

Report of the IWC Conservation Management Plan for the Southern Right Whale Southwest Atlantic population.

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PERIOD: July 2013 – April 2014

The overall objective of the CMP is to protect Southern right whales (SRW) habitat and minimise anthropogenic threats to maximise the likelihood that SRW will recover to healthy levels and recolonise their historical range.

ACTIONS

RES-01: determine movements, migration routes and location of feeding ground(s)

Argentina announced the availability for research purposes in 2015 of the rescue cutter of 50 m vessel ‘Tango’, now configured as multi-purpose vessel. These international expeditions will be carried out in 2015 into two feeding grounds in the South West Atlantic and all available non-lethal techniques will be used in an integrated way (satellite telemetry, photo-identification, passive acoustic, genetic, etc.).

As part of the SORP/ABWP, an exploratory trip was performed on board of the “Tango” to South Orkney (*Islas Orcadas del Sur*) area and area of influence (1 degree to the N, S, E and W) and the west side of the Antarctic Peninsula (*Península Antártica*), from the Shetland Island (*Islas Shetland del Sur*) to Brown Base (*Base Brown*) of Argentina in Paradise Bay (*Bahía Paraíso*). The trip took place from February, 17th to March, 5th 2014. It recorded information on sightings and acoustics. Each cetacean observed during the trip was recorded but the species of main interest were the Antarctic blue whales, humpback whales, southern right whales and killer whales. The only species that could not be recorded was the southern right whale, probably due to bad weather conditions on the north of South Orkney (*Islas Orcadas del Sur*) area where it was expected to find them. In 2015, a new trip to South Orkney (*Islas Orcadas del Sur*) will be organized.

A telemetry proposal was presented and it is under evaluation by governmental authorities.

RES-02: development of a GIS database on information on human activities that might have an adverse impact on whales.

This action is postponed to 2015 in order to optimize human sources and funds for this activity. Argentina received a GEF grant which is coordinated by the Secretaría de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sustentable and includes determining human activities that might threaten Southern right whales. It is necessary to secure also funds to carry on this activity in Brazil, Chile and Uruguay.

MON-01: Ensure long-term monitoring of abundance, trends and biological parameters.

Cooke is still working on the abundance and trends of the population for Argentina and Brazil using the long-term photo-identification programs.

Centro Nacional Patagónico (CENPAT) is also developing a program of aerial surveys around Península Valdés which increases the aerial and temporal survey coverage.

MON-02: enhance existing strandings networks including the capacity for undertaking post-mortems.

There are two programs working with the die-off events in Península Valdés. One is the SRW Health Monitoring Program which is run by a consortium of the non-governmental organizations Wildlife Conservation Society, Whale Conservation Institute/Ocean Alliance, Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas and Fundación Patagonia Natural. Several results of these studies have been presented to the IWC.

The second program is run by the Veterinary College – University of Buenos Aires and CENPAT. Results were presented at the 2013 workshop of Puerto Madryn.

MIT-01: development of a regional entanglement response strategy

Following the disentanglement workshops conducted by David Mattila –International expert on disentanglement of big whales and member of IWC Secretariat– 2 Brazilian and 2 Argentinean experts were trained at the Center for Coastal Research in Cape Cod, USA. The objective is to work on prevention measures.

-- *Information reported on entanglement for 2013*

--Argentina

Date: 28th August 2013

Location (Lat/ Long): 1.5nm offshore of Las Grutas, Río Negro (40°49'51.0''S - 65°4'35''O).

Number of animals involved: 1 adult

Event description: The whale was reported by “Cota Cero” whale watching operator. It presents a rope that surrounded the body behind the eyes (see pictures attached). The individual was observed only one day, it was socializing and could not be released.

Source: L. Albornoz, “Cota Cero”, C. Jiménez-Pinedo.



Picture: J. Padilla/ Cota Cero



Picture: J. Padilla/ Cota Cero

--Brazil

Date: 2013

Location (Lat/ Long): coast of Santa Catarina State, Southern Brazil

Number of animals involved: a total of 10 cases of confirmed different individuals

Event description: all cases were of animals sighted alive. Nine cases were of adults and one of a calf. All adults' cases all but one consisted of a piece of fishing net attached to the head callosities; one adult had a rope over the mid dorsal region of body. The calf had a piece of fishing net hang from the inside of the mouth. In all cases there was no evidence of lesions related to the entanglement. No cases of dead animals were reported related to these cases. Three cases of identified adult whales were later sighted free of the entanglement.

Source: Karina Groch

MIT-02: develop and implement a strategy to minimize kelp gull harassment

-Workshop Puerto Madryn, Chubut, August 2013.

On 28 and 29 August 2013, Dirección de Fauna y Flora Silvestre (Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería, Bosques y Pesca), Subsecretaría de Turismo y Áreas Protegidas, Administración de Parques Nacionales and CENPAT-CONICET hosted a workshop on mortality of Southern right whale in Puerto Madryn.

Several federal and provincial governmental and non-governmental institutions attended the workshop.

The main objective of the workshop was to explore the best way to properly disseminate the information on this species to be used by the public media and update results on SRW and mortality events.

The participants highlighted the importance of this workshop and it was agreed to meet annually in order to consolidate the work done to date. This provides a framework for establishing the best actions to develop and strengthen the future work of the institutions involved, reinforcing and enhancing the quality thereof.

-Workshop Puerto Madryn, Chubut, August 2014

Solving the kelp gull harassment problem is a priority action within the CMP developed for this region.

An IWC Workshop to develop and implement a strategy to minimize kelp gull harassment on southern right whales will be held in Puerto Madryn, Chubut in August 2014, 5-7. Funding for this workshop was secured last year at the IWC 65a SC. It is organized with the province of Chubut authorities. Results will be presented to the IWC 66 Scientific Committee.

MIT-03: establishment of an expert advisory panel

An expert advisory panel was established, with the following terms of reference:

- Members of the Panel serve in their individual capacity as experts and not as representatives of governments or organizations.
- The Panel will consist of a core group of no more than 10 scientists (2 nominated by each range state + 2 IWC Scientific Committee representatives). Members will serve for a maximum period of 5 years.
- Its primary role is to assist the Steering Committee to address scientific and technical issues as requested.
- The Panel will identify additional expertise as required.

The expert advisory panel was confirmed as follows:

- Argentina: Dr. Enrique Crespo and Marcelo Bertelotti
- Brazil: Dr. Karina Groch
- IWC: Dr. Greg Donovan

MIT-04: develop mitigation actions to address major threats identified through the Sensitivity Atlas

-- Information reported on ship strike for 2012

--Brazil

Event description: The only case of ship strike in Brazil in recent years is already reported to the IWC ship strike database: an adult female sighted in 2012, presenting large open cuts on the dorsal peduncle (the animal was alive, accompanied by a calf, and resighted for two months). There is no information on time of the collision or type of ship.

Source: K. Groch

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