

2nd Progress Report on IWC Ship Strike Data Coordination – May 2014

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SUMMARY

This report summarizes the second year of work carried out by the data coordinators between May 2013 and May 2014. These activities resulted in a variety of outreach actions, with a large number of contacts being established, and the drafting of a series of documents, including guidance documents for sailing and cruise ships. Effort has also been dedicated to the increase of user friendliness, as well as the technical functioning of the IWC ship strike data base. Some of the work carried out represents a continuation of the activities started last year including updates and improvements.

We have been exchanging several messages with the IWC Secretariat regarding the logistical aspects of the planned IWC and SPAW/UNEP Workshop to address collisions between ships and marine mammals with a focus on the Wider Caribbean, to be held in Panama in June 2014, actively participating in the drafting of the agenda, the selection of invited participants and the outline of the workshop.

Together with the IWC Vice-Chair we discussed issues related to the Ship Strike Working Group (SSWG), including developing a roadmap for IWC effort to address the issue. This will include, *inter alia*, synergies with ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS and other Inter-Governmental Organization/Agreements, to join forces to gather data and suggest mitigation measures.

Contacts with the ACCOBAMS Secretariat have been established, to strengthen the existing collaboration and to discuss possible synergies so as to assess and mitigate ship strikes.

A number of inquiries about the data base were received, and we provided relevant literature, general information as well as specific advice how to use the data base. In several cases, this stipulated the entry of new cases.

Until 1st May 2014, the data base held a total of 1221 incidents, both historical and recent. 559 of these were previously classified as being “definite strikes”. All new entries will still have to be verified by the IWC Ship Strike Data Review Group. For an estimated 200 existing (new) incidents, the data is expected to be incorporated when the new setup of the data base currently being initiated has been finalized.

Finally, the coordinators engaged with the Data Review Group (DRG) so as to start the process of classifying cases from the data base. As a consequence, a number of recent cases are currently being evaluated.

Following last year recommendation, we suggest that funding for ship strike data coordination should continue, given that this work appears to trigger the use and hence the “success” of the IWC data base, as well as considering that many tasks still have to be addressed.

BACKGROUND

The primary objective of the data coordinators is to progress the conservation and management work of the International Whaling Commission with respect to the issue of vessel collisions with cetaceans. In particular, it focusses on work identified by the joint ACCOBAMS/IWC workshop on this issue and the recommendation of the Scientific Committee for ship strikes co-ordinators that was endorsed by the Conservation Committee and the Commission in 2012.

Special attention was given to populating the global ship strikes database established by the Commission. The tasks assigned to the ship strikes coordinators are appended to this document. During the 2013 SC meeting it has been recognised that it has not been possible - in the initial stages of the co-ordinators role - to complete all of the tasks outlined below; emphasis has been laid on the items selected after reviewing the 2013 report . This report sets out the activities realized during May 2013 and April 2014 (the second year of the agreement). Some overlap with activities started in 2013 seems natural, but effort has also been devoted to addressing new items.

The work of the co-ordinators is being supervised by a steering group comprising Chemay, Donovan, Leaper, Perrin, and Rojas-Bracho, who have been contacted by the data coordinators for matters arising during the year.

1. DATA GATHERING

(1) Liaise with regional databases with large numbers of cases (e.g. US and Australia) in order to facilitate their submission to the global database – this will involve addressing issues of data confidentiality and classification, as well as facilitating easy submission to the database.

Close contact was held to the Australian Marine Mammal Centre during the development of their regional ship strike reporting tool. Detailed input was given, which guaranteed the compatibility of the new tool with the IWC data base.

(2) Identify national contact points, organisations and groups that hold data on ship strikes that have not been contributed to the global database and encourage them to submit their data to the global database – this will involve use of mail lists (e.g. Marmam, ECS-talk) and will involve addressing issues of data confidentiality and classification, as well as facilitating easy submission to the database. Telephone interviews with identified contributors should be investigated to facilitate submission of data.

