



FACTSHEET

PAK

2014

## Species

# Conservation of the Indus River Dolphin



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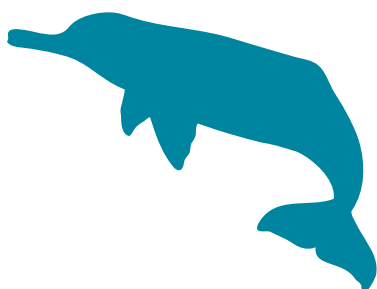
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**Duration:** 1997 - Present

The Indus River dolphin (*Platanista gangetica minor*) locally known as *bhulan* is WWF's global priority species, and is listed as *endangered* in the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List. It inhabits the Indus River in five sub-populations, which are confined by six irrigation barrages that are: Jinnah, Chashma, Taunsa, Guddu, Sukkur and Kotri.

The habitat of the species is reduced to one-fifth of its historical range and the whole population is now found in a stretch of approximately 1,000km of the Indus River, where the maximum population is present between Taunsa and Sukkur barrages. The habitat of the Indus River dolphin is degraded primarily due to shortage of water caused by its diversion to meet the growing agricultural needs in a semi-arid country. This also reduces the flow in the river, thus increasing the accumulation of pollutants. Canal strandings, contamination of water due to industrial waste and agrochemicals, unsustainable fishing practices and net entanglements are significant threats to the species.

WWF-Pakistan has worked in collaboration with relevant line departments and in partnership with the Sindh Wildlife Department in the Indus Dolphin Game Reserve; home to the largest population of the Indus River dolphin for the conservation of this river cetacean. WWF-Pakistan however, introduced some interventions in Punjab province between Taunsa and Guddu barrages to conserve the second largest population of the Indus River dolphin.



### Dolphin population estimation surveys

WWF-Pakistan has a long history of conservation of this species, and estimating the dolphin population has always been fundamental to setting up a scientific basis

to plan and streamline future conservation actions. WWF-Pakistan, in this regard has conducted surveys every five years starting in 2001. The first comprehensive study was carried out by WWF and its partners in 2001 covering the entire distribution range of the Indus River dolphin between Jinnah and Kotri barrages, revealing a total population of about 1,100 dolphins. The second survey, also conducted in 2006, estimated a total population of about 1,750 dolphins. The third survey was conducted in 2011, and estimated the total population of about 1,450 dolphins between Chashma and Kotri barrages.

### Working with communities

Involvement of community stakeholders (fisherfolk, local communities, and farmers) has always remained an important part of any conservation action plan. WWF-Pakistan has mobilized fisherfolk and facilitated them in establishing fisher Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in Sukkur, Ghotki, and Guddu, covering the project area. These CBOs have been further strengthened in adopting sustainable fishing practices and alternative sources of livelihoods in order to minimise harvesting pressure on aquatic resources.

### Rescuing dolphins

WWF-Pakistan efficiently leads a river dolphin rescue programme to minimise the direct mortality of the Indus River dolphin. Its dolphin rescue operations began in 1997 and a total of 140 stranding cases have been reported so far, which resulted in the successful rescue of 112 dolphins. A fully equipped and trained team of official and community rescuers, provided with a custom-made ambulance to translocate the stranded dolphins, are vital components of the rescue operations.

### Agrochemical waste reduction

The protection of the dolphin habitat is attained by addressing the issue of agrochemical waste in river water. The agricultural belt along the Indus River is famous mainly for cultivation of cotton crop. Better management practices were introduced among farmers by establishing farmer sustainability schools, which resulted in more than a 41 per cent reduction in pesticide use; 55 per cent less use of irrigation water; 61 per cent reduction in phosphoric fertilizers and 32 per cent reduction in use of urea fertilizers.

### Awareness raising

Inhabitants of the project area had very little knowledge about their environment and facilities the riverine ecosystem offer. It was therefore imperative to create awareness among the general public and communities about the ecological importance of local wildlife. WWF-Pakistan established Indus Dolphin Conservation Centres in Guddu and Sukkur to provide an opportunity for students and the general public to learn about the Indus River dolphin. Awareness raising material, celebration of environment days, school outreach activities and dolphin watching boat safaris are important means of imparting environmental awareness among target groups.



### WWF-Pakistan Species Goal




To conserve the minimum viable populations of selected indigenous, endemic and/or keystone species.



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### Long Term Goal

The long term goal of WWF-Pakistan's Indus River dolphin conservation programme is to conserve and protect the Indus River dolphin and its habitat; preserve the dolphin's genetic variability; and ultimately supports conservation of the lower Indus Delta ecoregion (Global 200) and its associated biodiversity.

	<p><b>Why we are here:</b> To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.</p>
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