



RED LIST CETACEANS

Evidence Report:

Preventing dolphin & porpoise extinctions



Net losses – an introduction

Most of the world's most threatened species of cetacean (whales, dolphins, and porpoises) live in coastal marine or large freshwater river systems dominated by small-scale fisheries. These dolphins and porpoises exist in the Amazon, Ganges, and Yangtze rivers, and the coastal waters of Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. Many of the communities associated with these coastlines are among the poorest in the world, and many have suffered at the hands of large scale commercial fisheries operating legally and illegally offshore.

Globally, more than 20 million people – nearly 50% of all fishers – work in small-scale fisheries, and these fisheries play a key role in poverty alleviation and food security. These small-scale fisheries have often shifted from traditional and sustainable technologies to modern, indiscriminate and destructive techniques, such as dynamite fishing, monofilament gillnet fishing, and bottom trawling.

Many small-scale fisheries around the globe are therefore depressed due to overfishing, limiting their ability to provide benefits to fisheries-dependent communities.

There is a critical need for the development of management approaches which recognize the interdisciplinary complexity of small-scale fisheries, building capacity for locally responsive management that protects and enhances fish stocks, and regenerates associated ecosystems. This change of approach will need to coincide with other associated benefits that value living cetaceans economically, most likely through tourism.

Without a change of approach, we can expect to see several threatened species of dolphin and porpoise go extinct in the coming decades. In this report, we look at the current capacity of the WCA partners and programmes to protect threatened dolphins and porpoises.

Front cover photo: Indian Ocean humpback dolphin calf stranding.
Goa. Terra Conscious and Drishti Marine

Small cetaceans in trouble

Table 1. IUCN Red Listed threatened coastal dolphin and porpoise species across all WCA regions

WCA Region	Threatened species
1: Sub-Saharan Africa	Atlantic humpback dolphin (Critically Endangered), Indian Ocean humpback dolphin (Endangered).
2: Northern Africa and Western Asia	Indian Ocean humpback dolphin (Endangered), Indo-Pacific finless porpoise (Vulnerable), Narrow-ridged finless porpoise (Endangered).
3: Central and Southern Asia	South Asian river dolphin (Endangered), Indian Ocean humpback dolphin (Endangered), Indo-Pacific finless porpoise (Vulnerable), Narrow-ridged finless porpoise (Endangered).
4: Eastern Asia	Indo-Pacific finless porpoise (Vulnerable), Narrow-ridged finless porpoise (Endangered), Baiji (Critically Endangered (extinct)).
5: South-eastern Asia	Irrawaddy dolphin (Endangered), Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (Vulnerable), Indo-Pacific finless porpoise (Vulnerable), narrow-ridged finless porpoise (Endangered).
6: Latin America and the Caribbean	Vaquita (Critically Endangered), Amazon river dolphin (Endangered), La plata dolphin (Vulnerable).
7: Oceania	Hector's dolphin (Endangered), Australian snubfin dolphin (Vulnerable), Irrawaddy dolphin (Endangered), Australian humpback dolphin (Vulnerable), Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (Vulnerable).

A photograph showing two Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins swimming in clear blue water. In the foreground, the backs of two people are visible; one is holding a camera to take a picture, and the other is pointing towards the dolphins. The scene is set on a boat, with the water's surface showing gentle ripples.

Tourists watching Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins

Photo: Lloyd Edwards / Raggy Charters

How the WCA partners protect threatened dolphin and porpoise species

- Fourteen WCA partners are working to protect threatened dolphins and porpoises across nine countries.
- Eight IUCN Red Listed dolphin and porpoise species are monitored by WCA partners.
- Most at risk species monitored by partners are the endangered South Asian river dolphin, narrow-ridged finless porpoise, Hector's dolphin, and Irrawaddy dolphin.
- WCA partner Marinelife Alliance in Bangladesh works with four threatened species: South Asian river dolphin, Irrawaddy dolphin, Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin, and Indo-Pacific finless porpoise.

How the WCA partners protect threatened dolphin and porpoise species



- We conduct conservation work to protect these species
- We see them during whale and dolphin watching tours
- We campaign to protect these species
- We encourage responsible tourism with these species
- We record sightings during dolphin watching tours
- We conduct research work on these species

WCA partners working with local fisheries

- Ten WCA partners work with threatened dolphin or porpoise species and engage with local fishing communities.
- Eight WCA partners work with fishing communities potentially impacting threatened dolphin/porpoise species. Five of these communities are already engaged in whale and dolphin watching tourism.
- All partners would be interested in being involved in a certification programme for sustainable fishing/tourism through local fisheries cooperatives with WCA partners providing training.



