

Report of the Standing Working Group on Whale Watching

The Conservation Committee is invited to:

- i) Note and provide comments on the update from the SWGWW*
- ii) Endorse the proposed interim workplan (2020-21) for the SWGWW and the associated budget*
- iii) Endorse the editorial protocol for the WW Handbook (Document CC/68A/07.1.1/01)*
- iv) Endorse the revised IWC Guidelines and Principles for Whale Watching (Document CC/68A/07.3/01)*

Background

A primary role of the Standing Working Group on Whale Watching (SWGWW) is to provide oversight of the delivery of actions under the IWC Strategic Plan for Whale Watching 2018-2024 endorsed by the Commission at IWC67. A significant focus in recent years has been the development of the IWC Online Whale Watching Handbook.

At IWC67 the Commission endorsed the following SWGWW workplan for the intersessional period 2018-2020:

- Maintain, update and further develop the Whale Watching Handbook
- Implement the 2018-2024 Strategic Plan
- Gain additional industry (both small-capacity and larger-capacity operators) input into the SWGWW, the Handbook and the implementation of the 2018-2024 Strategic Plan
- Support the IORA Network on Sustainable Whale Watching

This report updates on activities during the intersessional period 2018-2020, and includes proposals for an interim workplan for 2020-21. A new four year workplan will be developed over the next year and presented to IWC68.

1. The IWC Online Handbook on Whale Watching

1.1 Development of new content

The original content and website for the IWC online Whale Watching Handbook were developed throughout 2017 and 2018 and the Handbook was endorsed at IWC67.

In September 2019 Gianna Minton was contracted to develop and manage content for the Handbook with a focus on new content for the handbook, investigating whether content for industry could be improved and some update of existing content. A list of potential new case studies and country profiles was compiled based on suggestions from SC WW subcommittee members as well as various IWC or CMS contracting governments, and refined with the Whale Watching SWG. Subsequently, Minton worked with Government representatives and various other experts to produce six new country profiles (Canada, Chile, Dominica, Ecuador, Greenland and Maldives) and three new Case Studies (on ACCOBAMS High Quality Whale Watching, San Ignacio Lagoon, Mexico and practical aspects of enforcement of WW regulations). This new content has now all been approved and uploaded to the Handbook website.

Discussions on Handbook content with industry representatives led to the conclusion that the existing industry content for the Handbook was largely appropriate. Some suggestions were made regarding additional resources and links to add to the 'downloadable resources' section of the site, including the development of a new page with specific content for whale watching guides and educators. Minton

thus assembled a compilation of links to external websites and resources that may be of interest to guides and a modest addition was made to her contract for a production of a series of factsheets on topics of interest to whale watching customers that can be printed and laminated or displayed on a tablet. These can be accessed [here](#).

The Handbook's [searchable table of literature](#) was updated with new information provided by the Scientific Committee at SC68a and papers published since May 2018 and a further update undertaken after SC68B. The table now features the details and abstracts of over 450 reports and peer-reviewed journal articles on whale watching.

1.2 Engagement with CMS and Handbook translation

The SWGWW expresses its continued gratitude to the CMS for their efforts to translate the handbook into Spanish and French, and their commitment to also translate the new Handbook content. The potential for further joint work with CMS and other IGOs will be discussed during the next year, and proposals presented to IWC68.

1.3 Editorial Protocol for the Online Whale Watching Handbook

Following discussions at SC68a and other meetings in 2019, a draft Editorial Protocol for managing Handbook content (Document CC/68A/07.1.1/01) has been developed by the Secretariat, with input from the SWGWW. This sets out the process and responsibilities for identifying, developing and sign off of new content and other updates, including for input by the Scientific Committee. This was used to guide the drafting of new content for the handbook, which was reviewed and approved according to the proposed protocol. At its meeting in May 2020 (SC68B) the Scientific Committee endorsed this Editorial Protocol. In doing so, it highlighted the need for discussion and compromise between the Commissioners, Scientific Committee, and regional experts when drafting and approving content for the Handbook, in order for the Handbook to remain neutral and unbiased and recommended that this continue to be taken into account in the application of the Protocol.

The Conservation Committee is invited to note these comments from the SC and to endorse the editorial protocol.

