

IUCN SSC Cetacean Specialist Group



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NUMBER OF MEMBERS
140

Mission statement

The Cetacean Specialist Group (CSG) promotes and facilitates the conservation of cetaceans worldwide. It functions as a catalyst, clearing house and facilitator for cetacean-related research and conservation action. Our guiding premise is that conservation ultimately depends upon good science, and the group's credibility and value are based on maintaining high standards of scientific rigour. The advice we provide relates mainly to the status of populations, abundance, trends, the effects of current or potential threats, and the efficacy of mitigation. Our emphasis is on the recovery of threatened species and populations, but we also recognise the importance of maintaining the full diversity of the Cetacea, which includes just over 90 species, about 50 recognised subspecies and at least hundreds of populations.

Projected impact 2021–2025

Cetaceans are nominally protected under several international conventions and by national legislation in most countries, but they are affected by many human activities in marine and freshwater environments. Most of the conservation work by CSG members is linked, directly or indirectly, to that of other bodies or groups with shared

objectives, and this makes it impossible in most instances to tease apart the influence or 'impact' made 'by the CSG' per se (other than in the case of Red Listing). It also means that the targets, activities and results reported here are only a sample of the many areas of cetacean conservation work in which members are engaged, and which they are often leading or sharing the lead with others. The CSG regularly works to conserve cetaceans with bodies like the International Whaling Commission (IWC), Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and US Marine Mammal Commission, with national government agencies, and with NGOs interested in conserving cetaceans. Our group's traditional focus on Endangered and Critically Endangered small cetaceans, particularly those outside North America, western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, continues. Integrated Conservation Planning for Cetaceans (ICPC) is a team of experts formed to apply the IUCN One Plan Approach guidelines to selected species, subspecies and populations, prioritised according to conservation status, likelihood of catastrophic decline, and potential for effective mitigation.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-017 Publish a scientific paper on the Red List status of cetaceans.

T-020 Ensure all freshwater cetacean species, subspecies and subpopulation assessments are up to date.

T-021 Update Hector's Dolphin (*Cephalorhynchus hectori*) and Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) assessments (the last two species requiring update at the global level).

T-022 Ensure that assessments of Endangered or Critically Endangered subspecies and subpopulations are up to date.

T-023 Assess Yangtze River Dolphin (also known as Baiji; *Lipotes vexillifer*) using new methods to assess extinction.

T-024 Develop transparent guidelines for the selection of subpopulations that should be assessed and include clear roles for CSG members in this process.

PLAN

T-025 Increase diversity, equity and inclusion in CSG membership and activities.

T-026 Advance recommendations from the Yangtze Finless Porpoise (*Neophocaena asi-aeorientalis asi-aeorientalis*) conservation symposium held in Wuhan, November 2019.



Lahille's bottlenose dolphins are a priority species for the Cetacean Specialist Group
Photo: Els Vermeulen

T-027 Support relevant government agencies, researchers, and NGOs in Atlantic Humpback Dolphin (*Sousa teuszii*) range states in conservation planning for the species as proposed in the IUCN SSC EDGE Grant proposal and terms of reference.

T-028 Advance the ICPC targets recommended at the December 2018 Nuremberg workshop and develop a method to choose other projects.

T-029 Provide expert advice on global and national conservation planning efforts for river dolphins in South America and Asia.

ACT

T-001 Continue to provide technical support for the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force (<https://www.marine-mammalhabitat.org/>).

T-002 Continue to provide support to South Korean conservationists to reduce massive bycatch of Endangered Narrow-ridged Finless Porpoises (*Neophocaena asiaeorientalis*).

T-003 Continue to support the Consortium for the Conservation of the Atlantic Humpback Dolphin (CCAHD) to improve the conservation status of Critically Endangered Atlantic Humpback Dolphins in West Africa.

T-004 Help to expand and support the Arabian Sea Whale Network (see <https://iucn-csg.org/csg-special-projects/arabian-sea-humpback-whales/>).

