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MEPS 313:295-304 (2006) - doi:10.3354/meps313295

Satellite-monitored movements of humpback whales *Megaptera novaeangliae* in the Southwest Atlantic Ocean

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ABSTRACT: Southern Hemisphere humpback whales *Megaptera novaeangliae* migrate from breeding latitudes to feeding areas in the Antarctic Ocean. It has been hypothesized that *M. novaeangliae* in the western South Atlantic Ocean migrates to feeding grounds near the Antarctic Peninsula (ca. 65°S), but direct evidence to support this has never been presented. Between 1998 and 2004, 19 females and 4 males were instrumented with satellite transmitters off the coast of Brazil to track their movements and migratory destinations. Mean tracking time for the whales was 100 d (range = 30 to 180 d). The total distance travelled was 1673 km per whale (range = 60 to 7258 km). Movement patterns showed individual variation. Departure dates from the Brazilian coast ranged from 1998 to 2004. Whales migrated south through oceanic waters at an average heading of 170° and travelled 1000 km to reach feeding grounds. Two whales were tracked to feeding grounds in offshore waters near the Sandwich Islands (58°S, 26°W) after a 40 to 60 d long migration. Historical catch data support these migratory routes and destinations. This study is the first to describe the migratory routes of *M. novaeangliae* in the western South Atlantic Ocean.

KEY WORDS: *Megaptera novaeangliae* · Migration · Satellite telemetry · Winter · Southern Hemisphere · Atlantic Ocean · South Georgia · South Sandwich Islands

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Published in [MEPS Vol. 313](#). Online publication date: May 11, 2006

Print ISSN: 0171-8630; Online ISSN: 1616-1599

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