

Project Update: December 2010

One of the main aims of the project from the point of view of the analyses was to identify the age of the stranded cetaceans we collected samples from. Assessing the age of an individual is done using the teeth. Each tooth has Growth Layer Groups (GLGs) of cementum and dentine, with each layer (in most species of cetacean) equating to 1 year of life. These analyses were carried out by Dr. Christina Lockyer (Age Dynamics) based in Denmark. Dr. Lockyer successfully aged a total of 13 samples, with the ages of the individuals ranging from 0-17 years. We are still awaiting the final results from the genetic analyses to determine the species and sex of each of the 13 individuals - the analyses of these data should be completed soon. We will also look at the field notes associated with each of the samples to see if a cause of death is known or suspected - this will be particularly interesting for the individuals that have died at a very young age.



A section of a tooth from an unknown cetacean, the age is estimated to be 3 years of age. Photo by Dr. Christina Lockyer.