



Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area,
concluded under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
Accord sur la Conservation des Cétacés de la Mer Noire, de la Méditerranée et de la zone Atlantique adjacente, conclu
sous l'égide de la Convention sur la Conservation des Espèces Migratrices appartenant à la Faune Sauvage (CMS)



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ASSESSMENT OF THE CONSERVATION STATUS OF CETACEANS IN THE ACCOBAMS AREA

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ASSESSMENT OF THE CONSERVATION STATUS OF CETACEANS IN THE ACCOBAMS AREA

Note of the Secretariat:

This document was prepared to provide ACCOBAMS Parties with updated information on the assessment of the conservation status of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area and inform them of the ongoing process of reassessment engaged with IUCN in 2019, conducted in particular in light of the new results on cetacean distribution and abundance issued from the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative.

THE IUCN RED LIST

Established in 1964, the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species has evolved to become the world's most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of animal, fungi and plant species¹.

The goal of The IUCN Red List is to provide information and analyses on the status, trends and threats to species, in order to inform and catalyze actions for biodiversity conservation. To achieve these goals the Red List aims to (i) establish a baseline from which to monitor the change in status of species; (ii) provide a global context for the establishment of conservation priorities at the local level; and (iii) monitor, on a continuing basis, the status of a representative selection of species (as biodiversity indicators) that cover all the major ecosystems of the world.

The IUCN Red List assesses individual species according to a set of criteria and assigns them to different categories according to their relative probability of risk of extinction (IUCN, 2001). All species fall into one of nine categories: Extinct (EX), Extinct in the Wild (EW), Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU), Near Threatened (NT), Least Concern (LC), Data Deficient (DD) and Not Evaluated (NE).

The Red List Assessment is conducted at both global and regional levels. Global status refers to the status of a particular species worldwide, and regional status describes a species' conservation status, or likelihood of extinction in a particular region (i.e. the Mediterranean Region or the Black Sea Region). Due to the different scale of analysis, the same species can be assigned to different categories, so that a species listed as not threatened at global level could be listed as threatened at regional level, and vice versa.

ACCOBAMS CETACEANS SPECIES STATUS ASSESSMENT BACKGROUND

As a first step to establishing an agreed regional baseline against which cetacean population status changes can be measured at a regional scale, ACCOBAMS and the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation organized in March 2006 a meeting of experts from the IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group and from the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee in order to assess the status of the species of cetaceans known to be regular in the ACCOBAMS region. The conservation status of twelve resident species and subspecies of marine mammals from the Mediterranean and Black Sea biogeographical regions was assessed² at this occasion. A Mediterranean Red List assessment of resident cetacean species emerged from this workshop and following further updates in 2010, led to the publication of the ACCOBAMS Cetacean Status Report in 2010³.

¹ <http://www.iucnredlist.org>

² Reeves R., Notarbartolo di Sciara G. (compilers and editors). 2006. The status and distribution of cetaceans in the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea. IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, Malaga, Spain. 137 pp.

³ Notarbartolo di Sciara G., Birkun A., Jr. 2010. Conserving whales, dolphins and porpoises in the Mediterranean and Black Seas: an ACCOBAMS status report, 2010. ACCOBAMS, Monaco. 212 p

On this basis, a Red List assessment of cetaceans at the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions level started in 2010 and was published in 2012⁴, with a Red List Category assigned to each evaluated cetacean species of the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

In November 2013, an evaluation of the Mediterranean subpopulation of the Cuvier's beaked whale was submitted for review, and the status was updated on red list site in 2018 from Data Deficient to Vulnerable.

In 2018, an assessment process of the Gibraltar strait subpopulation of the killer whale was launched in view of its submission to be included in the Mediterranean IUCN Red List. The assessment document was presented to the 12th Scientific Committee of ACCOBAMS for review before submission to the IUCN Species Information Service (SIS) in August 2019.

