



**SPREP**  
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional  
Environment Programme

PO Box 240, Apia, Samoa  
E: [sprep@sprep.org](mailto:sprep@sprep.org)  
T: +685 21929  
F: +685 20231  
W: [www.sprep.org](http://www.sprep.org)



*The Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.*

## SPREP NEWS

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### **MObl – Marine Mammal Survey App for SmartPhones now available!**

***Adapted from WWF New Caledonia Press Release***

“MObl – Marine Mammal Observers of Oceania by Internet” is a new smartphone application now available to help users distinguish marine mammals at any time in New Caledonia and French Polynesia. If at sea and you happen to make a sighting, the phone app allows you to identify the species with a description and an image. It also ensures this information will be recorded to a database.

Once downloaded, the free app can be used without an internet connection.

This pilot project is the brain child of marine biologist Marc Oremus, cetacean specialist with the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), and the WWF office in New Caledonia. It is supported by WWF France, Crème de la Mer, Te Me Um and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). At present, the app is only available in French, but once it has been trialled in New Caledonia and French Polynesia an English version will be produced.

“We are pleased to be able to support such an initiative, it will certainly assist with raising awareness of whales and dolphins in New Caledonia and French Polynesia and we look forward to seeing this app covering the entire Pacific island region,” said Ms. Seema Deo, Communications and Outreach Adviser for SPREP.

When it comes to sighting marine mammals, scientists have been calling on the general public and mariners to collect information. Details of observations had then to be forwarded to organisations by e-mail or snail mail. The new smartphone app simplifies this process and also allows for amateur marine mammal watchers to provide useful data.

The MObl App allows for the position of the observation to be recorded either manually or automatically through the Global Positioning System of the smartphone. When the phone next has an internet connection the sighting report is automatically uploaded to a database which stores all recorded sighting information.

There is the option to note the number of individuals present at the time of sighting as well as including photographs. While not compulsory this helps provide evidence of species identity. A sighting report can also be compiled after the event which will then require position, date and time of sighting to be keyed-in manually.

“We are hopeful that this MObl phone app will allow people to identify marine mammals they encounter at sea and to let us know about sightings of rare or unusual species by accompanying the sighting with a good quality photograph. This is pioneering ‘citizen science’ and we’re excited by the possibilities this new phone app may bring,” said Mike Donoghue, Threatened and Migratory Species Adviser for SPREP.

The application was developed with the invaluable knowledge of Claire Garrigue and Morgan Poupon of Opération Cétacés based in New Caledonia and Michael Poole of the South Pacific Whale Research Consortium. The excellent nature drawings were made available by Brett Jarret. You can download the free MObl app at Google Play or the Apple Store.



***Images courtesy of the WWF New Caledonia Press Release***

***For further information please visit:***

***Facebook : MObl***

***\* WWF New Caledonia Blog : <http://nouvelle-caledonie.wwf.fr>***

***\* E-mail : [rapport.mobi@gmail.com](mailto:rapport.mobi@gmail.com)***