



International Whaling Commission

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CIRCULAR COMMUNICATION TO
MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
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Large-Scale Whalewatching Research Initiative Workshop

In 2006, the International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee agreed that there is now compelling evidence that the fitness of individual odontocetes repeatedly exposed to whalewatching vessel traffic can be compromised e.g. through reduced reproductive success and that this can lead to population level effects. However, other ecological factors are also influencing population dynamics. The Committee recognised the need to understand the principles governing the consequences for cetacean populations of disturbances caused by interactions with tour boats.

At the last Annual meeting the Commission endorsed the establishment of a project initiative to carry out studies with the aim to define these principles. This project aims at understanding how whalewatching disturbances on individuals interact with their life history strategies and the ecology of their population to result in population-level consequences. This project will be based on comparative work, deploying comparable BACI study designs in different field sites around the world with different species. These will represent different life history strategies, will be exposed to different levels of whalewatching activities and they will be followed for a period sufficient to infer population dynamics parameters.

The first phase of this project will be to hold a workshop to design a large-scale research study and select a list of potential field sites where it will be deployed. This small workshop will take place in Bunbury, Western Australia, from 30 March 30 to 4 April. Thirteen invited participants will take part in the workshop. Additional spaces are available for Scientific Committee members. If you would like to attend the workshop please contact David Lusseau, the convenor of the Workshop Steering Group (d.lusseau@abdn.ac.uk), with a copy to the Secretariat (jemma.miller@iwcoffice.org), as soon as possible (preferably before February 28). More information can be found on the following website (<http://www.cffr.murdoch.edu.au/mucru/lawe/>).

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