



for a living planet



Small cetaceans

The forgotten whales





One of the world's first large environmental campaigns was 'Save the Whales', launched when out-of-control commercial whaling had caused whale populations to plummet to such levels that many were teetering on the brink of extinction.

However the great whales are only the tip of the iceberg of the fascinating and varied group termed 'cetaceans', which covers whales, dolphins and porpoises. Some of these smaller whales, dolphins and porpoises, termed 'small cetaceans', are just as enigmatic, and often just as threatened, than their larger cousins.

Small cetaceans face a growing number of anthropogenic threats. Hundreds of thousands of small cetaceans die each year through bycatch and direct hunts, with other human induced threats such as habitat degradation, sonar activities, shipping, climate change and pollution also taking their toll.

This report takes a look at the whales that the world forgot, highlighting how small cetaceans suffer from a severe lack of data and information, are less well protected by international conventions than the large whales, and are suffering declines akin to many seen among the large whales. In fact, one small cetacean species, the baiji or Yangtze river dolphin, was recently declared probably extinct by IUCN (The International Union for the Conservation of Nature) – the first cetacean species to suffer this fate at the hands of humans. This report also puts the spotlight on the world's 8 most endangered small cetacean species, many of which have little time left before heading the same way as the baiji. A species of cetacean is no less a critical part of its ecosystem, and no less important to ecosystem and human well-being, if it is small than if it is large.



Why do small cetaceans need our attention?

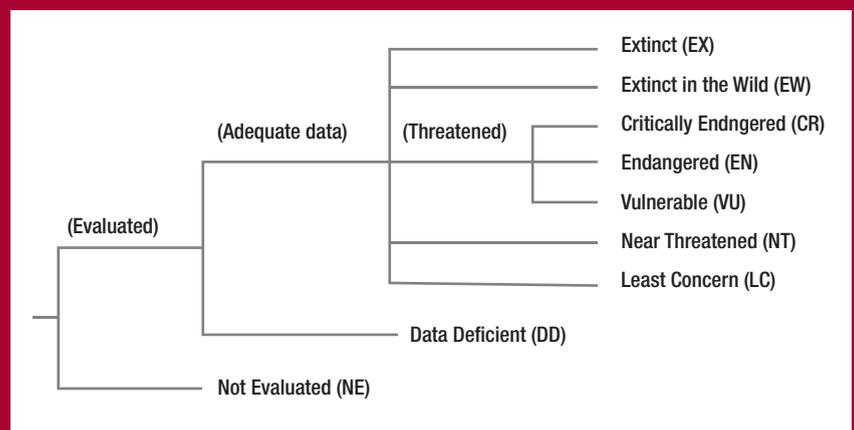


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IUCN Red List Definitions

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ is widely recognized as the most comprehensive, objective global approach for evaluating the conservation status of plant and animal species. Species are categorised into broad groups, as demonstrated in figure 1. The three groups 'Critically Endangered', 'Endangered', and 'Vulnerable' together make up those species considered to be 'Threatened.'

Figure 1: Structure of IUCN Red List categories. Figure taken from 2001 Categories & Criteria (version 3.1) at: www.iucnredlist.org/static/catagories_criteria_3_1



Crippling lack of data on small cetaceans

The first, and one of the most significant, disadvantages small cetaceans have compared to their larger cousins is a crippling lack of data. 40 out of 69 small cetacean species, or 58%, are classified by IUCN as data deficient, meaning there is simply not enough information available to determine whether they are threatened or not. For comparison, 4 out of 15 species (27%) of great whales are listed as data deficient, a much lower proportion, despite the fact that many of the reasons why small cetaceans are difficult to study also apply to the great whales. It must never be assumed that “Data Deficient” means that the species is out of danger—rather, it means that the world’s top scientists just don’t know.

Without even this fundamental level of data, making political decisions in terms of conservation and management for these species is difficult if not impossible. If governments and other decision makers do not have clear scientifically based information on the status and conservation threats to these species, it is very unlikely that important decisions required to conserve those species will be taken, especially if they are politically unpopular (such as reducing fishing effort). Without appropriate scientific evidence, decision making affecting the future of these species is effectively crippled. This lack of data on small cetaceans highlights the urgent need for additional research and analysis of small cetacean species, their habitats and the threats that they face. The IWC Scientific Committee (IWC SC) Sub-Committee on Small Cetaceans would be an ideal place to expand this work.

