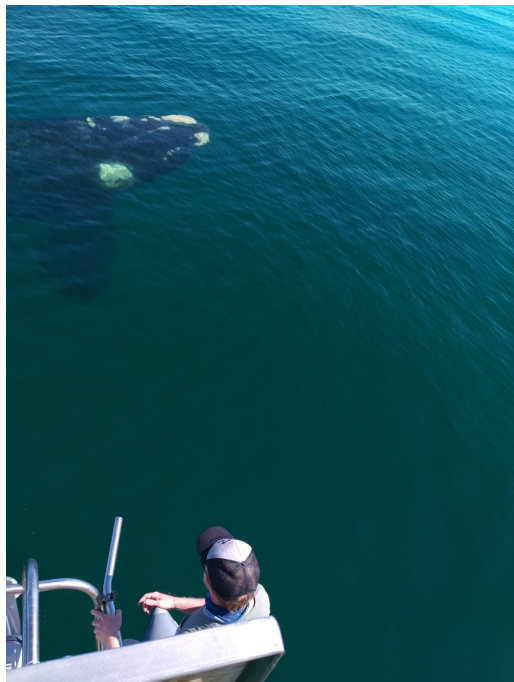


Is gull harassment causing the high mortality of southern right whale calves in Península Valdés, Argentina?

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Southern right whales (*Eubalaena australis*) in Península Valdés, Argentina, are exhibiting the highest calf mortality rate of any baleen whale population in the world. Several hypotheses relating to the underlying cause of this mortality have been tested, but none has been able to explain this unique phenomenon. One hypothesis that still needs to be tested in greater detail is if poor body condition of right whale mothers (due to low prey availability) and/or calves (due to increased energetic costs from Kelp gull harassment) could be the underlying cause of this high calf mortality. To fill this crucial knowledge gap, I use Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and photogrammetry methods to measure the body condition of right whale mothers and calves in Península Valdés and compare this to right whales from a healthy population in Australia. UAVs are also being used to measure the behaviour of right whale mother-calf pairs in the presence and absence of gulls, to determine if gull harassment could have energetic consequences for the whales.



Friday February 21st at 13.15

Seminar room at Zoophysiology (1131-127)