



Global Cetacean Action Plan

Providing guidance for the protection and recovery of whales, dolphins and porpoises in our changing world

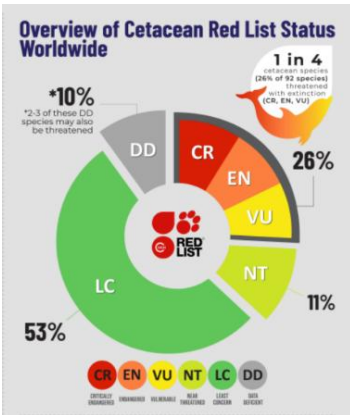


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Many cetacean populations are still declining

IUCN RED LIST STATUS

26% of all cetacean species are considered threatened



GROWING THREATS

- Entanglement in fishing gear
- Ship strike
- Underwater noise
- Coastal construction
- Habitat loss

Click [here](#) to see a review of action plans with recommendations on action planning.

The IUCN SSC Cetacean Specialist Group (CSG) is leading the development of a new Global Cetacean Action Plan (GCAP) to help stakeholders prioritize conservation measures using the IUCN Assess-Plan-Act cycle to halt population declines. The CSG is seeking support to ensure that the plan identifies and responds to the highest conservation priorities, engages stakeholders globally, and recommends measures that are adapted to meet today’s challenging conservation landscape.

Context and rationale

The 94 currently recognized cetacean species inhabit and have ecological roles in a range of freshwater, coastal and open ocean ecosystems across the globe. Today 26% of cetacean species are considered threatened according to the IUCN Red List, and this proportion is increasing (Braulik et al., 2023). Major threats such as fishery bycatch, habitat degradation (including chemical and noise pollution), prey depletion, marine traffic and climate change have intensified since the previous GCAP. Without immediate conservation intervention, some species and populations will soon be extinct or extirpated. Whales, dolphins and porpoises are legally protected in most countries where they are found, and are often described as flagship species to raise awareness and support for conservation initiatives. However, few of the bodies responsible for protection and management of coastal, riverine, and open ocean habitats are aware of the most significant threats facing cetaceans, or of the innovative solutions, technical expertise and partnerships that are available to address these threats.

Global guidance is needed on where and how researchers, managers, funders, and policy makers should concentrate their time, energy and resources to help halt the decline of cetacean populations and in doing so, help to preserve biodiversity.

How the plan will be created

In early 2025, the IUCN/SSC-CSG undertook a review of 23 global and regional species action plans, and consulted with the IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG) to create a document outlining a 14-step process for the creation of the next Global Cetacean Action Plan. The process will begin with an initial in-person workshop for CSG leaders and Regional Coordinators, the CPSG and representatives of organisations like the International Whaling Commission and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. The CPSG will guide participants through threat analyses and facilitate the first stages of drafting the GCAP. The Singapore Oceanarium at Resorts World Sentosa has generously offered to support this workshop in Singapore.

However, additional funds of roughly 100,000 USD are needed to support the costs of a project coordinator and a core team of CSG experts to organize a series of follow-up virtual meetings to solicit wider stakeholder input, manage the drafting process, and promote implementation of the plan through both virtual and in-person engagements. The final digital and hardcopy product will have a professional layout, supported by illustrations, images and infographics, and other materials that can be disseminated electronically.

The full project is expected to take 18 months. Click [here](#) to see a detailed budget breakdown.

The IUCN SSC Cetacean Specialist Group comprises 150 members from around the globe with a great breadth and depth of specialist knowledge on whales, dolphins and porpoises. The Group is responsible for the IUCN Red List assessments of cetaceans, and it collaborates with other international bodies to advance cetacean conservation priorities. Learn more about the CSG here: <https://iucn-csg.org/home/> and contact gianna.minton@gmail.com if you would like to discuss ways to contribute to the Global Cetacean Action Plan.