T-005 Assist efforts to prevent extinction of Taiwanese Humpback Dolphins (*Sousa chinensis taiwanensis*; see <https://iucn-csg.org/csg-special-projects/eastern-taiwan-strait-humpback-dolphins/>).

T-006 Continue to assist efforts to prevent extinction of the Vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*).

T-007 Continue to provide technical support to efforts to conserve the three Critically Endangered freshwater subpopulations of Irrawaddy Dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*) in Southeast Asia.

T-008 Provide technical support to integrated conservation planning for the Yangtze Finless Porpoise metapopulation kept within the semi-natural reserves.

T-009 In coordination with the IWC Conservation Management Plan, support collaborators in Brazil and Argentina to incorporate integrated conservation planning options into a conservation action plan for the Franciscana (*Pontoporia blainvillei*).

T-010 Provide support to existing programmes that attempt to rescue canal-entrapped Indus and Ganges River Dolphins (*Platanista minor* and *Platanista gangetica*,

respectively) by training local veterinarians and scientists to conduct comprehensive health assessments.

T-030 Provide expert advice on efforts to reduce bycatch of river dolphins, and advise on and assist in efforts to reverse and prevent impacts of water development on river dolphins in South America and Asia with an emphasis on site-based and population-level initiatives.

NETWORK

T-011 Continue involvement in the work of the International Whaling Commission's Scientific and Conservation Committees, Conservation Management Plans and Small Cetacean Task Teams.

T-012 Collaborate with the Convention on Migratory Species to advance Concerted Actions for threatened cetaceans.

T-013 Respond to requests for advice and feedback (e.g. to CITES and various IUCN bodies and Specialist Groups) as requested.

T-014 Continue involvement in work of the Society for Marine Mammalogy's Conservation Committee.

T-015 Expand professional resources for integrated conservation planning.

Le dauphin à bosse de l'Atlantique est l'une des espèces de dauphins côtiers les moins connues. Il se rencontre dans les eaux littorales de la côte atlantique tropicale et subtropicale de l'Afrique



© Cavillina Weir / Katus Ecology

EN DANGER CRITIQUE D'EXTINCTION :
IL RESTE PROBABLEMENT MOINS DE 3000 INDIVIDUS



© Tim Collins/WCS

DESCRIPTION

Caractéristique distinctive : une bosse prononcée sous la petite nageoire dorsale

Les mâles adultes ont une bosse dorsale plus prononcée que les femelles



Illustrations de Mark Cawardine

Longueur maximale de 2,8 m

Le grand dauphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) peut se rencontrer dans les mêmes zones, mais N'A PAS DE BOSSE sous sa nageoire dorsale



DAUPHIN À BOSSE DE L'ATLANTIQUE (*Sousa Teuszii*)

Les observations, les échouages et les signalements de prises accessoires confirment la présence actuelle ou récente de l'espèce dans les pays suivants :

1 Sahara occidental	11 Togo
2 Mauritanie	12 Bénin
3 Sénégal	13 Nigéria
4 Gambie	14 Cameroun
5 Guinée-Bissau	15 Guinée équatoriale
6 Guinée	16 Gabon
7 Sierra Leone	17 République du Congo
8 Libéria	18 République démocratique du Congo
9 Côte d'Ivoire	19 Angola
10 Ghana	

■ Présence confirmée ■ Présence non confirmée ■ Aire de répartition probable

Sans action de conservation, cette espèce pourrait disparaître

Actions requises :

- Sensibilisation
- Réduction des menaces
- Renforcement des capacités

MENACES IMMÉDIATES NÉCESSITANT UNE ACTION

- Prises accessoires (captures accidentelles) dans les engins de pêche
- Braconnage
- Perte et dégradation des habitats

MENACES À ÉVALUER

- Surpêche
- Dérangements par le tourisme
- Dérangement par le bruit
- Collisions avec les bateaux
- Changement climatique

LE CONSORTIUM POUR LA CONSERVATION DU DAUPHIN À BOSSE DE L'ATLANTIQUE

CCAHD – Agir en faveur de la conservation à long terme des populations de dauphins à bosse de l'Atlantique et de leurs habitats par la recherche, la sensibilisation, le renforcement des capacités et l'action



COMMENT AIDER ?

