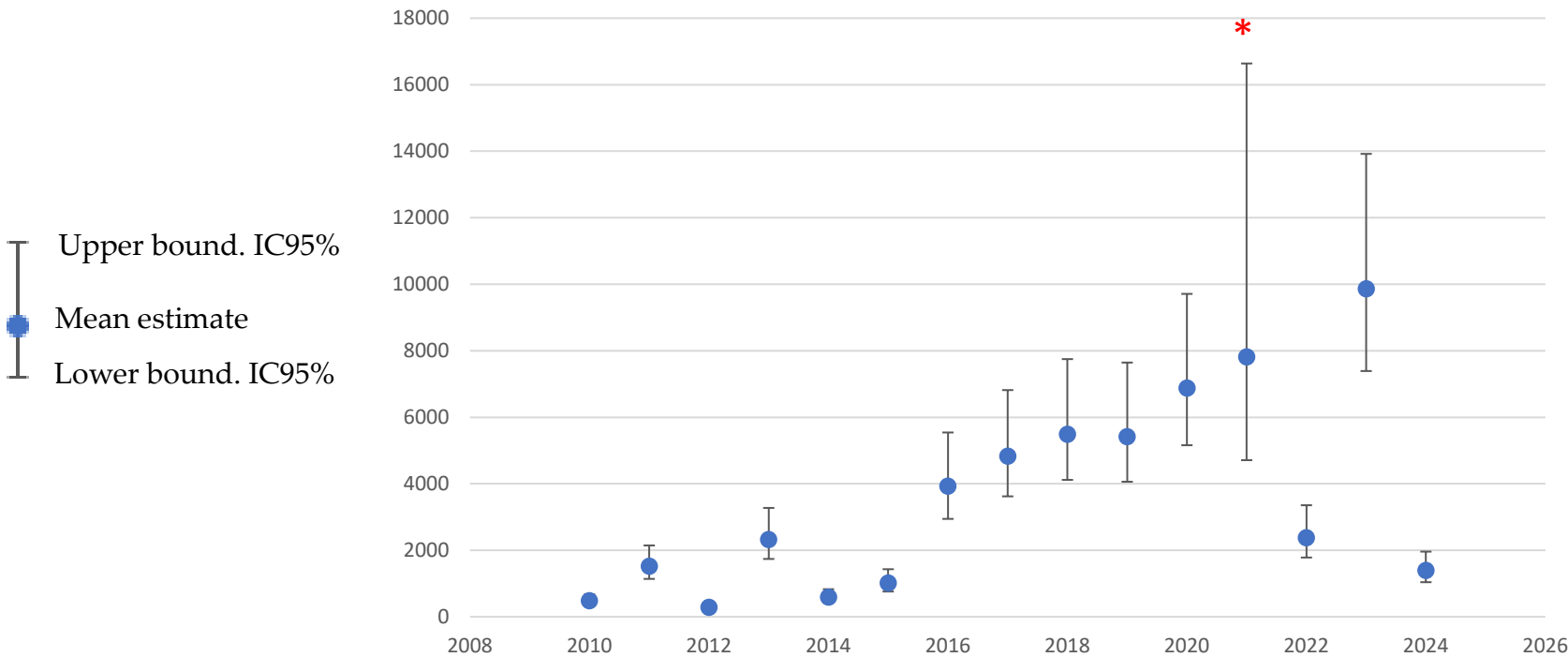
# Drift conditions during winter 2024



# Bycatch estimates inferred from strandings during winter 2024

- **1 450 (IC95% [1 090; 2 050]) estimated common dolphin bycatch,** including 1 160 (IC95% [840; 1 580]) South of 48°N between 1 Dec. 2023 and 31 Mar. 2024

