



WWF

BRIEFING

2011

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WWF's GLOBAL CETACEAN CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

At or near the top of the food web, whales, dolphins and porpoises (cetaceans) are highly vulnerable to harmful human activities in marine and freshwater ecosystems. Bycatch, pollution, collisions with vessels, ocean noise and habitat degradation – to name only a few – are major threats putting many species at risk of extinction. Most of the great whale populations have still not recovered from industrial whaling and small cetacean species are victims of destructive fishing practices and unsustainable coastal development. Bycatch kills an estimated 300,000 whales, dolphins and porpoises each year. The Yangtze River dolphin, the first cetacean species to slip quietly into probable extinction in recent times, did not die from a harpoon but as a result of a range of different threats from unsustainable fishing practices to habitat degradation, the cumulative impact of which this vulnerable species was not able to withstand.

A concerted effort is needed in order to prevent losing another of these iconic species. The WWF Cetacean Conservation Programme aims to focus WWF's resources where they can make the biggest difference.

Species focus: WWF focuses initially on some of the most threatened species of cetacean which require immediate attention – the North Atlantic right whale, the Western North Pacific gray whale, the Hector's dolphin, the Vaquita – as well as several river dolphin species which are on the brink of extinction.

Place based focus: WWF also focuses on ten of WWF's marine priority places that are ecologically important for cetaceans, and five major river basins where river dolphins occur.

Policy: In order to create the necessary enabling environment for cetacean conservation, and to address threats occurring outside the identified priority places

(such as migratory pathways) targeted policy activities at a global level are identified.

Threats: For each WWF priority species/place, threats were identified and ranked according to their scope, severity and urgency, and strategies to mitigate each of the most important threats were developed.

Securing a long term future for cetaceans on our planet is not something that anybody can do alone – effective partnerships with governments, the private sector, communities, scientists, NGOs and civil society are at the heart of WWF's Cetacean Conservation Programme. The marine environment has never been under such heavy pressure, and successful cetacean conservation will call on the ability of people and organisations to work together more than ever before, requiring long-term commitments and synergy of knowledge, skills and resources.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES FOR MARINE CETACEANS

By 2050 viable populations of all marine cetacean species exist in the wild, fulfilling their role in the maintenance of healthy marine ecosystems, and the sustainable development of coastal communities.

Goal 1 – By 2017, four highly threatened marine cetacean populations are stabilised or increasing.

- Addressing bycatch of *North Atlantic right whale* in Eastern Canada. North Atlantic right whales are listed as endangered by IUCN, with less than 400 animals remaining.
- Protecting the *Western North Pacific gray whale* in its primary feeding area off Sakhalin Island, Russia. The Western North Pacific gray whale is critically endangered, with possibly less than 130 animals remaining.
- Addressing bycatch of *Maui's dolphin* in New Zealand. The Maui's dolphin is critically endangered, just 111 animals remaining.
- Addressing bycatch of *vaquita* in the Gulf of California, *Mexico*. The vaquita is critically endangered, with around 245 animals remaining.

Goal 2 – By 2020, priority threats to marine cetacean survival are measurably reduced in at least ten priority seascapes.

- *Arctic Seas* – Priority threats to cetacean species are reduced and resilience to climate change is strengthened.
- *Coastal East Africa* – Cetaceans are benefiting from reduced mortality and critical habitats are secured.
- *Coral Triangle* – Cetaceans are benefiting from reduced mortality and improved community commitment to conservation.
- *Mediterranean Sea* – Priority threats to key cetacean populations (including the endangered fin whale) are reduced.
- *Southern Chile* – Priority threats to key cetacean populations (including the endangered blue whale) are significantly reduced and critical habitats are secured.
- *Southern Ocean (including coastal Argentina)* – Key depleted cetacean populations are stabilised (e.g. franciscana dolphin).
- *Southwest Pacific* – Priority threats to cetaceans are reduced.
- *West Africa* – Priority threats to cetaceans are reduced.
- *Gulf of California* – Large whale populations in the Gulf of California, Mexico, benefit from strict conservation measures.

Goal 3 – By 2020, at least ten policy outcomes at a regional or global level have been secured which increase the protection and conservation of cetaceans and their habitats throughout their range.

- Work on international/regional frameworks; bycatch; commercial whaling; oil and gas exploration and development; ship strikes; climate change adaptation strategies; whale watching tourism in developing countries; critical habitat areas, conservation management plans; and improving basic scientific understanding of cetacean populations, particularly for species listed by IUCN as data deficient.





GOALS & OBJECTIVES FOR FRESHWATER CETACEANS

By 2050 freshwater cetaceans and humans live in harmony in five critical rivers and mutually benefit from fully functioning and healthy river systems.

Goal 1 – By 2020, selected freshwater dolphin and porpoise populations are stabilised or increasing in six river basins.

- *Amazon & Orinoco Basins* – South American river dolphin species¹
- *Yangtze Basin* – Yangtze river finless porpoise
- *Indus Basin* – Indus river dolphins
- *Ganges Basin* – Ganges river dolphins
- *Mekong Basin* – Irrawaddy dolphins inhabiting the Mekong river

GOAL 2: By 2020, relevant policies have been improved at a global level, and the political will and commitment to conserve freshwater dolphins and porpoises and their habitats throughout their range has been increased.

- Work on pollutants, water infrastructure development projects, protected area networks, climate change, bycatch and sustainable dolphin and porpoise watching tourism.

¹ The Action Plan for South American River Dolphins 2010 - 2020, developed jointly by WWF, WCS, WDCS, SOLAMAC and Fundacion Omacha is available at http://assets.panda.org/downloads/the_action_plan_for_south_american_river_dolphins_baja.pdf

SOME ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite the growing pressures in marine and freshwater environments, there have been some notable successes in cetacean conservation across the world. The examples below show what can be achieved, although much more is needed to prevent extinction of several of the species mentioned below. WWF is committed to working with governments, industry and communities to ensure the world's whales, dolphins and porpoises have a long term future in the wild.



CANADA / NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE

The Government of Canada moved a shipping lane in the Bay of Fundy to reduce vessel collisions with North Atlantic right whales

MEXICO / VAQUITA

The Mexican government launched a multi-million dollar programme to reduce bycatch of vaquita in gillnets and established a vaquita reserve



NEW ZEALAND / MAUI'S DOLPHIN

The New Zealand government established a gill net ban in large parts of Maui's dolphin habitat

INDIA / GANGES RIVER DOLPHIN


Unregulated fishing has been brought to a complete halt in one project area, and the dolphin population has increased in the upper reaches of the Ganges River

WEST AFRICA / MULTIPLE SPECIES

West African Governments are establishing a wide network of Marine Protected Areas

For more information, please contact

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	<p>Why we are here To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.</p> <hr/> <p>www.panda.org</p>
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