2. Promotion of the Whale Watching Handbook

Analysis of Handbook use from its launch in 2018 to March 2020 shows that visitor numbers are climbing slowly and now average 156 individual visitors per day. Whilst the Handbook has been accessed by people in 205 countries, the majority (66%) of visitors use the English language section rather than the French or Spanish pages. The current outreach plan has three main aims: to identify key opportunities to raise awareness of the Handbook within specific audience sectors, (for example when new content is published); to generate a regular flow of information about the Handbook on social media; and to increase awareness of the French and Spanish language sections.

A 'Species of the Week' feature was launched in April using the IWC website and Twitter feed, with simple quiz questions, the answers to which can be found on the relevant species page of the Handbook. In recognition of the unique home-schooling arrangements in place in many countries at that time, a children's artwork competition was part of Species of the Week. A promotional banner and bookmarks have also been created for use at conferences, exhibitions and lectures.

Proposed activities for further promotion of the Handbook are in Annex 1.

3. IWC General Principles for Whale Watching

At its meeting in 2019 (SC68A) the Scientific Committee drew attention to the need to update the IWC General Principles for Whale Watching, which had not been updated since 1996, and recommended the approval and adoption of a revised document, which was drafted and approved by the SC WW

Subcommittee during SC68A. SC68B reiterated this recommendation. The primary changes were to incorporate issues that have arisen, or become more prominent within the whale watching industry over the past 20+ years (e.g. swimming with whales, the emergence of new technologies).

The SWG WW endorses these revisions (Document CC/68A/07.3/01) and recommends the revised IWC General Principles for Whale Watching to the Conservation Committee for endorsement. It further recommends that intersessional endorsement is sought from the Commission and that, following this, the document should be updated on the IWC website and online Whale Watching Handbook as soon as possible.

4. Collaboration with the Scientific Committee

The new Handbook content was submitted to the SC for review at SC68B and revised on the basis of comments received. The SC welcomed the new Handbook content, recommended that the promotion of the Handbook continue and that Contracting Governments and Scientific Committee members continue to provide relevant and up-to-date information.

At the same meeting, the Scientific Committee noted an ongoing need to effectively interact with the Conservation Committee and the SWGWW generally, but with particular regard to the Whale Watching Handbook. It was observed that discussion would be useful on the mechanism for offering input to the Handbook, and agreed that the Chair of the WW Subcommittee (Leslie New) would liaise with the Secretariat and the Chair of the Conservation Committee's Standing Working Group on Whale Watching to determine the most appropriate way forward and present the results of these discussions at SC68C.

The SWGWW notes the important work of the SC subcommittee on WW, and agrees with the need for closer collaboration, including on the WW handbook and on development of a new four year workplan for WW. It therefore looks forward to discussions with New and suggests that this also be discussed at the next meeting of the Joint CC-SC Working Group.

5. Cooperation with the IORA Network on Whale Watching

The first newsletter of the whale watching network of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was circulated in 2019 and featured an article on the WW Handbook. The SC WW sub-committee has established an intersessional correspondence group for cooperation with IORA which has been inactive to date but progress will be reviewed at SC68C.

6. Interim Workplan SWGWW 2020-2021

The SWGWW proposes the following interim workplan for 2020/21:

- **Consolidation and maintenance of the IWC WW Handbook including:**
 - Working with CMS to finalise and upload translations for all existing and new content
 - Modest updates to existing content requested by countries/data providers
 - Updating the searchable table of literature following the SC68C
- **Promotion of the WW Handbook**

Proposals are contained in Annex 1 and will be discussed in the virtual CC intersessional meeting
- **Development of a four year workplan for Whale Watching**

In collaboration with the SC WW Subcommittee and including a review of implementation of the IWC Strategic Plan to date to help identify priorities.

7. Proposed Budget for the SWG WW 2020-21

The proposed budget for 2020-21 is £16,500 of which £7,000 will be provided in-kind by CMS. This in addition to those activities that will be undertaken by the Secretariat (with existing Secretariat funds). Details are provided in Annex 2.

Given the extent of work needed to facilitate outstanding Handbook translations and associated updates it is proposed to let a contract for 2021 for the work in Annex 2. However, this contract will also facilitate a transition for ongoing maintenance (including day to day updates) in future years being undertaken in house by the Secretariat . Proposals will be put to IWC68 for further development of the Handbook and how these will be resourced.

It is proposed that this budget is endorsed and that IWC funding required (£9,5000) is allocated from existing earmarked funding for whale watching in the Voluntary Conservation Fund.