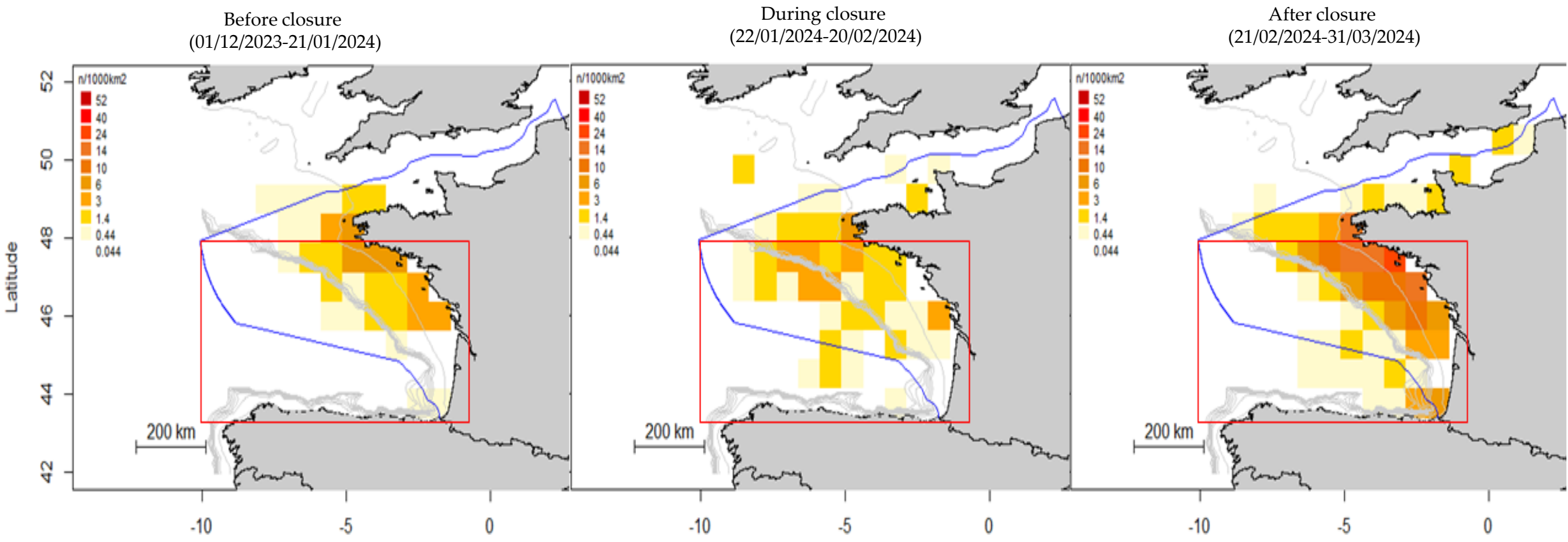
- In the closure area (South 48°N)
  - > before : 190 bycatch (IC95% [150; 280])
  - > during : 210 bycatch (IC95% [140; 260])
  - > after : 760 bycatch (IC95% [550; 1 040])



Common dolphin bycatch estimates in French waters since winter 2010 (December n-1 to March n)

\* Estimates based on both strandings and carcasses seen during aerial surveys (Peltier et al., 2024)

# Bycatch estimates inferred from strandings during winter 2024



Common dolphin bycatch areas inferred from strandings before, during and after fishery closure.

## Summary of bycatch during winter 2024

- Lower apparent bycatch rate than in previous years (60%-90% between 2017 and 2023)
- Drift conditions favorable to strandings (exception at the beginning of January): strandings globally representative of mortality at sea
- Significant drop in the number of bycatch during the winter of 2024
- Bycatch during the closure, especially in southern Brittany: unidentified gear at risk? gillnetters < 8m?
- The efficiency of the closure will have to be assessed at the end of the 3 years (variable depending on the year, the distribution of the dolphins and the seasonality of the bycatch risk)



Common dolphin stranded alive, Saint Brieuc, 27/01/2024 ©RNE

The image features a central graphic consisting of several concentric circles. The innermost circle is a solid dark blue. Surrounding it are several rings of varying shades of red, from a bright, glowing red to a deep, dark red. The text "To be continued..." is written in a white, elegant cursive font, positioned across the middle of the concentric circles. The overall composition is centered and has a classic, dramatic feel.

*To be continued...*