Photo: Measurements being taken of Indian Ocean humpback dolphin stranding. Goa. Terra Conscious and Drishti Marine

Fishing gear affecting dolphins

Partner-identified fishing
Gear/boat traffic affecting threatened
dolphin and porpoise species

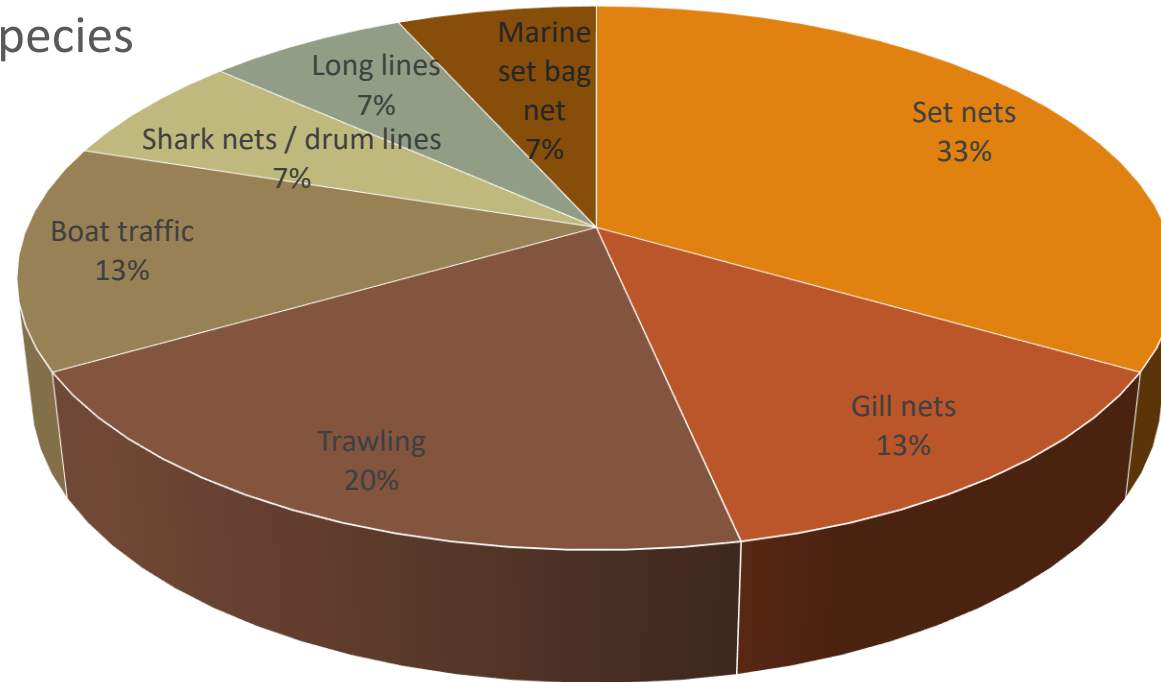


Photo: Narrow-ridged finless porpoise stranding. Terra Conscious and Drishti Marine

Case study Baía Babitonga, Brazil

A site of extreme biological importance

Babitonga Bay is located on the north coast of Santa Catarina and covers a total area of 130 square kilometres (50 sq mi). Its surroundings include the cities of Joinville and São Francisco do Sul. The shores are populated with typical native mangroves, and constitute 75% of the mangroves in the state with an area of about 6,200 hectares (15,000 acres). The bay also has sandy beaches, rocky shores, about 24 islands and tidal flats. The bay is important for its biodiversity and as the most southern of Brazil's remaining mangrove forests. In 2003 the Ministry of the Environment classified it as an area of extreme biological importance.

Vulnerable La Plata dolphins

La Plata dolphins (*Pontoporia blainvillei*) are the most threatened cetacean off the Brazilian coast, and the population living in the North of Espírito Santo is the one most at risk of disappearing. There are an estimated 600 to 700 individuals in the region, therefore any animal accidentally caught in fishing nets is a big toll for the species.

Babitonga Bay is home to the only La Plata dolphin population that resides throughout its life cycle in an estuarine environment. Studies by the Toninhas Project team have shown that La Plata dolphins do not come out of the Bay and sea La Plata dolphins do not enter the Bay. The natural predators of La Plata dolphins, including orcas and sharks, do not occur in the Bay.

Case study Baía Babitonga, Brazil

Fishing families

In 2007 the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio) estimated that over 2,000 families of fisher-folk used the natural resources in the proposed reserve area for their livelihoods. Aquatic farms cultivated mussels and oysters in the bay, and tourism was expanding. The Bay of Babitonga is also an important harbour and the region holds the state's largest industrial park, which depends on use of the port facilities. The area has been degraded by human occupation over the years. The water has been polluted by waste water, siltation due to deforestation, unsustainable fishing, landfill and other activities.

Protecting La Plata dolphins

WCA partner Instituto Balea Jubarte (Humpback Whale Institute) carry out the project "Diagnosis of La Plata dolphin by-catch and Community Approach to Mitigation Measures", with resources from the La Plata dolphin Conservation Project (FUNBIO). The idea of the project is to approach the fishing communities to diagnose causes of bycatch in the region and, together with them, think about ways to alleviate the problem. In Espírito Santo the species is classified as "Endangered" due mainly to bycatch in fishing nets and the degradation of critical habitat by coastal development.



