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Marine

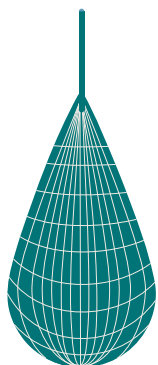
An Assessment of Cetacean Mortality in the Tuna Gillnet Fisheries of Pakistan



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Each year several marine cetaceans are found stranded along the Pakistani coastline. The cause of their mortality remains unknown, although entanglement is suspected as the primary reason. This project supplements the scarce information about cetaceans along the entire coastline of Pakistan. A 24 month long assessment of cetacean mortality in tuna gillnet fishing is providing support in devising a mitigation strategy for the protection of threatened marine mammals such as Fraser dolphins (*Lagenodelphis hosei*) and humpback whales (*Megaptera novaengliae*). The project is particularly focusing on the issue of entanglement in gillnets, thereby addressing the often ignored issue of by-catch.

In general, the information collected through the project will be used to prepare a strategy to protect threatened marine mammals of Pakistan. The strategy will be designed after consultation with the government and all other stakeholders. This project is not only helping in protecting cetaceans from mortality but is also helping in increasing their data in the Indo-Pacific region and increasing the potential for regional research and collaboration. Data collected will aid in developing conservation methods to avoid cetacean by-catch.



Project Objectives

- Monitor monthly landings of tuna and by-catch species at the major tuna landing centres in Pakistan over a 24 month period.
- Estimate fishing efforts engaged in tuna fishing on monthly basis.
- Monitor frequency of cetaceans' mortality in tuna gillnet boats on a monthly basis.
- Identify subspecies of cetaceans that are killed in tuna gillnet operations in Pakistan.

- Monitor frequency and mortalities of other non-target cetaceans (such as turtles) in tuna gillnet boats on a monthly basis.
- Quantify live enmeshed cetaceans successfully released in tuna gillnet operations in Pakistan.

Project Achievements

The project collected data throughout the year and made around 60 successful trips to project areas. This is the first time such an initiative have been piloted in Pakistan, which provides sufficient data to understand the gillnet fisheries of the country.

By-catch is neglected to a great extent in fisheries but through the project WWF can make informed decisions and develop management and species action plans for conservation.

Trained fishers have also played an important role and have disseminated lessons learnt to other fishermen who are adopting safe release practices of endangered animals, such as sea turtles, whale sharks and even manta rays. It was found that tuna gillnet fleets released around 6,000 green turtles, 28,000 olive ridley turtles, five whale sharks and one mobula safely back into the sea.

The project, while focused on looking at cetacean mortality, was also able to record that tuna gillnet fleets result in mortality of approximately 11,000 cetaceans caught as by-catch during a year.

All these findings have resulted in a cetacean action plan which has been drafted and discussed with stakeholders.

Recommendations

Considering the importance of such initiatives to reduce by-catch in gillnets, WWF-Pakistan is looking for further support to continue and upscale the by-catch project. In this regard, the following initiatives are our priority:

- Upscale our awareness programme with local skippers for the protection of threatened species in tuna gillnet by-catch.
- Organize trainings for skippers and fishermen in the safe release of entangled non-target animals such as turtles.
- Trace migration routes of turtles and other species through tagging and identification marking.
- Establish a database of tuna fisheries in Pakistan and other regional countries.
- Test technologies to reduce by-catch e.g. pingers, lights etc to deter animals away from the nets.
- Promote regional collaboration for reduction of by-catch and conservation of marine animals.
- Initiate an award scheme for skippers who demonstrate best practices in reducing by-catch.



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WWF-Pakistan Marine Goal


To conserve marine biodiversity of Pakistan through a multi-stakeholder participatory approach.



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Cetacean found in Pakistan

Blue whale, Bryde's whale, humpback whale, sperm whale, cuvier beaked whale, killer whale, Indopacific humpback dolphin, bottlenose dolphin, spinner dolphin, pantropical spotted dolphin, long beaked common dolphin, Risso's dolphin, and finless porpoise

	<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>
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