



Content

Dear Dolphin Friend,

The Year of the Dolphin 2007 has given an opportunity to present one species of dolphin each month in more detail. April's dolphin is the Irrawaddy-Dolphin, a species that is not known very well. However there is much to learn about this dolphin species.

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Irrawaddy Dolphin

Where and how do Irrawaddy Dolphins live?

Irrawaddy-Dolphins live in shallow coastal waters of the tropical Indo-Pacific, off the coast of Indonesia, North Australia and South East Asia. The animals prefer to stay very close to the coast and river mouths. They are usually classified as a marine species although some animals spend their whole life in fresh water, e.g. the Irrawaddy-River, which gave its name to the species.



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Irrawaddy-Dolphins are slow swimmers surfacing with a leisurely roll. They can remain underneath the surface for up to 12 minutes. They rarely show themselves above the surface of the water, but sometimes may make low horizontal leaps. They may also do something called 'spy hopping', which is the name given to the activity of poking their heads out of the water - perhaps to have a good look around. They have also been seen to spit water from their mouths whilst spy hopping!

The dorsal fin of the animals has the shape of a triangle with a blunt tip. With their rounded head Irrawaddy-Dolphins they resemble Belugas and Indian Harbor Porpoises.

Irrawaddy-Dolphins are endangered

The primary threat is incidental entanglement in gill nets, where they suffocate painfully. Other threats include habitat loss and human disturbance, including vessel collision.

The Irrawaddy-Dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) is listed on Appendix II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). Since then its conservation status has deteriorated. At its last meeting, the CMS Scientific Council acknowledges the existence of two distinct species of Irrawaddy-Dolphin: One differentiates between the *Orcaella brevirostris*, which occurs in five fresh water systems in Southeast Asia and the newly described *O. heinsohni*, which lives in coastal waters of North Australia and southern New Guinea.

There is no assessment of the total population of these species; they are "data deficient". However, several geographically isolated groups merely consist of a few individuals. In 2006 the fresh water population in the Irrawaddy, Mahakam, Mekona and Sonkhla Rivers were classified as "critically endangered" by IUCN, the World Conservation Union. The CMS Scientific Council has responded positively to the proposal to include the Irrawaddy Dolphin on Appendix I at the next Conference of CMS Parties.

Improved protection for Irrawaddy-Dolphins

To better protect the critically endangered Mahakam population of Irrawaddy-Dolphins, WDCS supports a team in the field to raise awareness among school children in the nearby villages. This educational activity aims to raise interest in these animals and to inform on their role in the ecosystem. [More...](#)

Within the framework of the Year of the Dolphin, Global Nature Fund, official supporter of the campaign, is active in conserving the habitats of Irrawaddy-Dolphins in the Mahakam area in Indonesia.

More information on the project:

www.globalnature.org/irrawaddy-dolphin

[More Information](#)

[Irrawaddy Dolphin](#)

[New on \[www.yod2007.org\]\(http://www.yod2007.org\): dolphin quiz and dolphin diploma](#)

Do you actually know the characteristic difference between an Irrawaddy-Dolphin and a Bottlenose or Common Dolphin? You will learn this and other exciting facts about dolphins if you participate in our current dolphin quiz...

Furthermore, children and young people can receive a dolphin diploma certificate for their active role in protecting dolphins.

Visit www.yod2007.org under join in and please pass the news on!