



**COURSE DATA**

**DATA SUBJECT**

**Code:** 43254  
**Name:** Marine conservation: Cetaceans, turtles and other large marine vertebrates  
**Cycle:** Master's Degree  
**ECTS Credits:** 3  
**Academic year:** 2026-27

**STUDY (S)**

Degree	Center	Acad. year	Period
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**SUBJECT-MATTER**

Degree	Subject-matter	Character
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**COORDINATION**

TOMAS AGUIRRE JESUS

**SUMMARY**

Conservation in the marine environment: cetaceans, turtles and other large vertebrates is a subject of the Master: "Biodiversity: Conservation and Evolution", of 3 ECTS credits. This course focuses on the status of the different species of marine vertebrates and on the most important threats to their conservation. Practically all species of marine mammals and sea turtles are considered charismatic species of great attraction for the general public. However, the interest in the conservation of these and other large marine vertebrate species goes beyond emotional or social aspects. In addition to these, there are important ecological, but also economic reasons that motivate the study and conservation of these animal species. Large marine vertebrates are located in the highest positions of the trophic webs in marine ecosystems; therefore, their conservation is essential for the maintenance of these ecosystems. However, many of these species have been and are exploited, in many cases unsustainably, by humans, reaching critical levels of conservation.

Furthermore, many of these species are particularly sensitive to environmental alterations caused directly or indirectly by humans, such as marine pollution (in all its variants) or climate change, elements to be considered in any conservation program. On the other hand, many of the species of large marine vertebrates are migratory species that, throughout their life cycles, cross the territorial waters of different countries and international waters. Therefore, the conservation of many of these species can also have political consequences and may require international agreements. For these reasons, there is a growing interest in the research, management and conservation of these species. This course will provide information on the diversity of large marine vertebrates, their biology and the degree of threat of the different species, as well as updated study techniques, so that the student will be able to face any



conservation problem concerning any of these species and to propose, in a critical and reasoned manner, the appropriate conservation measures for each species in its habitat and social-political environment.

## PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER SUBJECTS OF THE SAME DEGREE

There are no specified enrollment restrictions with other subjects of the curriculum.

## OTHER REQUIREMENTS

It is recommended, but not essential, to have a basic knowledge of Zoology and Marine Biology.

## COMPETENCES / LEARNING OUTCOMES

### 2148 -

Be able to access the information required (databases, scientific articles, etc.) and to interpret and use it sensibly.

Favour intellectual curiosity and encourage responsibility for one's own learning.

Stimulate the capacity for critical reasoning and for argumentation based on rational criteria.

Students should apply acquired knowledge to solve problems in unfamiliar contexts within their field of study, including multidisciplinary scenarios.

Students should communicate conclusions and underlying knowledge clearly and unambiguously to both specialized and non-specialized audiences.

Students should demonstrate self-directed learning skills for continued academic growth.

## DESCRIPTION OF CONTENTS

### 1. Diversity

Presentation and justification of the course: Why is important the conservation of large marine vertebrates - Biology, diversity and conservation status of marine mammals: cetaceans, pinnipeds, sirenians and other marine mammals - Biology, diversity and conservation status of marine reptiles: sea turtles, iguanas, sea snakes, marine crocodiles - Other large marine vertebrates of conservation interest. 8 hours

Field techniques: studies at sea and on the coast: censuses, tagging and monitoring, new technologies.



## 2. Techniques of study

Laboratory techniques: morphological analysis, genetic analysis, stable isotopes, pollutants.

4 hours

## 3. Conservation issues

Conservation status of marine vertebrates: level of threat, commercial exploitation, past and present use, legislation aspects. - Interaction with fisheries and other activities of human exploitation of marine resources. - Effect of marine pollution: solid waste, heavy metals, organochlorine compounds, noise pollution.- Other conservation problems: Climate change. Diseases and epizootics and their relationship with threats of human origin.

5 hours

## 4. Practical sessions

LABORATORY PRACTICAL SESSION (Performing necropsies of cetaceans and sea turtles).

5 hours

FIELD TRIP (Detection and handling of sea turtle nests).

5 hours

## 5. Seminars and group work

Attendance to seminars and preparation and presentation of group works.

3 hours

## WORKLOAD

### PRESENCIAL ACTIVITIES

Activity	Hours
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>0,00</b>

### NON PRESENCIAL ACTIVITIES

Activity	Hours
Attendance at other activities	0,00
Individual or group project	20,00
Independent study and work	25,00
Preparation of lessons	0,00
Preparation for assessment activities	0,00
Resolution of case studies	0,00
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>45,00</b>



## TEACHING METHODOLOGY

Lectures

Practical laboratory sessions, including cetacean and sea turtle necropsies

Seminars

Collective tutorials

Group work: oral presentation of the work

Conferences and other voluntary activities

## EVALUATION

The evaluation of the course will be carried out through the following procedures:

1. Attendance and use of the classes. Attendance to the practical classes will be mandatory, and a record of attendance to this activity will be kept.
2. Completion of a written test on the contents of the syllabus (**60% of the overall grade**). This test may include questions related to the practical sessions carried out.
3. Oral presentation of the group work on a conservation problem of a marine vertebrate species (**40% of the overall grade**). In this presentation the order, clarity and precision in the exposition of the work will be valued, as well as the answers given to the questions that are formulated.

## REFERENCES

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- Lutz P.L. & J.A. Musick (eds). (1997). The Biology of Sea Turtles, CRC Press, Boca Raton, Florida.
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- Reading, P. (2000). Endangered animals: a reference guide to conflicting issues. Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, CT, USA.
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