Chacun a un rôle à jouer dans la protection de cette espèce. Découvrez comment vous pouvez aider. Rendez-vous sur www.sousateuszii.org pour plus d'informations.



Infographic highlighting the precarious conservation status of Atlantic humpback dolphins (*Sousa teuszii*), available in English, French and Portuguese via the website <https://www.sousateuszii.org/>
Photo: CCAHD

COMMUNICATE

T-016 Maintain and regularly update the Cetacean Specialist Group website: <https://iucn-csg.org/>.

T-018 Prepare monthly social media communications (Facebook, Twitter and website news) on the role of the CSG, CSG activities, process of Red Listing and Red List status of cetaceans.

T-019 Host a CSG Cetacean Red List webinar for the general cetacean conservation community.

Activities and results 2021

ASSESS

Red List

T-020 (KSR 6)

Number of global Red List reassessments completed: 2

Result description: To reflect the recent taxonomic split between Indus and Ganges River Dolphins, new assessments of both *Platanista* species were drafted, reviewed and submitted, but not yet published. A species expert accepted the role of updating the Red List assessments of the Mekong and Ayeyarwady River subpopulations of Irrawaddy Dolphins, and the assessments will be undertaken in 2022.

T-021 (KSR 6)

Number of global Red List reassessments completed: 0

Result description: West Island Hector's and Māui Dolphins (the two *Cephalorhynchus hectori* subspecies) and the Sperm Whale have pending assessments that require final review prior to submission to IUCN for publication.

T-022 (KSR 6)

Number of global Red List reassessments completed: 9

Result description: Ten subpopulation reassessments of Mediterranean cetaceans were published in December 2021, of which seven were assigned to a threatened category. The threatened Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) Mediterranean subpopulation and Common Dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) Inner Mediterranean subpopulation assessments were updated in 2021. Assessments of another three threatened subspecies from the Black Sea are in final draft and will be submitted in 2022. Several subpopulations of Irrawaddy Dolphins are due for reassessment in the coming year. Rice's Whale (*Balaenoptera ricei*) was formerly assessed as a subpopulation (Gulf of Mexico Bryde's Whale, *Balaenoptera edeni*) and that assessment

will be removed and replaced by an assessment of the newly recognized species by summer 2022.

T-023 (KSR 6)

Number of global Red List reassessments completed: 0

Result description: A working group composed of several Chinese experts, the Red List coordinator and several other experts was established to conduct a series of online meetings in 2022 to apply the new methods for assessing extinction to the Yangtze River Dolphin (Baiji).

T-024 (KSR 6)

Number of technical documents provided to support Red List assessments/reassessments: 0

Result description: Guidelines were drafted and edited by Taylor, Reeves, Minton and Braulik, but a process to integrate broader CSG input was not progressed.

Research activities

T-017 (KSR 5)

Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 0

Result description: A short summary paper on the Red List status of cetaceans was submitted to the International Whaling Commission's Scientific Committee

meeting in May 2021, and this was intended as a start for the longer scientific paper. An outline of the paper, including a list of analyses to be conducted, was drafted by a core group of authors. A basic analysis was conducted, and GIS and statistical modelling were underway, to be reviewed by co-authors in early 2022.

PLAN

Planning

T-025 (KSR 8)

Clear membership policy articulated in writing, increase in membership from under-represented groups: 25%

Result description: The CSG leadership reviewed membership criteria and updated wording on the CSG website: <https://iucn-csg.org/membership/>. Terms of reference for Regional Coordinators were developed, including a mandate to help identify and invite new members from under-represented regions and groups. Regional Coordinators were asked to agree to these terms, and it was agreed to appoint two new Co-Coordinator, one each in Asia and South America. A number of new members from under-represented regions were invited to join the group for the new quadrennium.