In general, a number of inquiries about the ship strike issue are received every year, including agencies, the maritime industry and scientists. As for the previous report, we have been providing relevant literature and general information, as well as specific advice how to use the ship strike data base.

A second message to MARMAM and ECS-TALK email lists has been sent, presenting the role of the ship coordinators and reiterating the need to increase public awareness for the ship strike

database, as well as the need to increase the sample size and facilitate data submission.

Two new papers have been drafted by the coordinators, with inputs received from the Ship Strike Working Group members and by the Steering Group; these papers focus on guidelines for sailing vessels engaged in offshore waters regattas (*IWC Guidance for organisers of off-shore recreational boating events to minimise risk of collisions with cetaceans*) and cruise liners (*IWC Guidance for Cruise Line Operators to Minimise Risk of Collisions with Cetaceans*). These papers were submitted for endorsement at the SC meeting in Slovenia and will be discussed at the joint IWC-SPAW/UNEP workshop before seeking approval by the Commission in September 2014. Both documents provide an annex with a detailed list of navigational and educational ship strike mitigation measures currently in place (including reporting).

(3) Follow developments (e.g. in the USA) with respect to establishing criteria for determining cause of death including ship strikes and disseminate this widely

During SC 65 in Jeju, the SC agreed on criteria to classify ship strike cases on the basis of newest scientific findings and recent publications. These criteria are now being applied during the evaluation of the cases in the IWC data base by the Data Review Group (see below).

(4) Regularly review scientific journals for ship strike information and contact authors to collate data for entry into the database.

Current email list were kept under supervision for new publications regarding ship strikes; several authors were contacted and motivated to either enter cases directly into the data base or provide raw data on collision cases.

(5) Use search engines and other internet news monitoring tools for reports of ship strikes and follow up on reports of new incidents in order to gather information as soon as possible after the incident took place and facilitate its incorporation into the database – this will include informing national coordinators promptly of reported incidents within their area.

Again we have been following up on a large number of press & internet reports about collisions to identify details about the cases described. This resulted in a number of new cases being entered into the data base, including historical incidents and near misses.

A number of papers and other publications were checked for collision cases. Accordingly authors were contacted to provide further information.

2. OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

(1) Work with the Secretariat to ensure that the IWC ship strike web site pages are kept up to date including:

- *updating publicly available summaries from the database;*

- *providing links to other sources of information material e.g. that produced by international organisations such as ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, CMS, IMO as well as national groups;*

The Terms of Reference for the ACCOBAMS working group on ship strikes have been discussed at the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee meeting held in Monaco in April 2014. The list of participants has also been updated, with new names added. A second message to the group has been circulated, presenting the role of the IWC and the ship strikes coordinators. The need to collect data on ship strikes has been reiterated and the link between ACCOBAMS and the IWC was underlined. A specific recommendation has been presented to the ACCOBAMS meeting of Parties held in November 2013 in Tangier (Morocco), presenting the common work plan and stressing the need for a coordinated effort in the next triennium, joining forces with ASCOBANS and other relevant stakeholders.

(3) Work with the Secretariat to develop a communications strategy. This may include:

- *developing approaches to ensure that the current leaflet on ship strikes prepared by Belgium with assistance from inter alia IFAW is as widely distributed as possible within shipping industry (direct to vessels), shipping management companies, and maritime academies;*

A general IWC communication strategy is currently being developed by the Secretariat. The coordinators have been keeping in touch with the new IWC communication officer and submitted a number of suggestions how the website section could be adapted. This dialogue is on-going, while any decision and adaptation of the website is subject to the general communication strategy.

The new edition of the Belgian leaflet has been presented and distributed at several occasions as detailed below.

- *exploring ways of raising the profile of the database by contacting other organisations including ECS, ACS, SMM, ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS), NGOs, recreational boating associations, maritime organisations;*

Regular email exchanges have been carried out with the World Ocean Council, namely with its CEO, to discuss possible synergies and way to disseminate results, public awareness material (e.g. the draft guidance documents produced) and request for additional data for the data base. We provided literature and offered advice. Moreover, a number of (other) national and international maritime organizations and companies (including cruise operators such as Costa Crociere, TUI Cruises and HapaG Lloyd) were contacted, to inform them about IWC's work on the issue.

