INTRODUCTION:
The Gulf of California is a highly biodiverse sea, containing 39% of the world’s marine mammal species and ~33% of the world’s cetacean species. Kino Bay in the Gulf of California has unusually large numbers of cetaceans in a comparatively small area. Therefore, it is absolutely vital to keep Kino Bay’s marine mammals protected by learning and researching about them as much as possible. Figure 1 shows the area (outlined by a red square) of the area surveyed by the project.

METHODS:
Prescott College’s Marine Mammal Program (MMP) has been studying marine mammals in Kino Bay since 1997. Héctor Pérez Puig, Research Coordinator of the MMP and marine mammalogist professor with a Master’s degree in Marine Ecology, has been surveying Kino Bay since 1997. Héctor Pérez Puig, Research Coordinator of the MMP and marine mammals in Kino Bay Center for Cultural and Ecological Studies, Sonora, MX.

REFERENCES:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:
Karli Corey, Cosme Damian Becerra

DISCUSSION:
Many scientists, researchers, and students participating in research and surveys through the MMP in Kino Bay have gathered valuable data on populations of marine mammals that inhabit the Gulf of California. This data contributes to the conservation of marine mammals in the area, including the Long-beaked Common Dolphin, Bottlenose Dolphin, Short Finned Pilot Whale, Fin Whale, Humpback whale, and more.

RESULTS:
Photo identification has provided extensive evidence of Kino Bay’s biodiversity and high density of cetacean species. Since 1997, 1,675 sightings of 18 species of cetaceans during 366 outings have been recorded. Since 2009, 207 sightings have generated approximately 18,000 photographs of nine species of cetaceans. The species with the largest number of recorded individuals were the Long-beaked Common Dolphin (+88,000), the Bottlenose Dolphin (+6,500), the Short-finned Pilot Whale (+1,100), and the Fin Whale (+700). The following number of each species has been photographically differentiated: 141 Fin Whales, 191 Bottlenose Dolphins, 415 Short-finned Pilot Whales, 10 Humpback Whales, Gray Whales, and a few Bryde’s Whales.

On our expedition we experienced a rare sighting of two juvenile Humpback whales (Figures 3 - 6), as well as two pods of Bottlenose dolphins (Figures 7 -9). One of these pods contained a newborn dolphin calf, which is discernable from the adults due to its striped pattern (Figure 9). Both pods of dolphins also had sea lions swimming among them.

Figure 3 shows the GPS location of the sighting of the two juvenile Humpback whales.

Figure 8 shows the GPS location of the sighting of one of the dolphin pods.

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