T-026 (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 0

Result description: Several of the recommendations from the symposium point to conducting a comprehensive Population Viability Analysis (PVA) for Yangtze Finless Porpoises in the wild and oxbow reserves, to determine the size of an *ex situ* metapopulation needed to meet the goals of the Chinese government's action plan. While PVAs have been used for *in situ* and *ex situ* populations of other species separately, it may be possible to conduct a PVA that synthesises the risk of extinction and loss of genetic diversity of the entire Yangtze Finless Porpoise population, by including both the *in situ* and *ex situ* populations with movement between the two. The PVA workshop report outline was drafted but put on hold due to challenges with regard to funding and travel due to the global pandemic. During the last ICPC team meeting for the year, a small group was formed to complete drafting of the 2019 symposium report and advance a hybrid virtual/in-person PVA workshop in 2022.

T-027 (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 2

Result description: Workshops were held in three Atlantic Humpback Dolphin range countries (see report or brief summary here: <https://www.sousateuszii.org/projects/government-stakeholder-engagement-meetings-in-sousa-teuszii-range-countries/>) with funding from the IUCN SSC EDGE Internal Grant. Communication tools for these engagements were developed and disseminated to all Consortium for the Conservation of the Atlantic Humpback Dolphin (CCAHD) members, which include conservation stakeholders in 14 of the 19 possible range countries for the species. These tools include an infographic, which is available in three languages (English, French and Portuguese) via the CCAHD website: https://www.sousateuszii.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CCAHD_h_dolph_english_infog_052521.pdf. A webinar is planned for 2022 to allow those who hosted these initial meetings to share their experiences with the wider CCAHD membership.

T-028 (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies developed: 0

Result description: Species conservation planning is progressing for Atlantic Humpback Dolphins, Indus and Ganges River Dolphins, Franciscanas, and Lahille's Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus gephyreus*). More details on these efforts are available under reporting on other targets. The current strategy is to continue to focus on the selected projects until the anticipated subpopulation prioritisation method is available to aid in selecting new projects. In February 2021, ICPC members joined the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) capture myopathy workshop, the primary goal of which was to develop a better understanding of capture myopathy, which is an essential veterinary consideration for hands-on conservation work with small cetaceans. Risk factors, diagnostic techniques, treatment options and prevention strategies were discussed.

T-029 (KSR 8)

Participation in workshops, meetings and stakeholder engagement involved in river dolphin conservation planning actions: 3

Result description: CSG members played an integral role in the development of a website that features a wide range of resources for conservation planning for river dolphins: <https://www.riverdolphins.org/>. This project also included the drafting of a 'best

practice report' (https://www.riverdolphins.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Global-Best-Practices-in-River-dolphin-Conservation_final-version_July2021.pdf) and a report focusing on conservation needs for Ganges River dolphins (<https://www.riverdolphins.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Ganges-river-dolphin-Action-Plan-Gap-analysis-July2021.pdf>).

ACT

Conservation actions

T-001 (KSR 10)

Number of areas under management for the species or group of species: 2

Result description: The three CSG Deputy Chairs are involved in identification of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) and promotion of their use for conservation management and threat mitigation (note that IMMA designation alone does not mean the area is 'under management'). The CSG Chair acts as a reviewer of IMMA proposals. A virtual workshop held in March 2021 identified 14 new IMMAs in the Black Sea, Turkish Straits and Caspian Sea (<https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/on-international-black-sea-action-day-three-threatened-dolphin-and-porpoise-species-awarded-immas/>). A planned workshop to identify IMMAs in the Eastern Pacific had to be delayed due to pandemic-related travel restrictions but should be held in 2022.

T-002 (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 0

Result description: CSG members are in regular contact with Korean scientists involved in bycatch reduction efforts. However, recent staff changes in one of the organisations in Korea most active on this front have delayed progress.

