

## CETACEAN CULTURE

### Issue: Cetacean culture

#### 1. Action requested

The Scientific Committee is invited to:

- a. **consider** the establishment of a dedicated working group,
- b. **provide recommendations** to the Parties on this issue.

#### 2. Background

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) has been leading ground-breaking work on the implications of animal cultures and social learning for conservation.

This issue could become a new topic to be addressed by the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee.

## CETACEAN CULTURE

### New topic to be addressed at the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) has been leading ground-breaking work on the implications of animal cultures and social learning for conservation. This work has helped to generate a number of important scientific papers, and the conservation of distinct cultures has been taken forward for several taxa, including chimpanzees in West Africa and sperm whales in the South Pacific.

Noting that cetaceans are among the species known to have populations that can be defined by their cultural traits, the suggestion here is that ACCOBAMS should give consideration to how this issue may assist in its work.

This might, for example, include using the concept of culture in the species covered by ACCOBAMS as a new education and outreach tool to help the public more fully understand them. It may also extend to consideration of whether cultural units might helpfully be defined for species in the ACCOBAMS region and used to aid their conservation (e.g. in the context of vessel strikes).

A working group could be established to consider this matter and to determine whether drafting a recommendation by the SC meeting, and eventually, a draft resolution for the MOP would be an appropriate way forward.

### Background

CMS Factsheet on Animal Culture: <https://www.cms.int/en/publication/fact-sheet-animal-culture-and-conservation-migratory-species>

Some key papers:

Brakes, P., Dall, S. R. X., Aplin, L. M., Bearhop, S., Carroll, E. L., Ciucci, P., Fishlock, V., Ford, J. K. B., Garland, E. C., Keith, S. A., McGregor, P. K., Mesnick, S. L., Noad, M. J., Notarbartolo di Sciara, G., Robbins, M. M., Simmonds, M. P., Spina, F., Thornton, A., Wade, P. R., Whiting, M. J., Williams, J., Rendell, L., Whitehead, H., Whiten, A., Rutz, C. (2019). Animal cultures matter for conservation. *Science*, 363, 1032–1034.

Brakes, P., Carroll, E. L., Dall, S. R. X., Keith, S. A., McGregor, P. K., Mesnick, S. L., Noad, M. J., Rendell, L., Robbins, M. M., Rutz, C., Thornton, A., Whiten, A., Whiting, M. J., Aplin, L. M., Bearhop, S., Ciucci, P., Fishlock, V., Ford, J. K. B., Notarbartolo Di Sciara, G., Simmonds, M. P., Spina, F., Wade, P. R., Whitehead, H., Williams, J., Garland, E. C. (2021). A deepening understanding of animal culture suggests lessons for conservation. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 288, 20202718.

Vachon, F., Hersh, T. A., Rendell, L., Gero, S., Whitehead, H. (2022). Ocean nomads or island specialists? Culturally driven habitat partitioning contrasts in scale between geographically isolated sperm whale populations. *R Soc Open Sci*, 9(5), 211737.

Whitehead, H. (2010). Conserving and managing animals that learn socially and share cultures. *Learning and Behavior*, 38, 329–336.

Whitehead, H., Ford, J. K. B., Horn, A. G. (2023). Using culturally transmitted behavior to help delineate conservation units for species at risk. *Biological Conservation*, 285, 110239.

Wild, S., Krützen, M., Rankin, R. W., Hoppitt, W. J. E., Gerber, L., Allen, S. J. (2019). Long-term decline in survival and reproduction of dolphins following a marine heatwave. *Current Biology*, 29(7), R239–40.