- *considering the need to update the leaflet.*

During 2013 the Belgian leaflet has been produced as a new edition, and the coordinators took part in the development of the update. The leaflet is available in six languages: English, French, Spanish, Arabian, Chinese, Russian.

(5) Assist Secretariat with maintaining links with IMO, ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS etc.

A representative from ASCOBANS was met during the Advisory Committee meeting in Warsaw (August 2013) and at the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee meeting and informed about the role and the purpose of the new data coordinators. A message to the existing ACCOBAMS ship-strikes working group, which was originally created during the 5th ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, held in Rome in 2008, was sent asking for collaborative effort to populate the IWC ship strikes database and to inform about the current effort carried out with the ship strike coordinators. The ToR have been updated and new members have been added (see above).

One coordinator will also participate – representing ACCOBAMS - to the 18th Meeting of the CMS Scientific Council (1-3 July 2014) in Bonn (Germany) and will discuss links to strengthen collaboration.

(6) Provide an annual update to Scientific Committee.

(This report)

(7) Consider developing PowerPoint presentations/posters for use at workshops, symposia, conferences, etc.

A PP presentation on ship strikes for crew and staff was given on-board a cruise ship in February 2014. This presentation will serve as the template for a dedicated IWC presentation for the above purpose. This is currently work in progress and a draft presentation will be soon available.

Three copies of the IWC ship strike display banner are ready to be displayed at various events (see below).

(8) Consider presenting information at specific conferences (e.g. ECS, SMM etc.).

A self-standing banner display has been developed by the coordinators during the first year – with the support from the steering group - and three copies were produced. The self-standing banner has been displayed at the ASCOBANS AC meeting in Warsaw (August 2013), the ACCOBAMS Meeting of Parties in Tangier (Morocco) in November 2013, at the Biennial Conference of the Society for Marine Mammalogy, in Dunedin (New Zealand) in December 2013, and at the ECS conference in Liege (Belgium) in March 2014. Thus, a large international audience was informed about the work carried out by the IWC on this issue.

3. DATABASE MANAGEMENT

(1) Work with the Secretariat to improve the user friendliness of the database (requires technical assistance) including in response to user problems and suggestions.

While using the data base to enter new cases, some details of functionality were found to need improvement. A concise review of the structure and design of the data base was undertaken. This resulted in a wish list of changes, some of which have been incorporated already. Thus, the technical functioning of the database has been enhanced. Several users of the data base encountering similar difficulties were informed about how to circumvent difficulties and thus successfully enter new data. The technical maintenance and user friendliness of the data base are being developed on an on-going basis.

The Secretariat meanwhile decided to re-establish the data base on the basis of the newest technical solutions available. The data coordinators will closely accompany this process and provide the best of their advice. This will lead to a faultlessly functioning data base in the future.

(2) Data entry of new records including data presented in meeting papers and National Progress Reports at annual meetings of Scientific Committee, including sailing vessel cases from Ritter (2012) – priorities for entry to be established with the steering group

For IWC documents, see above, section 1(4).

Cases were started to be entered. A total of 111 entries of collisions between sailing (from Ritter (2012)) vessels and cetaceans are expected to be entered when the new setup of the data base has been finalized.

Regular contacts with the IWC Data Review Group have been established during the year, to provide a first set of data to validate and verify. We encountered some difficulties in getting feedbacks from the group and we are currently discussing a drastic re-consideration of the group, in order to make it more efficient and active.

(3) Work with data review group to ensure that all new records are appropriately reviewed including identification of potential duplicate reports.