CURRENT STATUS OF CETACEAN SPECIES IN THE ACCOBAMS AREA

Up to date, eight species of cetaceans were assessed at the Mediterranean subpopulation level, three taxa were assessed at the sub specific level for the Black Sea, one species assessment is under review by the IUCN Species Information Service and one species assessment is in preparation. Details can be found below (tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Cetacean taxa assessed for their risk of extinction in the Mediterranean and Black sea. (details taken from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>)

| Species/subspecies | IUCN Category | Status population trend | Last assessed | annotations | Link to the IUCN Red List assessment |
|--|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---|
| MEDITERRANEAN SEA | | | | | |
| Fin Whale <i>Balaenoptera physalus</i> Mediterranean subpopulation | VU | Decreasing | 07 July 2011 | | https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/16208224/17549588 |
| Sperm Whale <i>Physeter macrocephalus</i> Mediterranean subpopulation | EN | Decreasing | 27 September 2006 | Needs updating | https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/16370739/16370477 |
| Short-beaked Common Dolphin <i>Delphinus delphis</i> Mediterranean subpopulation | EN | Decreasing | 30 April 2003 | Needs updating | https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/41762/10557372 |
| Common Bottlenose dolphin <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> Mediterranean subpopulation | VU | Decreasing | 18 November 2009 | | https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/16369383/16369386 |
| Striped Dolphin <i>Stenella coeruleoalba</i> Mediterranean subpopulation | VU | Unknown | 09 August 2010 | | https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/16674437/16674052 |

⁴ IUCN (2012). Marine Mammals and Sea Turtles of the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Gland, Switzerland and Malaga, Spain: IUCN. 32 pages.

| | | | | | |
|--|----|-------------|--------------------|-------------------|---|
| Risso's Dolphin <i>Grampus griseus</i> Mediterranean subpopulation | DD | Unknown | 01 April 2010 | | https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/16378423/16378453 |
| Long-finned Pilot Whale <i>Globicephala melas</i> Mediterranean subpopulation | DD | Unknown | 26 April 2010 | | https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/16376479/16376495 |
| Cuvier's Beaked Whale <i>Ziphius cavirostris</i> Mediterranean subpopulation | VU | Decreasing | 27 January 2018 | | https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/16381144/50286386 |
| BLACK SEA | | | | | |
| Black Sea Harbour Porpoise <i>Phocoena</i> <i>phocoena ssp.</i> <i>relicta</i> | EN | Decreasing | 30 June 2008 | Needs updating | https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/17030/6737111 |
| Black Sea Bottlenose Dolphin <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> <i>ssp. ponticus</i> | EN | Decreasing | 01 July 2008 | Needs updating | https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/133714/17771698 |
| Short-beaked Common Dolphin <i>Delphinus delphis</i> <i>ssp. ponticus</i> | VU | Unspecified | 30 June 2008 | Needs updating | https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/133729/3875256 |

Table 2. Cetacean taxa in process of evaluation for the IUCN Red List

| Species/subspecies | IUCN Category | Status population trend | Last assessed | annotations |
|--|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Killer Whale <i>Orcinus orca</i> Gibraltar strait subpopulation | CR | Unknown | 30 sep/2019 | Submitted for publication |
| Rough-toothed dolphin <i>Steno bredanensis</i> Mediterranean subpopulation | | | | Under preparation |

PERSPECTIVES

The ACCOBAMS Work program foresees - as a Scientific Committee assignment within the CA1 Conservation Action related to improve knowledge about state of cetaceans and monitor cetacean status - **'to assess IUCN threat status of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area and update it regularly, and more specifically to gather information to assess the data deficient species'**.

Following the Recommendation 10.3 of the 10th Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (Nice, France, 20-22 October 2015) and the Resolution 6.15, adopted by the Sixth Meeting of the Parties (Monaco, 22-25 November 2016) regarding the assessment of the IUCN conservation status of cetaceans in the ACCOBAMS Area, the Scientific Committee decided during its 11th Meeting (Monaco, 7-9 February 2017) to assess the status of killer whale in priority and to postpone the (re)assessment of the other species after the results of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative (ASI), when updated information and robust data on population abundance and distribution will be available.

In this line, and considering the now available results of the ASI project as well as other data and observations collected in the last few years, new assessments of the conservation status of Mediterranean and Black Sea cetaceans and update of existing ones according to the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria were launched in 2019.

This initiative is the result of a collaboration between ACCOBAMS and the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation and will use all new sources of information for an updated Red List Status of Mediterranean and Black Sea cetaceans. Under the coordination of the Chair of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, the process has started mid-2019. A final review and validation of species assessments before submission to IUCN Red List Unit is planned for the spring 2020, in order to allow the new status to be published online by the end of 2020 or early 2021.

Concerning the killer whale assessment submission for inclusion as a Gibraltar strait subpopulation, an answer from the IUCN Species Information Service is expected for the end of 2019.

All the results of these processes will be included in an updated Cetacean Status Report in the ACCOBAMS area to be published in 2021 and will be also used in the context of the ongoing development of Conservation Management Plans for Mediterranean cetaceans.