



## YoD Newsletter May 2008

Supporting on the ground conservation

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### YoD Priority Projects



We would like to introduce you to a selection of dolphin conservation projects. These projects were chosen by an expert panel and are of special value to the species and habitats they deal with.

The projects were chosen from a large selection by the Cetacean Liaison Group (CLG), an international panel of dolphin and whale conservation experts active in all parts of the world. The CLG chose them based on their potential to strongly impact cetacean conservation in their respective focus areas. YoD Partner WDCS (Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society) will play an active part in the implementation of the projects.

If you find one of the projects especially appealing, you can donate to make it happen. We (will) provide the necessary information along with a project description on the YoD website.

We will support these projects through fundraising, channelling of donations and awareness raising. For this purpose, we have chosen one project each from

1. The ASCOBANS agreement area (ASCOBANS is the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Baltic and North Seas)
2. The ACCOBAMS agreement area (ACCOBAMS is the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black and Mediterranean Seas)
3. The South Pacific Islands region
4. The South Asian region
5. The West African coastal region

A detailed outline and explanation of the projects' goals and structure can be found on the website. Here's some introductory information.

Project Nr. 1: Effects of Contaminants on Reproduction in small Cetaceans (Harbour Porpoises and Common Dolphins)

This study will assess the impact of contaminants on the reproduction of small cetaceans, and produce data for use in comparisons and modelling. It will use samples from Common Dolphins and Harbour Porpoises that stranded along the English and Welsh coastlines. Reproductive problems can be caused by many factors including genetic defects, infectious disease, degenerative changes,

neoplasia or aging (senescence), nutritional or environmental stress and others.

Over the last years, results from a large number of studies have been contributing to the growing evidence of the endocrine disruptors in the environment. If the results identify that contaminants have an adverse effect on individual reproductive capabilities, both species would be more vulnerable to exploitation, especially from other anthropogenic activities such as incidental capture, and would not necessarily recover from exploitation in a predictable way.

#### Project Nr. 2: Conservation of relict Common Dolphins in the central Mediterranean Sea

Once one of the most common cetacean species in the Mediterranean, the common dolphin has declined throughout the region during the last 30-40 years. Intensive research has documented the risk of complete eradication for common dolphins living in the eastern Ionian Sea.

Meaningful conservation action to protect common dolphins in the Mediterranean should include both top-down (basin-wide management) and bottom-up approaches (small-scale actions). While top-down action is important to develop a regional policy and institutional awareness, bottom-up initiatives are more likely to ensure timely progress in the conservation of critically endangered dolphin groups, particularly in areas where public awareness is scarce, institutional commitment to conservation is moderate, and problems are acute.

This project aims to create local awareness of the need to protect the marine ecosystems of which dolphins are one of the most charismatic components, and promote sustainable fishing and respect for natural heritage.

The project will include activities in the fields of:

- Scientific monitoring of remaining Dolphin populations
- Awareness and Education
- Capacity building
- Conservation and Management

#### Project Nr. 3: Training to Pacific Islands Region scientists on cetacean research and conservation techniques and assessment of cetacean populations in the proposed World Heritage Seascape in Fiji

The Pacific Island Region contains 22 Pacific Island Countries and Territories, as well as a portion of the Australian continent, both the North and South Islands of New Zealand, and a portion of the Hawaiian Islands. The region supports a range of globally threatened species including at least 30 cetaceans. Threats to cetaceans in the Pacific Island Region include fisheries bycatch, habitat degradation, drive hunts, live captures for captive display and export, and "scientific" whaling.

This project will consist of a training course on cetacean population assessment techniques for scientists and conservationists (9-12 persons) from the Pacific Islands Region, an intensive cetacean survey in the proposed UNESCO World Heritage Seascape in Fiji conducted by the training course participants, and follow-up mentoring of 2-3 graduate students from the Pacific Islands in cetacean studies.

The objectives of this project are to:

- Increase the capacity of local scientists in the Pacific Islands Region
- Assess the conservation status of cetacean populations in Fiji
- Integrate cetacean conservation into protected area planning for Fiji and others
- Strengthen cooperation among Pacific Island Countries and Territories in support of the CMS Memorandum of Understanding for Pacific Islands Cetaceans
- Identify and mentor 2-3 graduate students from the Pacific Islands Region to continue and build up cetacean work initiated by this project

Indicators of achievement will include:

- Scientists and conservationists from the Pacific Islands Region trained in cetacean population assessment techniques and approaches for conservation management
- Cetacean concerns integrated into marine protected area planning in Fiji
- Information generated and published in a science journal and popular articles in the local and international media on the status of cetaceans and management strategies for their protection in the proposed UNESCO World Heritage Seascape in Fiji
- Increased awareness and cooperation among government officials, NGOs, and local communities on cetacean conservation

#### Project Nr.4: Workshop on the Biology and Conservation of Cetaceans in South Asia

Marine and freshwater environments in Asia support the greatest number of cetacean species threatened with extinction. A fundamental gap in the information needed for conserving Asian cetaceans is the general lack of attention that has been given to reviewing the biology and developing conservation recommendations for marine species in South Asia.

In 2004-2005, the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCCS) sponsored a project to Conduct Training Courses for South Asian Scientists and an Assessment of Coastal Cetacean Populations in the Bay of Bengal. This project gave intensive training and field experience to a core group of scientists.

The Workshop on the Biology and Conservation of Cetaceans in South Asia proposes to bring together scientists to review recent progress and establish research and conservation priorities for cetaceans in South Asia, and to involve high-level government officials with developing a Regional Agreement on the Conservation of Cetacean in South Asia under the auspices of CMS. The idea would be to convene a three-day scientific workshop with 2-3 representatives from each South Asia nation (Bangladesh, India, Iran, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), followed by a two-day meeting of high-level government officials from these same countries. A preliminary report of the scientific workshop would be presented to the officials at this meeting and a preliminary regional agreement would be drafted.

The project based in West Africa will be added to the website as soon as possible.

For more detailed information about the YoD Priority Projects, please visit [www.yod2008.org](http://www.yod2008.org)

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