

Red List of

Cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea



Key Facts

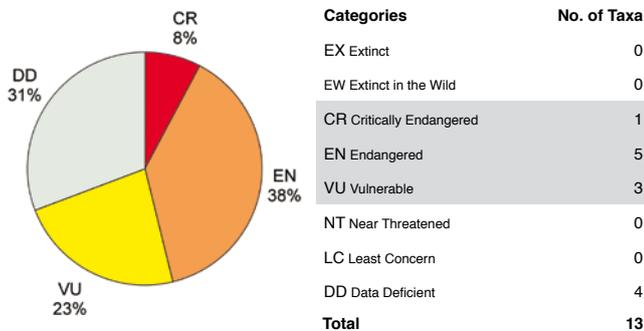
- ❑ Cetaceans are marine mammals: they breastfeed their young and need to reach regularly the surface to breathe.
- ❑ 23 species have been recorded in the Mediterranean and Black Seas from the small porpoise (1.5 m) to the fin whale (20 m).
- ❑ 10 species of dolphins and whales are regularly found in the region. A further 13 species are vagrant and occur infrequently in these waters.
- ❑ Nine cetaceans are qualified as threatened in the Mediterranean basin. This includes the Mediterranean populations of Sperm Whale *Physeter macrocephalus* and the Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis*.
- ❑ The ongoing use of illegal driftnets has had, and continues to have, a major impact on large whales.
- ❑ Since 2001, The “Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area” (ACCOBAMS) has worked for the development of cetacean conservation in the region.
- ❑ More scientific data is needed for all the cetacean species, especially in the southern and eastern parts of the Mediterranean Sea.

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™

Conservation Status Assessment

Out of the 13 Cetacean populations assessed in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, one was proposed as Critically Endangered, five for Endangered and three for Vulnerable. Four were considered Data Deficient, meaning that there was not enough scientific information to assess their extinction risk.

Summary of conservation status of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea (2008)



Main Threats

Chemical (and noise) pollution, incidental mortality in fishing gear, overfishing and habitat degradation are the main threats affecting cetacean populations in the Mediterranean Sea. Depletion of fish stocks from commercial pressures, which form part of the diet for many cetaceans, is also a major threat.

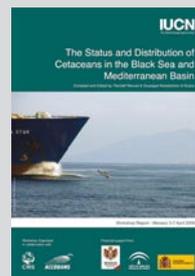


Case Studies of Threatened Species

- The **Killer Whale** *Orcinus orca* population from the Strait of Gibraltar is threatened by direct mortality from tuna fishermen that see them as a menace to their activities as they like to eat the fish from the fishing gear.
- The **Common Bottlenose Dolphin** *Tursiops truncatus* is likely to have been affected in numerous ways by human activities: low availability of prey as a result of overfishing and environmental degradation, accidental mortality in fishing gear and chemical pollution of sea water.
- The Mediterranean **Stripped Dolphin** *Stenella coeruleoalba* is exposed to high levels of chemicals and heavy metals, which have severe effects on their reproduction and their immune system.
- **Fine whales** *Balaenoptera physalus* in the Mediterranean Sea are thought to be mainly threatened due to collision with ships.
- Biodiversity loss due to human impact and climate change together with the decline on prey availability have affected the Mediterranean subpopulation of **Short-beaked Common Dolpin** *Delphinus delphis*.

For More Information

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The Status and Distribution of Cetaceans in the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea.

Download the report from the Publications section.

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