

## An update on the work of the Small Cetacean Voluntary Fund, 2018-22

*IWC Scientific Committee*

### Progress of Small Cetacean Voluntary Fund Projects

The Commission operates a voluntary fund that supports invited participant (IP) attendance at SC meetings and research projects that focus on committee recommendations. The research projects include an aspect of capacity building and stakeholder involvement, are in cooperation with governments and NGOs, and ideally, have the potential to catalyse longer term research, management and conservation goals.

Calls for proposals are circulated when the fund amount is more than GBP100,000. Calls have been made in 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 and 2022. Five projects were endorsed at IWC67, however, the Principal Investigator for one project was subsequently unable to conduct the proposed research, due to a change in employment. Thus, four projects were funded, and the funds not spent on the fifth project were re-allocated to extend the work of one of the other approved projects. All four projects have been successfully completed and final reports are available on the IWC website. In 2021, the Commission approved a further five proposals (Table 1).

Table 1. Small Cetacean Voluntary Fund Projects 2022.

Principal Investigator	Title	Species	Region
Gopal Khanal	Understanding the effects of trans-boundary barrage operations on the Nepal-India border for Ganges River dolphin habitat and population dynamics	<i>Platanista gangetica</i>	India and Nepal
Laura J May-Collado	Rapid assessment of the occurrence and conservation status of Guiana dolphins at the northern periphery of their range in Central America	<i>Sotalia guianensis</i>	Costa Rica and Nicaragua
Mariano Alberto Coscarella	Population assessment and dynamics of Lahille's bottlenose dolphins in Argentina	<i>Tursiops truncatus gephyreus</i>	Argentina
Yurasi Briceño	More knowledge, less mortality: education for the conservation of Guiana dolphins ( <i>Sotalia guianensis</i> ), Lake Maracaibo, Venezuela	<i>Sotalia guianensis</i>	Venezuela
Joanna Alfaro Shigueto	Assessing the conservation status of Burmeister's porpoises in Peru – trialling tools for estimating abundance and bycatch of this cryptic and poorly known species	<i>Phocoena spinipinnis</i>	Peru

For the period 2018-2022, the Small Cetacean Voluntary Fund (SCVF) received contributions of £73,271 from the Governments of Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and from the organisations ASI/Centro de Conservacion de Cetacea, Campaign Whale, Cetacean Society International, Dolphin Connection, the Environmental Investigation Agency, Humane Society International, OceanCare, Whaleman Foundation, the Animal Welfare Institute, Sea Legacy, LegalSeas, Natural Resources Defence Council and ProWildlife.

All of the IWC voluntary funds are vital to the work of the Scientific and Conservation Committees and provide support to developing nation participants thus increasing the diversity of expertise and views across the Commission. At IWC68, a dedicated event will highlight the contribution of the Small Cetacean Voluntary Fund, the Conservation Voluntary Fund and the Southern Ocean Research Partnership to the work of the IWC.