T-003 (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 2

Result description: The CSG supported three Atlantic Humpback Dolphin range country partners to conduct government engagement workshops to raise awareness among relevant agencies on the conservation status and needs of the species. This was achieved in part through an IUCN SSC EDGE grant. A short summary of the workshops can be found here: <https://www.sousateuszii.org/projects/government-stakeholder-engagement-meetings-in-sousa-teuszii-range-countries/>. Atlantic Humpback Dolphin conservation is now

also featured as a Focal Taxa project on the CSG website (<https://iucn-csg.org/atlantic-humpback-dolphins/>), and the CSG works closely with the CCAHD to support ongoing conservation work in relevant range countries. Funds have been raised to address knowledge and capacity gaps in seven range countries.

T-004 (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 1

Result description: CSG members supported virtual meetings of the Arabian Sea Whale Network (ASWN) in 2021, focusing on collaboration for acoustic research and collection of data from stranding events. ASWN members presented results of their work at the International Whaling Commission's Scientific Committee meeting in May 2021. New members joined the group from Oman, Kuwait, India and Sri Lanka.

T-005 (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 1

Result description: Taiwanese Humpback Dolphins are featured in the Focal Taxa section of the CSG website, thus helping to highlight their precarious conservation status and needs (see <https://iucn-csg.org/csg-special-projects/eastern-taiwan-strait-humpback-dolphins/>).

T-007 (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 2

Result description: CSG members contributed to a WWF-hosted trinational workshop focusing on the three Critically Endangered riverine populations of Irrawaddy Dolphins (see https://www.riverdolphins.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Irrawaddy-Trinational-Workshop-report-2020_Final.docx). The CSG continues to provide technical support to conservation efforts for the Mekong River population of Irrawaddy Dolphins in Cambodia.

T-009 (KSR 10)

Number of actions addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 1

Result description: Health assessment plans are in place for a project off the coast of Argentina in March 2022, to catch, tag, and release up to six Franciscanas to learn about movement patterns relative to

coastal fisheries. A consortium of local and international experts was formed to improve existing rehabilitation protocols for Franciscanas.

Technical advice

T-006 (KSR 11)

Number of intervention letters addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 1

Result description: The CSG website continues to host new scientific reports including reports on the autumn 2021 Vaquita survey. A letter was drafted for the SSC Chair to send in response to the Government of Mexico's plans to formally allow gillnetting within the Zero Tolerance Area.

T-008 (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 1

Result description: CSG and ICPC members are working closely with scientists at the Institute for Hydrobiology who oversee and conduct research on Yangtze Finless Porpoises with a focus on assessing the feasibility of conducting a Population Viability Analysis (PVA), using methods developed for other species by the IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG).

T-010 (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 1

Result description: Collaborations with the organisations currently overseeing local river dolphin rescue operations have been established to help build infrastructure through training local river dolphin first responders and organising data collection to improve long-term conservation efforts.

T-030 (KSR 10)

Number of technical consultations provided to support conservation actions: 1

Result description: CSG members played an integral role in the development of a website that features a wide range of resources for conservation planning for river dolphins: <https://www.riverdolphins.org/>. This project also included the drafting of a 'best practice report' (https://www.riverdolphins.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Global-Best-Practices-in-River-dolphin-Conservation_final-version_July2021.pdf) and a report focusing on conservation needs of Ganges River dolphins (<https://www.riverdolphins.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Ganges-river-dolphin-Action-Plan-Gap-analysis-July2021.pdf>).

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-015 (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in other fields: 1

Result description: The Integrated Conservation Planning for Cetaceans (ICPC) group engaged in intra-group discussions via email and videoconferencing throughout the year.

Synergy

T-011 (KSR 3)

Number of IWC Scientific Committee Meetings attended: 1

Result description: CSG members attended the 2021 IWC Scientific Committee meeting, as well as IWC workshops on Underwater Noise and Climate Change. In addition to contributing to a range of topics and discussions addressed during meetings, CSG members submitted papers to the IWC SC highlighting and explaining both the IUCN Red Listing process for cetaceans, and ICPC.