Annex 1. Whale Watching Handbook Communications Plan- April 2020 onwards

Aims:

- Identify key opportunities to raise awareness of the WW Handbook to specific audiences.
- Create a regular flow of information about the Handbook on social media.
- Increase awareness/hits on Spanish and French pages.
- Improve Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) :visibility/ranking.

Event/activity/'news hook'	Timing	Primary Audience(s)	Detail and platforms	Outcome & evaluation
Specific				
'Species of the week' initiative on Twitter and IWC website.	Launched 14/4/20	General public. Children (home-school). IWC Twitter followers.	New, weekly webpage and Tweet featuring a 'Species of the Week' quiz and picture competition for children, directing people to the Handbook for quiz answers.	Complete – initiative ran for 6 weeks. Small but consistent spike in Handbook hits in 24 hours following each weekly quiz/ artwork post. 16% rise in IWC Twitter following from Wk 1 – Wk 6 (note: also several other factors inc. the rise in people at home/online).
Publication of new cetacean factsheets.	Published 15/7/20	WW guides and educators General public seeking more info on whale watching.	IWC website news item with links. Post to Cetal Fauna Facebook Group (Information sharing forum with 8.2k members).	Complete. The Handbook recorded a daily visitor increase averaging 56% during the week following publication. The factsheets section attracted the most hits of any website section with 18% More outreach is planned for the factsheets, focusing on schools and children.

Review of Handbook's Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) in order to improve search rankings.	Ongoing.	Generic – anyone searching online for information about whale watching.	<p>SEO Review complete. Secretariat has begun rolling programme to register/broaden SEO keywords.</p> <p>Also planning to edit Wikipedia entries related to whale watching to ensure IWC work, links and references are incorporated which will improve search rankings.</p> <p>Also investigating scope to include Handbook material on Google Scholar.</p>	This is straightforward but time-consuming and will take time to complete, and then time for the impact to be visible.
Improve visibility of the 'languages' tab on Handbook homepage.	As soon as resources allow.	Generic - French and Spanish speakers.	Make languages tab more prominent (incorporate flags?).	
Create YouTube demo of the Handbook.	Now – basis of the YouTube recording will be Gianna's presentation to CC Meeting.	Generic – anyone searching online for information about whale watching.	<p>Post on IWC website (home page and Whale Watching Handbook page) and Twitter, and ask CMS to do the same.</p> <p>Post to other social media platforms (see below).</p>	
Publication of each new case study and each new country profile.	Rolling programme is most realistic option – focusing on each target audience	<p>Whale watching industry.</p> <p>National governments esp those supplying new material for the Handbook:</p>	IWC Circular reminding IWC community of the benefits of engagement with the Handbook, seeking support for promotion, and highlighting the need for Spanish and French language outreach. The Circular might include a short multi-purpose press release/article, with an appeal to all members of the IWC community to	

	<p>individually, depending on when preparations can be put in place.</p>	<p>Canada, Maldives and Chile, Denmark (Greenland), Dominica, Ecuador, Mexico.</p>	<p>disseminate this text to their own stakeholders as widely as possible. CMS Notification to their membership as above.</p> <p>Provide a short text for governments to include in official gazettes that post whale watching requirements and regulations (follow up with Lorenzo).</p> <p>If resources are available:</p> <p>Approaches to travel companies known to be 'eco-friendly' - with the message that there is more content now for them to use to advise their target groups on how to choose responsible WW experiences.</p> <p>www.responsibletravel.com www.naturetrek.co.uk www.stridetravel.com/eco-sustainable-gree-travel-tour-companies www.drinkteatravel.com/choose-sustainable-tour-operator</p> <p>Approaches to tourism bodies in specific regions and countries (IORA, AECO others?)</p> <p>Outreach to smaller NGOs in those countries featured in new case studies or country profiles.</p>	
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Non-specific				
<p>Some possible platforms and dates that might be appropriate vehicles for outreach on the Handbook. In some circumstances we may increase our impact by pairing up a platform and a date (for example a placed article in ECOMagazine on World Habitat Day).</p>	<p>Broadcast 2/7/20</p> <p>International Day of Education Jan 24</p> <p>World Wildlife Day March 3</p> <p>International Day for Biological Diversity May 22</p> <p>World Environment Day June 5</p> <p>World Oceans Day June 8</p>	<p>Marine mammal scientists and others with an interest in marine mammals or careers in marine science.</p>	<p>Marine Mammal Science podcast interview with Gianna: ‘The Whale Watching Handbook.’</p> <p>Publications: placed article or interview with special interest media eg. ECOMagazine, BBC Wildlife.</p> <p>Events (virtual/in-person subject to Coronavirus): present, demonstrate, display banner, handout information. Geneva Forum: annual conference including Annual International Platform on Sustainable Tourism. (Free to attend if virtual in Dec 2021).</p> <p>Social Media: share any relevant news with: Cetal Fauna Marine Mammal Magazine Marine Biologist Network Conservation of Cetaceans Wildlife Workers Network International Marine Conservation Congress African Marine Mammal Research Marine Mammal Observer Association</p>	<p>Complete – 38 min interview inc. positive/comprehensive discussion of Handbook aims, content and success so far. The MMS podcast consistently achieves top ranking for nature-themed podcasts across a wide range of countries.</p>

