



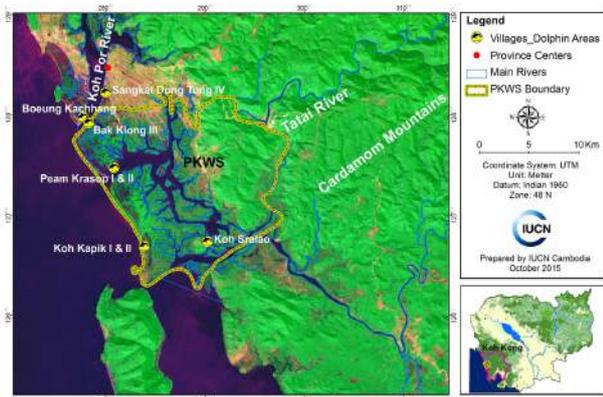
Transboundary Dolphin Conservation in Cambodia and Thailand

Koh Kong Province, Cambodia

Many dolphin populations globally are under threat from a variety of human activities, including destructive fishing gear, pollution, habitat destruction, overfishing and climate change. In the transboundary area along the Thai-Cambodian border, dead dolphins have been found repeatedly in recent years, and urgent action is needed to protect the remaining dolphin populations in this area.

The Transboundary Dolphin Conservation project, implemented by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) from January 2015 to June 2016 in partnership with the Fisheries Administration Cantonment, the Department of Environment of Koh Kong Province, Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary, Cambodia, and the Thai Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR), and funded

by the Swedish Postcode Lottery, aims to improve knowledge and enhance protection of the remaining populations of four dolphin and porpoise species (Irrawaddy Dolphin, Finless Porpoise, Indo-Pacific Humpbacked Dolphin and False Killer Whale) in their coastal and marine habitats in Koh Kong Province, Cambodia and Trat Province, Thailand. In order to address the causes of dwindling dolphin populations, the project is working with local communities and authorities on both sides of the border, to facilitate transboundary collaboration in compiling knowledge, conducting research and implementing conservation initiatives to protect the dolphins while strengthening the capacity of local communities to manage their marine resources sustainably.



Dolphins in Koh Kong Province

Recent boat surveys conducted in Koh Kong Province by IUCN in collaboration with the Fisheries Administration and the Department of Environment suggest that a significant number of dolphins inhabit the area, especially in open waters just outside the mouths of waterways leading in and out of the mangrove forest of Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary in Koh Kong.

Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary

The fisheries and other ecosystem services provided by Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary support approximately 10,000 inhabitants. The project is working with the communities of eight villages in four communes in and around Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary within Koh Kong Province: Koh Kapik, Bak Khlong, Sangkat Dong Tong and Peam Krasop.

Transboundary Initiatives

In order to protect dolphins in the border region, transboundary collaboration between the communities and authorities in Cambodia and Thailand is being facilitated. A Transboundary Marine Mammal Management Committee and a Technical Working Group have been established at a national and provincial level in Cambodia to facilitate collaboration with Thailand. Local authorities, experts and community members from both sides of the border are being involved in joint research, forums and training to exchange experience and knowledge. Community members and experts involved in existing dolphin conservation initiatives in Thailand are providing training and inspiration to Cambodian authorities and communities, and Cambodian communities are providing new information on dolphin behavior and movement.

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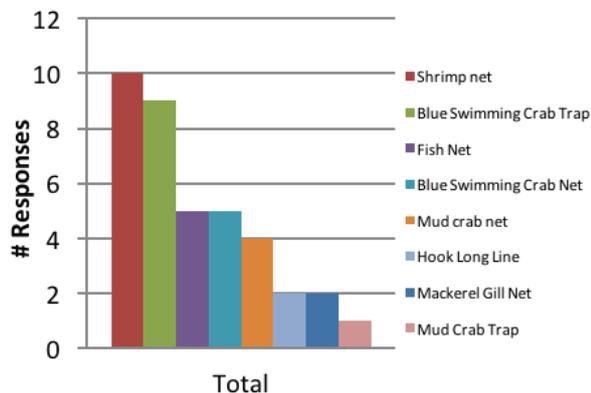


Partners



Community-based knowledge

Surveys of local communities have been facilitated by IUCN, Fisheries Administration Cantonment and Department of Environment Staff including Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary to better understand community livelihoods, knowledge of dolphins and human interactions with dolphins in Koh Kong. Importantly, these surveys indicate that villagers believe that most dolphin deaths occur due to entanglement in fishing gear.



Causes of entanglement reported by villagers around Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary. Note that the most common responses partly reflect how commonly the equipment is used by villagers, and some high risk fishing gear is not listed as it is not used by the community.

Community-led dolphin rescue and research

Fishermen are generally the first to find stranded dolphins or dolphin carcasses, and are best placed to provide early assistance to stranded or entangled dolphins, increasing their chances of survival. A network of willing community members has been established to assist with dolphin rescue and report dolphin deaths, and Thailand's DMCR is assisting to build the capacity of the network and to transfer knowledge from Thailand. Volunteers from each of the target villages are participating in joint training with Community Dolphin Conservation Networks in Thailand to develop their capacity to rescue stranded or entangled dolphins and collect information on dolphin deaths. This information will be critical to pinpoint specific threats to dolphins in Koh Kong.

Scientific research

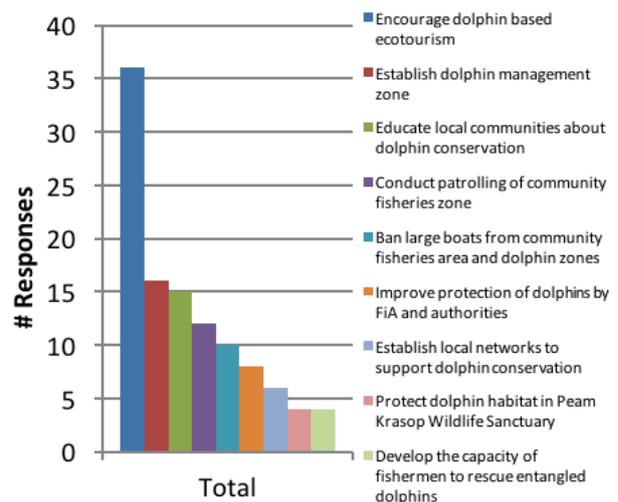
Local communities and authorities will participate in formal dolphin surveys to conduct research on the locations of dolphin populations, the status of their habitat; and establish a database for photo identification which will assist in long-term research into the status and number of dolphins present, migration patterns, and determine dolphin movement between Koh Kong and Trat Provinces.

Supporting dolphin ecotourism

Dolphin watching tourism can drive dolphin conservation by providing alternative livelihoods dependent on the presence of healthy dolphin populations. Poor dolphin watching practices, however, can disturb and threaten dolphin populations. IUCN is working with local communities, the Fisheries Administration Cantonment and the Department of Environment to identify opportunities to integrate sustainable dolphin watching routes into existing and new ecotourism initiatives at Peam Krasop Wildlife Sanctuary. IUCN will also provide support through the definition of best practices for dolphin watching tourism, and developing community capacity to implement and self-regulate best practice operation of dolphin watching ecotourism.

Next steps

There is widespread support amongst local fishing communities in Koh Kong for establishing a dolphin management zone using existing community fisheries regulations, conducting patrols against illegal fishing, establishing a community rescue network, and for developing sustainable dolphin based ecotourism opportunities. These mechanisms aim to ensure the sustainability and continuation of dolphin conservation efforts after the end of the project.



Most common dolphin conservation strategies proposed by villagers in Koh Kong.

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