

Proposal for the Inclusion of Species on the Appendices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

A. Proposal: Inclusion of Cephalorhynchus commersonii (South American population) in Appendix II.

B. Proponent:

C. Supporting Statement

1. Taxon.

1.1. Classis	Mammalia
1.2. Ordo	CETACEA
1.3. Familia	Delphinidae
1.4. Genus/Species/Subspecies	<u>Cephalorhynchus commersonii</u> (Lacepede, 1804)
1.5. Common name(s)	
English:	Commerson's dolphin
Spanish:	tonina overa
French:	dauphin de Commerson

2. Biological data

2.1. Distribution (current and historical)

The distribution of Commerson's dolphin is apparently limited to waters of southern and southeastern South America (from Drake Passage, the southern and eastern coasts of Tierra del Fuego, and the central Strait of Magellan, near Cabo Froward, northward on the Argentine coast to about 41°30'S), the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands and the Kerguelen Islands. The presence of this dolphin around South Georgia has not been confirmed (Brown, 1988; Goodall et al., 1988; Leatherwood et al., 1988).

2.2. Population (estimates and trends)

The only existing estimate of population size is that of Leatherwood et al. (1988) from aerial surveys in the northern Strait of Magellan. These authors provide a minimum estimate of 3,221 (SE=1,168) dolphins for the area surveyed. No studies on population identity or stocks exist for this species.

2.3. Habitat (short description and trends)

Found in cold inshore waters in open coasts, sheltered fjords, bays, harbours and river mouths, and occasionally enter rivers. The offshore limit of the species range is said to be the 100 m isobath (Goodall et al., 1988; Leatherwood et al., 1988). Off South America Commerson's dolphins appear to prefer areas where the continental shelf is wide and flat, the tidal range is great, and temperatures are influenced by the cool Malvinas Current. Water temperatures in areas frequented by these

dolphins range from 4°C to 16°C. Around the Falkland (Malvinas) as well as off mainland Argentina, Commerson's dolphins are often seen swimming in or at the edge of kelp beds (Goodall et al., 1988).

2.4. Migrations (kinds of movement, proportion of the population migrating)

Movements in this species are poorly understood. Although Goodall et al. (1988) did not find evidence of seasonality in the presence of this dolphin in southern South America, short-range movements in search of prey are likely to occur.

In Chile Leatherwood et al. (1988) did not observe Commerson's dolphins in some areas where they have been previously recorded. It has been suggested that the reduced abundance of these dolphins in some areas in southern Chile may be due to depletion of the population or that the animals moved east in the Strait of Magellan.

3. Threat data

3.1. Direct threats to the population (factors, intensity)

In recent years, various species of small cetaceans, mainly Commerson's dolphins and Peale's dolphins, have been harpooned and used as bait in the southern king crab fishery in both Argentina and Chile (Goodall and Cameron, 1980; Sielfeld, 1983; Goodall and Jordan, 1986). In Chile, the direct catch of Commerson's dolphin and other small cetaceans dates back to 1976. For that year, and based on reports from the crab industry, Torres et al. (1979) estimated that around 1,200 dolphins were taken for crab bait in the Strait of Magellan. Sielfeld et al. (1977) estimated the take for the seasons 1977-78, and 1978-79 in 2,400 and 4,102 respectively, with Commerson's dolphin and Peale's dolphin (Lagenorhynchus australis) as the most affected species. Since 1980, reports from the industry were not available, so estimation of catches was more difficult.

Because the centolla is overfished in the Magellan region, the fishing effort has shifted to the false king crab which is exploited principally farther west in the channels. Commerson's dolphins are not found here, but they are abundant in the eastern part of the Strait. In Argentina the crab fishery operates in the Beagle Channel, where few Commerson's dolphins exist. However, some animals have been killed for sport (Goodall et al., 1988).

Of major importance in the incidental mortality of Commerson's dolphins are the gillnets set for robalo (Eleginops maclovinus). Between December 1975 and March 1979 a minimum of 69 Commerson's dolphins were taken in Argentine Tierra del Fuego. Small numbers are also taken in shore seines and in commercial fisheries (Goodall et al., 1988). In Chile the

robalo fishery also takes this dolphin, but the magnitude of the incidental catch remains unknown. A few may still been taken in an illegal net fishery for king crabs (Goodall and Cameron, 1980).

3.2. Habitat destruction (quality of changes, quantity of loss)

No information

3.3. Indirect threat (e.g. reduction of breeding success by pesticide contamination)

No information

3.4. Threats connected especially with migrations

No information

3.5. National and international utilization

Both the direct and indirect catches of Commerson's dolphins supply bait for crab traps in the king crab fishery, in particular in Chile (Goodall and Cameron, 1980; Lescrauwaet, 1989).

Some specimens have been exported for live display in oceanaria in the USA, (Federal Republic of) Germany and Japan (Klinowska, in press).

4. Protection status and needs

4.1. National protection status

Regulations for small cetaceans in Argentina and Chile date back to 1974 and 1977, respectively. Permits are required for any taking, but in practice enforcement only applies to live-captures (Klinowska, in press). In particular, enforcement is difficult in southern Chile, where the characteristics of the area preclude appropriate control. There does not appear to be any legislation protecting small cetaceans in the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands, although some proposed conservation areas may protect the habitat (Klinowska, in press). In the case of live-captures, Argentina banned this activity until more information on the species would be available (Cano, 1984, quoted by Goodall et al., 1988).

4.2. International protection status

Cephalorhynchus commersonii is listed in Appendix II of CITES. The IUCN Red Data Book include the species as "Insufficiently Known" (Klinowska, in press; Perrin, 1989). No other international agreement includes this species.

4.3. Additional protection needs

Cooperative research efforts should be developed for further protecting of this and other species affected by the crab fishery. Studies on the biology, movements and abundance of the species should be obtained, as well as collection of definite statistics on bait usage and development of alternative sources of bait. Information about the identity and status of the population around the Falklands(Malvinas) Islands should also be studied.

5. Range States

Argentina, Chile and United Kingdom (Falkland Islands)

6. Comments from Range States

7. Additional remarks

8. References

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