	<p>World Tourism Day Sept 27</p> <p>World Animal Day Oct 4</p> <p>World Habitat Day Oct 7</p> <p>International Day of Education Jan 24</p> <p>World Wildlife Day March 3</p> <p>International Day for Biological Diversity May 22</p> <p>World Environment Day June 5</p> <p>World Oceans Day 8 June</p>		<p>Whale Watching Guides of the World</p>	
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Annex 2. Project Proposal and Budget – Whale Watching Handbook

1. Project Title

Maintaining, updating and promoting the Whale Watching Handbook

2. Lead Working Group

The Standing Working Group on Whale Watching under the Conservation Committee will lead this work. It will work closely with the Scientific Committee's sub-committee on Whale Watching. The Secretariat will coordinate the work, including appointment and oversight of any contractors.

3. Project Description

The project will involve:

- Facilitation of translations by CMS and uploading translations to IWC website
- Ad hoc corrections and changes requested by appropriately authorised users
- Updating the Table of searchable literature following IWC SC68C
- Outreach and communication activities

4. Project Justification

Sustainable management of whale and dolphin watching has been identified as a priority action in the Conservation Committee's Strategic Plan. The Commission has also agreed a Whale Watching Strategic Plan (updated at IWC67). The development of an online Whale Watching Handbook is a key part of implementing both of these strategic plans, and has long been a long-standing recommendation of both the Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee. The Handbook is a living document and requires regular updating and review to ensure it remains relevant and useful. There is significant scope to further develop the Handbook including in support of wider capacity building activities, but this consolidation period is necessary to make sure all the existing content is translated and accurate, and to continue to increase awareness and use of the Handbook.

5. Relevant IWC Voluntary Funds

This project meets the criteria for the whale watching stream of the Voluntary Conservation Fund.

6. Overview of activities

Activity	Expected Results	Timeline	Budget Implications	
			Type (Salary, Travel, Meeting Services, Equipment, Other)*	Estimated Total Cost (GB pounds)
Include new information (updated table of literature) from the 2021 Scientific Committee (contractor)	More up-to-date and accurate information available to users	2021	4 days	1200
Translation of Handbook content by CMS	Content is available to a wider audience	2021		7,000
Facilitation of original and new (2020) translations including liaising with CMS and translators, maintaining overviews of translation status, and uploading translations to website. 46 items/pages in Spanish and 58 in French.	Content is available to a wider audience	2020-2021	23.5 days	6,900
Handover and training to Secretariat staff	Transition to day to day updates being done in the Secretariat in house	2021	1 day	300
Contractor time for promotion of handbook	Taking advantage of opportunities for contractor to promote Handbook at in person or virtual meetings	2021	2 days	600
Provision for development of promotion materials	Promotion of WW Handbook to a wide audience	2021		500
Total				£ 16,500 incl £7,000 translation which will be provided in kind from CMS

7. Core Secretariat support requested 2020-2021

Type	Detailed description	Number of days
IT/database	Technical time of IT officer to maintain and update the software and trouble shoot where appropriate. Estimate for 2021 Estimate for one year.	2
Communications	The communications strategy will be implemented by the Communications Officer and other staff where appropriate. Estimates for one year	7.5
Meeting Services	n/a	
Project management	The project will be managed by the Head of Programme Development. Estimate for one year	5
Other		
Total		14.5

8. Potential partners or funders

The Convention on Migratory Species will fund the translation of the Handbook into French and Spanish. The IWC Secretariat will identify new partners as part of ongoing work with engaging other organisations.

9. Project requirements/Permits/Insurances

n/a

10. Possible Risks

The Secretariat is working at maximum capacity so if there are significant unanticipated demands on their time from other priorities there is a risk that not all of the time anticipated will be available.