Small cetaceans in decline

The most important (yet hardest to measure) criterion in determining how well a species is doing is its population ‘trend’

IUCN Red List Categories for Cetacean Species		
Small cetaceans		
IUCN Red list Category	Number of species	%
CR	2	2.9
EN	2	2.9
VU	4	5.8
NT	4	5.8
LC	17	24.6
DD	40	58
Great whales		
IUCN Red list Category	Number of species	%
CR	0	0
EN	5	33.3
VU	1	6.7
NT	0	0
LC	5	33.3
DD	4	26.7

Note: The above tables provide a summary of conservation status of cetacean species according to the IUCN Red List Version 2009.1. This assessment has been done at the level of species only, and therefore masks the fact that many sub-species or sub-populations are listed by IUCN separately as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable.

– i.e. whether the population is increasing in size, decreasing, or staying the same. For conservation purposes, a population which is stable or increasing would indicate a conservation success.

According to the IUCN Red List, all small cetacean species for which the population trend is known are in decline. For the majority of small cetacean species (87%) their trend status is unknown, something which further highlights the fundamental problem of lack of data noted above. For the great whales, the trend is only known for six species (two are stable and four are increasing). The increasing / stable designations for the great whale species do not automatically translate into conservation success as they are primarily a result of the population correcting itself after the dramatic population declines seen after commercial whaling. However the fact that all small cetacean species for which the trend is known are decreasing in abundance should be a warning signal

that highlights the need for increased attention and focus on these animals.

Lack of international policy support for small cetaceans

Several multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) exist to protect and conserve our planet’s wildlife. For cetaceans the key MEAs are the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (also known as CMS or the Bonn Convention) and to a limited degree the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

CITES helps protect species from overexploitation through regulating international trade by including species on one of its three Appendices. Species on Appendix I are those that are threatened, and cannot be traded internationally for primarily commercial purposes. Species on Appendix II include those that are not necessarily threatened with extinction now but may become so unless their trade is strictly regulated; they can be traded internationally, but within strict regulations ensuring that trade is sustainable and legal. Appendix III includes species at the request of the exporting country which needs the cooperation of other countries to help prevent illegal exploitation. Presently 175 countries are a Party to CITES

CMS aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range. CMS provides strictest protection for those species listed on CMS Appendix I. CMS Parties, of which there are 110, must strive

Population Trends for Cetacean Species		
Small cetaceans		
Population trend	Number of species	%
Decreasing	9	13
Unknown	60	87
Stable	0	0
Increasing	0	0
Great whales		
Population trend	Number of species	%
Decreasing	0	0
Unknown	9	60
Stable	2	13.3
Increasing	4	26.7



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towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them. Migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix II. For Appendix II species, the Convention encourages the Range States to conclude global or regional Agreements. The Agreements may range from legally binding treaties (called Agreements) to less formal instruments, such as Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).

There are several CMS Agreements and MOUs relevant to small cetaceans:

- Cetaceans of the Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area – ACCOBAMS
- Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas – ASCOBANS
- MOU for Cetaceans of Pacific Island States
- MOU for Small Cetaceans and Manatees of West Africa

The IWC was set up under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, signed in 1946. There are now 85 member nations to IWC. The main duty of the IWC is to keep under review and revise as necessary the measures laid down in the Schedule to the Convention which govern the conduct of whaling throughout the world. These measures, among other things, provide for the complete protection of certain species; designate specified areas as whale sanctuaries; set limits on the numbers and size of whales which may be taken; prescribe open and closed seasons and areas for whaling; and prohibit the capture of suckling calves and female whales accompanied by calves. In addition, the Commission encourages, co-ordinates and funds whale research, publishes the results of scientific research and promotes studies into related matters such as the humaneness of the killing operations.

Some Governments are of the opinion that the IWC has the legal competence to regulate catches of only the 15 whales recognised by the IWC SC (the baleen

whales and the sperm whale). However small cetaceans have most of the characteristics which originally spurred the recognition that international management was necessary for whales (highly migratory, an international resource, several species harvested unsustainably etc.) Therefore to segregate the two groups entirely makes no sense on either biological or management grounds.

As many IWC contracting parties do recognise that small cetaceans are covered by the IWC, there is a small cetaceans sub-committee of the IWC SC (as noted above). The Small Cetaceans Subcommittee of the IWC SC regularly reviews the status of small cetaceans, evaluates whether levels of human-induced mortality are of conservation concern, and has assessed mortality of small cetaceans due to bycatch – the incidental capture of cetaceans in fishing gear. However all IWC Contracting Governments must recognise the competence of the IWC on small cetacean issues in order for the useful analyses and recommendations



Small cetaceans are less well represented and protected by policy fora than their cousins, the great whales.

I of CMS, which offers the strongest mechanism to stop and reverse the declines in these animals.

- Almost all great whales are listed in the CMS appendices (9 under Appendix I, and 4 under Appendix II), with the exception only of the common minke whales (although they are included in the ACCOBAMS agreement) and gray whales.

One of the reasons behind this lack of representation of small cetaceans in international policy fora could be the

lack of data availability for small cetaceans. In order to list species on the Appendices of either CMS or CITES, a full proposal must be completed by the proponent government, which outlines the case for listing backed up with appropriate scientific evidence. If scientific data is badly lacking for a species, the possibilities of successfully completing a listing process are considerably diminished.

Number of Cetacean Species listed under International Conventions

Small cetaceans

	Appendix I	Appendix II	Not listed
CITES	12 (17.4%)	57 (82.62%)	0 (0%)
CMS	4 (5.8%)	29 (42%)	36 (52.2%)

Note: If species listed under both Appendix I & II, they were only counted under Appendix I

Great whales

	Appendix I	Appendix II	Not listed
CITES	15 (100%) ¹	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
CMS	9 (60%)	4 (26.7%)	2 (13.3%)

Note: If species listed under both Appendix I & II, they were only counted under Appendix I

of the IWC SC Small Cetaceans Subcommittee to be truly effective.

Not only do some governments try to prevent IWC from covering small cetaceans, but small cetaceans are also less well represented and protected by other policy fora than the great whales.

- Relatively few small cetaceans species, only twelve (17%), are listed on Appendix I of CITES, which would provide them with the highest level of protection. 57 (83%) of species are included in Appendix II¹. This compares poorly, in terms of protection, to the great whale species which are all listed on Appendix I.
- For small cetaceans, only 33 out of 69 are listed on CMS Appendices meaning that CMS only covers 48% of small cetacean species.² The majority, 36 species (52%) are not listed at all under CMS. Only four small cetacean species (6%) are listed on Appendix



Rescue of Indus river dolphin which had become trapped in a canal. Sukkur, Province of Sind, Pakistan, Kirthar canal.

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1. Except the population of minke whales off West Greenland, which is included in Appendix II.

2. Except the population of minke whales off West Greenland, which is included in Appendix II

3. It should be noted however that the CMS regional agreements often cover all cetaceans species occurring in the geographical region of coverage, not just those species listed on the appendices of the Convention.

The eight most endangered small

The following summarises the status of and conservation efforts to protect the 8 most endangered small cetacean species across the globe – the species listed as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable in IUCN’s Red List. We have also included some of WWF’s work on these species, with the full appreciation that range state governments and many other NGOs are also working on these species.



1. Vaquita (CR)

1 Vaquita (CR)
The vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*), is the smallest porpoise in the world, and the only cetacean species endemic to North America. However this unique species is in imminent danger of extinction. Current estimates indicate as few as 150 surviving individuals in a population critically threatened by entanglement in gillnets (bycatch).

Following the committed lead of the Mexican government, WWF is working closely with Mexican and international conservation scientists, and a dedicated community of donors, to prevent the extinction of the vaquita.

WWF research helped to bring the crisis to the attention of the current Mexican government, and WWF continues to be a key investor and participant in activities to introduce safe alternative fishing methods, help fishers transition to sustainable alternative livelihoods, and establish the monitoring and enforcement measures necessary to prevent the extinction of the species. Now, for the first time in decades, scientists are increasing the odds in favour of vaquita survival.

2 Yangtze River dolphin or baiji (CR)

2 Yangtze River dolphin or baiji (CR)
The Critically Endangered Yangtze River dolphin, or baiji (*Lipotes vexillifer*), can only live in freshwater and has very poor eyesight. It once lived in the lower and middle reaches of the Yangtze River, Fuchun River, and in Dongting and Poyang Lakes, China. Today it is the world’s most endangered cetacean. Fewer than 100 were thought to survive

in the middle reaches of the Yangtze; however a 2006 survey, supported by WWF among other partners, failed to find any individuals, raising fears that the species has become extinct.

Through a partnership with HSBC, WWF is working on the establishment of a network of protected areas for the Yangtze cetaceans (baiji and finless porpoise). The protection of these species is dependent upon the protection of their habitat. This requires a concerted effort to restore a living river, not only for the cetaceans but also for thousands of other species, and millions of people who rely on the freshwater resources that the Yangtze River Basin provides.

3 South Asian River dolphin (EN)

3 South Asian River dolphin (EN)
South Asian River dolphins are actually comprised of two distinct subspecies, inhabiting the Indus and the Ganges River basins respectively:

The Indus River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica minor*) is one of the world’s rarest mammals. Numbers of this dolphin have dramatically declined since the construction of an irrigation system in the Indus. According to the latest survey



2. Yangtze River dolphin or baiji (CR)

conducted in Pakistan by WWF–Pakistan and the Ministry of Environment, the minimum population of Indus River dolphins is 1,341 animals. A small population of 10-15 dolphins has also been discovered in a 60 km stretch of the River Beas in northern India in 2008.

In addition to efforts to conserve the dolphin’s habitat, including addressing problems such as river pollution, WWF–Pakistan has also been involved, together with local communities, in the rescue of individual dolphins that become trapped in irrigation canals. Other activities include promoting improved agriculture practices, sustainable fishing practices and finding alternative livelihoods for fishermen. WWF–India is developing a conservation plan for the Government of Punjab in northern India that will seek to protect the small population of Indus River dolphins found in the Beas River.

The Ganges River dolphin, or susu (*Platanista gangetica gangetica*), inhabits the Ganges river basin in Nepal, India, and Bangladesh. This vast area has been altered by the construction of more than 50 dams and other irrigation-related projects, with dire consequences for the river dolphins. The Ganges River dolphin lives in one of the world’s most densely populated areas, and is threatened by removal of river water and siltation arising from deforestation, pollution and bycatch. In addition, the construction of dams in the river are separating populations of dolphins from each other. A recent survey conducted by WWF–India and its partners in the entire distribution range in the Ganga and Brahmaputra river system – around 6,000 km - identified fewer than 2,000 individuals in India.

4 Hector’s dolphin (EN) and Maui’s dolphin (CR)

4 Hector’s dolphin (EN) and Maui’s dolphin (CR)
Hector’s dolphin (*Cephalorhynchus hectori*), and its subspecies, Maui’s dolphin (*Cephalorhynchus hectori maui*), live only in New Zealand’s shallow coastal waters – and nowhere else in the world. Hector’s dolphins are listed on IUCN’s

cetacean species on our planet



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3. South Asian River dolphin (EN)

Red List as 'endangered.' Maui's dolphins are even worse off – they are considered 'critically endangered' by the IUCN. Maui's dolphins only live on the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand. Their numbers are estimated at just 111 individuals, making them the rarest of any of the world's 32 marine dolphin species.

WWF has long campaigned for protection measures that will ensure the survival of some of Hector's and Maui's dolphins. Research has clearly identified that the most serious threat they face is entanglement in gill net and trawl fisheries. However, efforts to protect the dolphins are constantly stymied by the self-interest of some inshore fishers. It is this fishing that is likely to cause the extinction of these dolphins.

In 2008, the New Zealand government announced a number of fishing bans to protect Hector's and Maui's dolphins. Several of these were challenged in the New Zealand High Court by representatives of the fishing industry.

The fishers' action to take the government's decision to judicial review flies in the face of strong public opinion in support of protection for these dolphins. WWF-commissioned surveys show that 83 percent of New Zealanders support the banning of gill nets and trawl nets from places the dolphins live, and that 53

percent of people who say they buy fish are less likely to buy fish caught in coastal waters because the nets used threaten Maui's dolphins. Ironically, the resistance of fishers to the dolphin protection measures may hurt their own industry.

WWF is continuing its campaign to ensure these dolphins get the protection they need. We are asking the New Zealand government to develop a species recovery plan that will allow both Hector's and Maui's dolphins to regain their abundance throughout their natural range, and no longer be threatened with extinction.

WWF is also working with schools and communities along the west coast of the North Island, and in the South Island, to show them how they can help protect the dolphins' habitat.

5 Irrawaddy dolphin (VU to CR for most populations)

A few decades ago, the fishers of Burma summoned Irrawaddy dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*) by tapping the sides of their boats with oars. By swimming around the boat, the dolphins would attract fish into nets, and the fishermen would then share their catch with the dolphins. Nowadays, Irrawaddy dolphins are severely threatened by fisheries bycatch, habitat degradation and chemical pollution. The fact that this species lives in the limited habitats of estuaries and freshwater rivers makes it particularly vulnerable to threats from human activities. Today, they are about 6,000 animals in the Indo-Pacific waters.

WWF is particularly concerned about the Mekong River Irrawaddy dolphin population, which has as few as 66-86 individuals in Cambodia. A report recently

showed that, since 2003, there have been 88 dolphin deaths recorded, likely making this population of freshwater Irrawaddy dolphins the most threatened of all the sub-populations, and on the verge of extinction. The results of this study show that the deaths have been caused by a combination of factors such as infectious disease, environmental contaminants, and inbreeding depression. Under normal circumstances, this disease would not be fatal to the dolphins. However, contaminants have weakened the dolphin's natural defences, making it even more vulnerable to the disease. WWF is closely monitoring this population and is developing a recovery plan for the dolphins, bearing in mind that dolphins are not the only potential victims. Local communities also depend on a clean freshwater ecosystem.

6 Atlantic hump-backed dolphin (VU)

The Atlantic hump-backed dolphin (*Sousa teuszii*) is found off the coast of West Africa, from Mauritania to Angola, but its true distribution is insufficiently documented and the species has not been widely studied. This species prefers shallow coastal waters, river channels, and estuaries. Its common name comes from the shape of its unique dorsal fin, which curves to form a distinct hump.

Atlantic hump-backed dolphins are accidentally caught by fishermen in nets (particularly shark nets) but it is thought that some fishermen may intentionally harvest the animals.

In December 2008 WWF's office in West Africa signed an agreement with the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) to conserve the West African Manatee



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4. Hector's dolphin (EN)



5. Irrawaddy dolphin (VU to CR for most populations)

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and Small Cetaceans in Western Africa and Macaronesia. More than 30 small cetacean species will be covered in this agreement, in an area that stretches from Macaronesia, through Morocco to South Africa. This agreement will play a vital role in future conservation efforts by helping to facilitate transboundary cooperation and by providing an international platform to negotiate and coordinate research and conservation measures, especially those tackling the greatest threat to cetaceans in West Africa – bycatch.

7 Finless porpoise (VU to EN, depending on populations)

The finless porpoise (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*) once thrived in the Yangtze River, sharing its habitat with the baiji dolphin. But with the expansion of human economic activity, the species has been squeezed into two lakes and fragmented sections of the Yangtze, where they are only just surviving. There are between 700 and 900 animals in the Yangtze River itself, with about another 500 in Poyang and Dongting Lakes. If conservation actions are not immediately taken, the finless porpoise, may go the same way as the baiji.

The main threats affecting the Yangtze River basin’s ecosystem are shipping, sand dredging, over-fishing and pollution. In Poyang Lake, where the population of finless porpoise is mostly concentrated, sand dredging is conducted at such a high intensity that it has been the principal cause of the death of the local dolphin population. In order to save the species and to create a larger breeding group of porpoises (which is more balanced in terms of age and gender), the Tian’ezhou Reserve has been created to give the porpoises a chance to meet other members of their own species. WWF is putting much effort into the conservation of this semi-wild population and is working on restoring the wetlands in the Central and Lower Yangtze areas, which will not only benefit to porpoises, but also to other key species and local communities.

8 Franciscana dolphin (VU)

The Franciscana dolphin (*Pontoporia blainvillei*) is endemic to the coastal Atlantic waters off central South America (Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay). Although sometimes described as a “river dolphin,” the Franciscana is not a freshwater species: it is found mainly in coastal marine waters (usually limited to waters no deeper than 30 meters) and occasionally in estuaries. The primary threat throughout most of its range is bycatch in fishing nets, especially gillnets. There is no current abundance estimate for the species as a whole, but research suggests that dolphin populations cannot sustain the current level of mortality resulting from bycatch.

Since 2004, WWF and its partners have been working to reduce bycatch of Franciscana dolphins in Argentina. WWF’s associate organization, Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina (FVSA) along with the local NGO Aquamarina – CECIM tested the use of bottom hand-lines as an alternative fishing practice to replace gillnets in Bahia Samborombon and Cabo San Antonio. Hand-lines involve the use of hooks rather than nets, and are therefore much more selective in what they catch. Local fishermen participated in trials using both hand-lines and gillnets; landings of both fishing gear were compared and showed that longlines capture larger fish in size but a smaller volume of fish. A team of fisheries economists are currently running an analysis of yields but the fishermen are not too optimistic about it. In order to move on towards effective solutions to this problem, WWF is now testing with the same group of fishermen the use of reflective gillnets (winner of Smart Gear Competition 2007; see www.smartgear.org) and will compare bycatch of Franciscana dolphins with the ordinary gillnets.



7. Finless porpoise (VU to EN, depending on populations)

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Spotlight on Bycatch – the biggest threat to small cetaceans

Modern fishing gear is very efficient at catching fish, along with many other unwanted and/or untargeted species in its path. These other animals are called bycatch. They are often thrown back into the ocean – dying, or dead. Even if they are used, they are still bycatch: unregulated, unreported, and untargeted.

Indiscriminate fishing makes absolutely no sense. In many cases, bycatch costs fishers time and money, and is a major killer of marine wildlife.

It is estimated that more than 300,000 small whales, dolphins, and porpoises die each year from entanglement in many types of fishing gear – thus bycatch is causing one death every 2 minutes and is the single-largest cause of mortality for small cetaceans.

Gill nets

Gillnets are probably the most problematic fishing gear, and are a major threat to at least five of the eight most endangered small cetacean species documented here. A gillnet is a translucent curtain of net designed to catch fish by their gills or fins; sometimes several kilometres long and 20-30 metres in height. The nets can be anchored to the seafloor, or suspended at or below the surface (driftnets).

Gill nets are intended to catch fish, and occasionally shrimp or other crustaceans. However everything larger than the net’s mesh is also trapped: juvenile fish, non-target fish and sharks, seabirds, crustaceans, marine turtles, invertebrates... and cetaceans. Gillnets that are lost at sea are rarely recovered. These “ghost nets” can continue to capture marine animals for many years.

Solutions

In many cases bycatch is avoidable. Simple solutions exist in many fisheries and for many different types of fishing gear, and many fishers are working



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hard to help reduce bycatch, but much more needs to be done. Gillnets present a particular challenge as bycatch solutions are hard to devise for such an indiscriminate fishing gear.

However there are a few solutions:

- Pingers are small acoustic devices that emit low-intensity sounds at frequencies cetaceans can detect with their sonar. They do not scare or harm the cetacean, rather, they alert the cetacean to the presence of gillnets and discourage the cetacean's approach. However, there are some concerns that pingers may make entire regions off limits to cetaceans for feeding, or that habituated cetaceans may associate the sound of a pinger

with a readily available source of food (the fish in the net).

- In mid-water driftnets, researchers have tried to reduce cetacean bycatch by impregnating the nylon of gillnets with a dense material, such as barium sulphate and iron oxide. It is thought that this increases the acoustic reflectivity of the net and allows cetaceans to detect the gillnet and avoid becoming entangled. Another technique trialled is placing objects in the gillnet to reflect the sonar, thus ensuring cetaceans have an easier time detecting and avoiding the nets.
- Marine Protected Areas, short term, seasonal or permanent time/area

closures and/or gear restrictions may provide the clearest opportunity to help affected populations recover. These site-based fisheries management tools offer an effective and practical way to reduce bycatch and can be combined with enforced measures to implement more selective fishing gear.

These and many other techniques are available on a WWF interactive data base of bycatch solutions – listing over 80 different modifications currently in use all around the world to reduce bycatch for 16 different gear types. The database is searchable by gear, bycatch type, region/ target species and includes images and descriptions. WWF also holds a 'Smart Gear' competition every year, which rewards practical, innovative fishing gear designs that reduce bycatch. Smart Gear offers a US\$30,000 grand prize, and two runner up prizes of \$10,000. For more information visit www.smartgear.org

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Why are small cetaceans so important?

Small cetaceans fulfil a critical role in the ecosystems in which they live, stabilising and ensuring a healthy and productive system. Small cetaceans are also part of the highly profitable whale and dolphin watching industry, which generates over US\$1 billion per year, involving more than 492 communities in 87 nations. Communities which obtain livelihood and other benefits from whale watching enterprises often have few other alternative income sources, which heightens the importance of whale and dolphin watching for these areas. Finally, small cetacean conservation projects often deliver real benefits for local communities. One example of a conservation project supporting the Ganges river dolphin in India improved water quality which benefited local people as well as the dolphins, and significantly strengthened local governance systems in the village, enabling the community to more sustainably manage their natural resources⁴.



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4. For more information please read *Linked Futures*, http://assets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_mdgsummary_06.pdf



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Conclusion



It is clear that small cetaceans – the world's 'forgotten whales', have less known about them and are less well protected by intergovernmental fora than the great whales, and that many species of small cetacean are in significant decline. The eight most endangered species of small cetaceans teeter on the brink of extinction at the hands of human-caused threats such as bycatch, pollution and habitat loss.

Why is it that these small cetaceans haven't received the attention they need? One explanation may be that unsustainable commercial whaling - which rallied massive public opposition when it was responsible for the near extinction of several whale species in the last century – was focussed primarily on great whale species.

However whilst the great whales are now protected (to an extent) by the international commercial whaling moratorium, small cetacean hunts continue around the globe, largely unmanaged and unchecked by the international community. The Japanese hunt of Dall's porpoise for example has been highlighted by the IWC SC several times as unlikely to be sustainable. However the Japanese government has simply ignored IWC SC recommendations to reduce quotas, claiming that IWC does not have competence over small cetaceans.

It is time that this wholly inadequate excuse for avoiding full and proper management of small cetacean species is eliminated, and for all IWC Contracting Parties to acknowledge that the IWC covers all cetaceans, large and small alike. It is time for the IWC Contracting Parties to take full responsibility for the conservation future of small cetaceans.

In addition it is critical that the IWC considers small cetaceans as a priority issue to be discussed with equal importance as commercial whaling, scientific whaling and sanctuaries. If small cetaceans are not central to negotiations on current whaling, it is possible that conservation successes achieved for great whales could simply result in a shift of problems from great whales to small cetaceans. For example, there are concerns that any limitation placed on pelagic or 'scientific' whaling would do nothing to alleviate, and might even worsen, the pressure on populations of small cetaceans that are already being subjected to unsustainable takes, such as the Dall's porpoise in Japan. The quadrupling of the Dall's porpoise catch in the late 1980s, soon after the moratorium on commercial whaling was put in place, is one indication of the link between whaling and small cetacean hunts. If the IWC is to become an effective body, it must embrace the principles of Ecosystem Based Management and consider the impact of its decisions on a broader range of species than great whales alone.

WWF looks forward to continuing and strengthening its work on small cetacean species into the future, and working collaboratively with the IWC and its contracting governments to ensure that our species is not responsible for any more small cetacean extinctions.