The data coordinators engaged with the Data Review Group (DRG) so as to start the process of classifying cases from the data base. To that end, a mode was developed to provide all existing evidence (including data from the data base as well as additional information/files) to the members of the DRG. A decision making process was developed based on the criteria that have been endorsed by the IWC SC at its meeting in Jeju in 2013 (see also above). As a consequence, a number of recent cases are currently being evaluated by the DRG. It is expected that this will develop as an ongoing work stream.

To summarize, the work of the data coordinators until today resulted in a variety of outreach activities, a large number of contacts being established, a significant number of new incidents being entered, and the increase of user friendliness as well as the technical functioning of the data base.

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Appendix 1: Description of tasks of ship strike data coordinators

(A) Objectives and broad tasks

1. Data gathering

- (1) *Liaise with regional databases with large numbers of cases (e.g. US and Australia) in order to facilitate their submission to the global database – this will involve addressing issues of data confidentiality and classification, as well as facilitating easy submission to the database*
- (2) *Identify national contact points, organisations and groups that hold data on ship strikes that have not been contributed to the global database and encourage them to submit their data to the global database – this will involve use of mail lists (e.g. Marmam, ECS-talk) and will involve addressing issues of data confidentiality and classification, as well as facilitating easy submission to the database. Telephone interviews with identified contributors should be investigated to facilitate submission of data.*
- (3) *Follow developments (e.g. in the USA) with respect to establishing criteria for determining cause of death including ship strikes and disseminate this widely*
- (4) *Regularly contact national co-ordinators or stranding networks (from IWC list) providing them with any new updates relevant to ship strikes and helping to facilitate data entry of any new records to IWC database.*
- (5) *Regularly review scientific journals for ship strike information and contact authors to collate data for entry into the database.*
- (6) *Use search engines and other internet news monitoring tools for reports of ship strikes and follow up on reports of new incidents in order to gather information as soon as possible after the incident took place and facilitate its incorporation into the database – this will include informing national coordinators promptly of reported incidents within their area.*

2. Outreach and communication

- (1) *Work with the Secretariat to ensure that the IWC ship strike web site pages are kept up to date including:*
 - *updating publicly available summaries from the database;*
 - *providing links to other sources of information material e.g. that produced by international organisations such as ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, CMS, IMO as well as national groups*
 - *consider whether there is value in highlighting recent cases/reports on the web page in a positive manner to encourage further reporting*
- (2) *Monitor and respond to emails addressed to the shipstrikes@iwcoffice.org email address, including reports of new incidents, giving feedback to data providers and dealing with requests for summary information from the database.*
- (3) *Work with the Secretariat to develop a communications strategy. This may include:*
 - *developing approaches to ensure that the current leaflet on ship strikes prepared by Belgium with assistance from *inter alia* IFAW is as widely distributed as possible within shipping industry (direct to vessels), shipping management companies, and maritime academies;*
 - *exploring ways of raising the profile of the database by contacting other organisations including ECS, ACS, SMM, ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS), NGOs, recreational boating associations, maritime organisations;*
 - *considering the need to update the leaflet*
- (4) *Liaise with national Port Authorities and Coast Guards for gathering information on ship strikes, to distribute awareness material and eventually access AIS data.*
- (5) *Assist Secretariat with maintaining links with IMO, ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS etc*
- (6) *Provide an annual update to Scientific Committee.*
- (7) *Consider developing PowerPoint presentations/posters for use at workshops, symposia, conferences, etc.*
- (8) *Consider presenting information at specific conferences (e.g. ECS, SMM etc)*
- (9) *Explore funding options for future IWC ship strike work.*

3. Database management

- (1) Work with the Secretariat to improve the user friendliness of the database (requires technical assistance) including in response to user problems and suggestions.
- (2) Data entry of new records including data presented in meeting papers and National Progress Reports at annual meetings of Scientific Committee, including sailing vessel cases from Ritter (2012) – priorities for entry to be established with the steering group
- (3) Further development of database handbook, ensuring that the database documentation remains up to date, is widely distributed and that any changes are notified to all actual/potential collaborators.
- (4) Work with data review group to ensure that all new records are appropriately reviewed including identification of potential duplicate reports.