



ASI update May 2020: progress in data analysis and exploitation of results

❖ UPCOMING SURVEY RESULTS

Following the presentation of the preliminary ASI data during the dedicated ASI special event at the 7th Meeting of Parties in Istanbul, Turkey, in November 2019, ASI data were presented during the 2nd World Marine Mammal Conference, held in Barcelona, Spain, from the 8th to the 12th of December 2019. A plenary talk dedicated to the challenges related to organizing and conducting such an ambitious project was also listened by over 2500 conference participants (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tUjxKnALj8&feature=youtu.be>) .

To date, the Mediterranean Data analysis has been completed for cetacean species and the Black Sea Data analysis recently provided its preliminary results. Reports of all analysis from aerial- and boat-based surveys are under development and their finalised versions will be made available this fall.

In addition, the first paper with data coming from the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative was recently published on the scientific journal *Environmental Pollution*¹. Data were used to provide the first abundance estimate of floating mega-debris (> 30 cm) and map their distribution over the entire Mediterranean Sea. This work and related data and codes, along with the major part of the ASI data, are available on the [ACCOBAMS Website](#).

The ASI effort was presented during the 13th meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee (Cap d'Ail, France, 26–28 February 2020), where [the main achievements and progresses of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative](#), including the CeNoBS Project, and all future related activities were discussed.

❖ DATA ANALYSIS SUB REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

Among the main achievements of the ASI, the capacity building component developed in collaboration with the UNEP/MAP/SPA-RAC and through the CeNoBS project allowed to train in 2018 and 2019 more than 100 scientists from all the ACCOBAMS Area to cetacean and marine megafauna monitoring.

In line with those key achievements, a first data analysis sub-regional workshop for the central Mediterranean was organised at the end of 2019, where a participatory approach to data analysis and interpretation was implemented, with the participation of scientists from Albania, Croatia, Israel, Italy, Montenegro and Slovenia. Two additional analytical workshops are to be conducted in the next months (depending on the evolution of the Covid-19 crisis): the Second ASI Data Analysis workshop for the Western Mediterranean basin should take place the week of the 19th of October 2020, in Monaco. A Third ASI Data Analysis workshop that will target participants from the Eastern Mediterranean and from the Black Sea, thanks to the CeNoBS project, will take place in Istanbul, at a date that will be determined later in the year (potentially early 2021).

¹ Lambert, C., Authier, M., Dorémus, G., Laran, S., Panigada, S., Spitz, J. Van Canneyt, O. & Ridoux, V. 2020. Setting the scene for Mediterranean litterscape assessment: the first basin-scale quantification and mapping of floating debris. *Environmental Pollution*.



❖ TURNING ASI RESULTS INTO CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

A major final goal of the ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative will be the development of conservation recommendations using the survey results, through the organization of a regional workshop based on the interpretation of the ASI large scale survey results. This event is under preparation in collaboration with the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee and the recommendations that will emerge will then be presented and discussed during the next ACCOBAMS Meeting of Parties (MOP8 in 2022) and to other relevant stakeholders.

❖ UPDATE OF CETACEAN CONSERVATION STATUS AND A NEW PUBLICATION IN DEVELOPMENT

The ASI and CeNoBS results will also be used for the update of the Cetacean Conservation Status report publication², one of the key outputs expected from the ASI as an ACCOBAMS reference document. The collected data are also currently used by local scientists to re-assess Mediterranean/Black Sea cetaceans status under the framework of the IUCN Red List, in collaboration with the IUCN Center for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med); the available regional estimates will be used as baseline information to evaluate the population status of those species previously assessed and to provide new assessment for Data Deficient (DD) species. Both activities are implemented in collaboration with the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee, some Members being directly involved.

❖ ENSURING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE MONITORING EFFORT IN THE ACCOBAMS AREA

In order to assess trends in population status that will inform decision makers and support relevant conservation measures, monitoring effort must be replicated systematically and regularly over time. Thus, the ASI and its achievements are paving the way for an ACCOBAMS long term monitoring program whose development will start in 2020 and be supported by a study to identify institutional, technical and financial mechanisms to be prioritized to ensure the long-term implementation of this monitoring programme.

In addition, the workshop 'Towards Coordinated Marine Mammal Monitoring Programmes For MSFD Second Cycle 2020-2026' was organized during the 2nd World Marine Mammal Conference in Barcelona with the objective to identify complementarities and synergies and to foster collaboration and transboundary consultations between existing and upcoming marine mammal monitoring programmes related to MSFD descriptor 1 Biodiversity in different EU countries from the ACCOBAMS Area and beyond.

² Previous publication is from 2010: <https://accobams.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Notarbartolo-di-Sciara-and-Birkun-2010.pdf>