



CETACEAN SPECIALIST GROUP

5 February 2012

Chief Conservator of Forests
Room# 509 Bana Bhaban
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Dhaka- 1207
e-mail: yunus_forest@yahoo.com; ccf-fd@bforest.gov.bd

Dear Mr. Md. Yunus Ali,

On behalf of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Cetacean Specialist Group (CSG), I would like to congratulate you on the recent declaration of three new Wildlife Sanctuaries for freshwater dolphins in the Eastern Sundarbans Mangrove Forest. This is a wonderful first step by the Government of Bangladesh for protecting Ganges River dolphins and Irrawaddy dolphins. Both of these animals are threatened with extinction in the near future in the absence of effective conservation management. Both have also been among the highest priority species identified by our Specialist Group as in need of urgent conservation attention.

I was delighted when I first learned from Ishtiak Ahmad at the Workshop on Establishing Protected Areas for Asian Freshwater Cetaceans in Samarinda, Indonesia, in October 2009 about plans for establishing these Wildlife Sanctuaries for the dolphins. I was also glad to hear from Brian D. Smith, our Asia Coordinator, at the International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected areas in Martinique last November about investigations being carried out by the Wildlife Conservation Society's Bangladesh Cetacean Diversity Project (BCDP) and the Forest Department on the ecology and human use of the planned sanctuaries. So news of the formal declaration is particularly welcome.

The CSG promotes and facilitates the conservation of cetaceans worldwide. Our guiding premise is that conservation ultimately depends upon good science, and the group's credibility and value are based on maintaining high standards of scientific rigour. Our emphasis is on the recovery of endangered species and populations, but we also recognize the importance of maintaining the full diversity of cetaceans and the ecosystems of which they are a part.

Randall Reeves, Chairman
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The CSG currently has 108 members worldwide who contribute significant experience and technical expertise to the growing pool of knowledge about cetaceans. The group is proud that our membership includes two scientists from Bangladesh, Benazir Ahmed, Professor and Chair of the Zoology Department, Chittagong University, and Rubaiyat Mowgli Mansur, Principal Researcher, BCDP. We would like to make sure you aware of the expertise available within our group and offer our assistance in providing technical advice on conservation management in the new Wildlife Sanctuaries.

Congratulations again and please do not hesitate to contact me, or Brian D. Smith (bsmith@wcs.org), if you have any questions or would like more information about the CSG.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Randall R. Reeves". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Dr. Randall R. Reeves

cc:

Dr. Hasan Mahmud, Honorable State Minister, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (minister@moef.gov.bd)

Mesbah ul Alam, Secretary in Charge, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, (secretary@moef.gov.bd)

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Md. Akbar Hossain, Conservator of Forest, Khulna (akbar_1956@yahoo.com)

Ishtiak Ahmad, Head IUCN Bangladesh