Case study Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

One site, multiple threatened cetaceans

The coast of Cox's Bazar and the Sundarban Mangrove forest, Bangladesh, are important habitat for a number of threatened cetaceans. These include Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*), Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*), Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops aduncus*), and finless porpoise (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*). Risso's dolphin (*Grampus griseus*) and Spinner dolphin (*Stenella longirostris*) are also regularly recorded. In addition, South Asian river dolphin occurs in the Sundarbans mangrove forest.

Protecting 150 kilometres of coast

WCA partner Marinelife Alliance run a cetacean sighting, stranding, monitoring and conservation programme along 150 kilometres of coastline in south east Bangladesh. This includes St. Martin, Teknaf-Cox's Bazar coast, Sonadia Island, Kutubdia Island, and the south central coast.

Case study Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Training fishermen to reduce bycatch

Marinelife Alliance works closely with the local fishing community; artisanal fisheries that use Marine Set Bag Nets (MSBN), gill nets and hooks that can also catch small cetaceans. Marinelife Alliance holds 22 years of stranding and mortality data along the coast of Cox's Bazar. Stranded species include finless porpoise, Irrawaddy dolphin, Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin, Risso's dolphin, Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin and more. Juvenile baleen whales have also been recorded washed up on the Cox's Bazar coast. Local fishermen are trained in techniques to reduce bycatch and raise awareness. Large, mechanized trawl nets operating in deeper offshore waters are responsible for killing large numbers of sea turtles and small cetaceans in the region.



Photo: Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins. Lloyd Edwards / Raggy Charters

Red List Whale Heritage Sites

WCA's [Whale Heritage Site](#) (WHS) programme protects important sites for cetaceans through community-led initiatives that focus on sustainable practices, responsible ecotourism and unique cultural heritage. Twelve partners (92%) identified local threatened dolphin or porpoise habitats as having the potential to become Whale Heritage Sites.

1. Kutubdia to St. Martin Island, coast of Cox Bazar, Bangladesh
2. Jurubatiba National Park candidate WHS, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
3. Baía Babitonga, Santa Catarina, Brazil
4. Jangamo Bay, Mozambique
5. Ponta do Ouro Partial Marine Reserve, Mozambique
6. Ilha de Mozambique arcghipelago, Mozambique
7. Kaikoura, New Zealand
8. Queen Charlotte Sound, New Zealand
9. Marlborough Sounds candidate WHS, New Zealand
10. Akaroa Harbour, New Zealand
11. iSimangaliso Wetland Park, South Africa
12. The Bluff WHS, Durban, South Africa
13. Cabo Polonio candidate WHS, Uruguay
14. Barra de Valizas, Uruguay

Next steps

1. Gather data on all sites with the potential to protect threatened dolphin and porpoise species through local fishing/tourism communities.
2. Gather data on traditional/low impact fisheries/aquaculture and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) able to assist local communities in their attempts to develop dolphin-friendly fishing methods.
3. Identify and engage with new partners working in sites for threatened dolphin and porpoise species.
4. Prioritise Whale Heritage Sites in critical habitat for threatened dolphin and porpoise species.
5. Develop responsible / regenerative fishing criteria for Whale Heritage Sites and Responsible Whale Watching certification programmes. Implement criteria across threatened species sites with fishing/tourism communities.
6. Seek funding streams that support partners working on the ground in support of WCA programmes for cetacean conservation and extinction prevention at priority sites.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following WCA partners for contributing valuable information for this report, and for their ongoing commitment to monitoring and protecting some of the world's most threatened dolphin and porpoise species:

Rachel Kramer, WILDOCEANS, South Africa; Mohammad Zahirul Islam, Marinelife Alliance, Bangladesh; Josh Thomson, Whale and Dolphin Tours Durban, South Africa; Luena Fernandes, Instituto Baleia Jubarte / UFBA, Brazil; Laura Torre, Australia; Vanessa McKay, Carino Wildlife Cruises, New Zealand; Chantal Pagel, Marine-

Wildlife.org, New Zealand; Francesca Trotman, Love The Oceans, Mozambique; Dani Spencer, E-Ko Tours, New Zealand; Rodrigo Garcia Pingaro, Org. Cetacean Conservation, Uruguay; Angie Gullan, Dolphin Encountours Research Center, Mozambique; Lloyd Edwards, Raggy Charters, South Africa; Ivan Martin, Swiss Cetacean Society, Switzerland; Daren Grover, Project Jonah, New Zealand; and Peter Allsop, Ilha Blue, Mozambique.

Back cover photos: Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin stranding, Goa. Terra Conscious and Drishti Marine; Fisherman. Pixabay; Amazon river dolphin. Lloyd Edwards / Raggy Charters.



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