T-012 (KSR 3)

Number of CMS Scientific Council meetings attended: 1

Result description: The CSG is represented in the CMS Scientific Advisory Group and has provided input and advice related to issues of relevance to cetaceans (bycatch, underwater noise, etc.), listing of cetacean species on CMS Appendices, and the implementation of Concerted Actions for species and populations of concern (including Arabian Sea Humpback Whales and Atlantic Humpback Dolphins, which are featured as both CSG and CMS conservation priorities).

T-013 (KSR 3)

Number of requests answered: Many.

Result description: The CSG had numerous exchanges with the IUCN Global Species Programme, SSC Chair and Marine Conservation Committee (MCC) Chair regarding the Vaquita. There were numerous exchanges with the Global Species Programme to enable the Kate Sanderson grants. The CSG also provided contributions and support for various IUCN World Conservation Congress resolutions related to cetaceans and bycatch of Endangered or Threatened species, and the CSG contributed to an MCC-led cross-taxa discussion of bycatch.

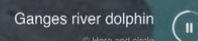
T-014 (KSR 3)

Number of meetings and joint letters or consultations on cetacean conservation issues of shared concern: 1

Result description: Several CSG members continued to serve on the Society for Marine Mammalogy (SMM) Conservation

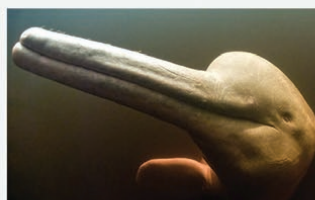
Protecting river dolphins worldwide

River dolphins still swim in some of the world's greatest rivers, but all six surviving species are threatened with extinction. This site provides the best global source of knowledge and solutions that can boost efforts to safeguard these iconic animals - and benefit the people and nature that depend on their rivers.



Ganges river dolphin

© Hero and circle



River dolphins worldwide

Explore this section for information on the remaining species of river dolphin that live in eight of the greatest river basins around the world.



Best practices

Explore this section to learn about ways in which river dolphins are being studied and protected around the world.



Resources

A searchable table of literature allows you to search and filter around 600 documents, ranging from peer-reviewed scientific journal articles to government reports and action plans.

CSG members contributed to the development of the Riverdolphins.org website, that compiles a range of resources and information on conservation threats and priorities
Photo: Riverdolphins.org

Committee and participated in the review of SMM-funded conservation research proposals.

COMMUNICATE Communication

T-016 (KSR 12)

Number of updates posted to CSG website: 7

Result description: Seven news items were posted on the CSG website in 2021 (<https://iucn-csg.org/>), and additional pages were added and refined with content related to Integrated Conservation Planning for Cetaceans (<https://iucn-csg.org/integrated-conservation-planning-for-cetaceans-icpc/>) and Focal Taxa (e.g. <https://iucn-csg.org/atlantic-humpback-dolphins/>).

T-018 (KSR 13)

Number of digital communication outputs developed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 3

Result description: The CSG website and social media sites featured regular updates and news items throughout 2021 (see

<https://iucn-csg.org/>, <https://www.facebook.com/CetaceanSG> and <https://twitter.com/iucncetaceansg>).

T-019 (KSR 13)

Number of communication products using innovative tools: 0

Result description: A short summary paper on the Red List status of cetaceans was submitted to the International Whaling Commission's Scientific Committee meeting in May 2021, and this formed a start for the longer scientific paper, which will also serve as the basis for the content of the first CSG Whole-Membership Webinar in 2022.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge, with thanks, the support given to the Chair by the US Marine Mammal Commission for much of his CSG-related work.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 30

Geographic regions: 18 Global, 2 Africa, 4 America, 8 Asia

Actions during 2021:

Assess: 6 (KSR 5, 6)

Plan: 5 (KSR 8)

Act: 11 (KSR 10, 11)

Network: 5 (KSR 2, 3)

Communicate: 3 (KSR 12, 13)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:

