



BRIEFING

INT

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Main © Omacha Foundation Fernando Trujillo, Inset © Jeffrey Davila / WWF-Peru



TUCUXI RIVER DOLPHINS

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *SOTALIA FLUVIATILIS*

POPULATION We don't know the exact number left of these dolphins, but we do know that the numbers are decreasing. The species is classified as data deficient by IUCN.

MORE ABOUT THEM

The Tucuxi is the smaller, gray counterpart to the Amazon River dolphin. It looks more like its marine cousins and just like them, the tucuxi jumps playfully out of the water, which is a beautiful sight. Its scientific name is *Sotalia fluviatilis*, which means dolphin 'of the river'. The freshwater species is found throughout the Amazon and Orinoco river basins. The Tucuxi travels in groups of about 10-15 individuals and has a highly developed social structure.

WHY IS THE TUCUXI RIVER DOLPHIN THREATENED?

Development and infrastructure —such as the construction of dams—continues to challenge Tucuxi populations by fragmenting their range and limiting their breeding opportunities. Scarcity of migratory fish which the Tucuxi feeds on also poses a threat. Additionally, they are suffering from being caught in fishing nets, and mercury poisoning due to gold mining is a particular concern for this species.

WHAT IS WWF DOING?

WWF is using quadcopter drones to spot and count individuals in the Brazilian Amazon as our priority is to gather an accurate count of the population. By doing this, we are capturing the much needed data to determine future necessary actions to protect this specie. In parallel we are also working on addressing the major threats to the species, namely mercury contamination due to gold mining, overfishing and poorly planned dam construction.



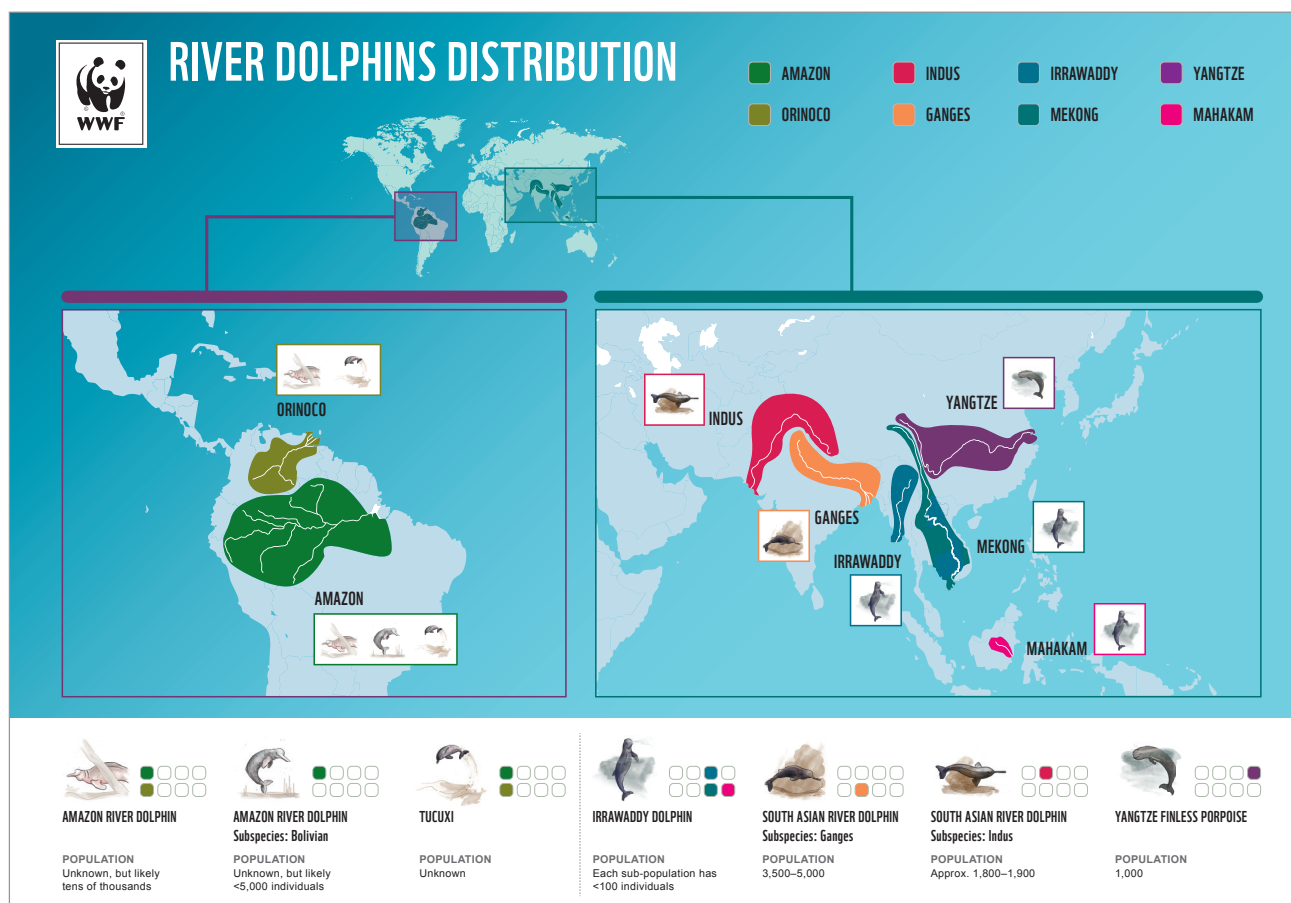
HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Only by building and growing a strong global community of partners will we be able to secure the long-term future of river dolphins.

WWF is excited to work with local and global partners on key projects including:

- establishing baseline population numbers and range data;
- working with key local (and inter) national industries to transform their business practices and adopt water stewardship practices;
- creating a global movement to unite and inspire governments, businesses and communities to secure the long-term future of river dolphins, their rivers and the communities that depend on them.
- working towards a signed Inter-Governmental Declaration by 2021 to protect river dolphins worldwide.

**JOIN US.
TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE
THIS HAPPEN.**



RIVER DOLPHINS AT RISK

River dolphins are found in 15 countries, covering some of the world's most ecologically diverse river basins, including the Yangtze, Mekong, Indus, and Ganges in Asia and the Orinoco and Amazon basins in South America.

There are however only **five existing species** of river dolphins left in the world today and **they are all endangered or critically endangered**.

WWF's answer to disrupt and reverse this trend is to build a global movement, the River Dolphin Initiative, to secure the long-term future of river dolphins, their rivers and the communities that depend on them.

Our vision is that by 2030, we will have stopped the decline of river dolphin populations in Asia and South America and will have restored and doubled the most threatened populations.

There are three major global threats to river dolphins:

- Unsustainable fishing and fishing-related activities. In Asia, (illegal) bycatch is the number one cause of river dolphin mortality. In South America, intentional killing of river dolphins for fish bait and meat affects several thousand dolphins per year.
- Infrastructure projects that affect habitat connectivity, including hydropower dams, irrigation barrages and

embankments. In Asia, river dolphin habitat has decreased by 50–70% and in South America by 10%. Asia and South America are in the grips of an infrastructure explosion; for example, with hundreds of dams planned in the Amazon, and a potential giant dam in the lower Mekong (Sambor).

- Mining, agriculture and industrial development that degrade water quality. Deteriorating water quality due to agriculture runoff and industrial effluents is a serious threat to dolphins in Asia, while mercury poisoning due to gold mining has been found in dolphins in both Asia and South America.

HOW WILL WE DELIVER THIS INITIATIVE?

WWF has long-term river dolphin conservation experience, but we know that we cannot bend the curve alone. Our solution is to mobilize a powerful global community of partners to secure the future of river dolphins and the communities that depend on healthy and productive freshwater ecosystems.



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