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Agenda Item 25.3.1

IMPORTANT MARINE MAMMAL AREAS

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

This document contains the *3rd Information Note on Activities Related to the Identification of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs)* and informs Parties about newly identified IMMAs in accordance with Decision 14.60 (a).



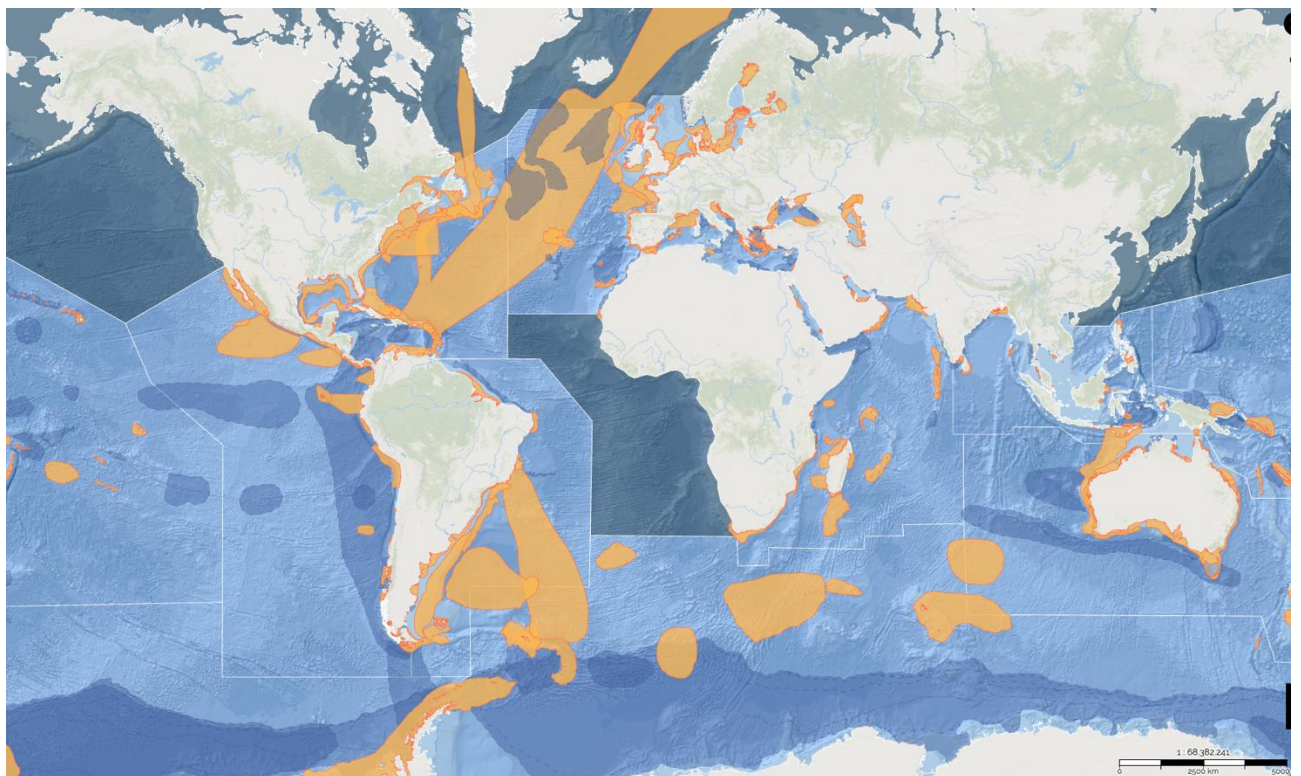
**MARINE MAMMAL
PROTECTED AREAS
TASK FORCE**



**3RD INFORMATION NOTE ON ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE
IDENTIFICATION OF IMPORTANT MARINE MAMMAL AREAS (IMMAs)**

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Since 21 March 2023 (date of the 2nd Information Note¹), the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force has engaged in the following activities in support of its IMMA programme:

1. North East Atlantic Ocean region

From 22 to 26 May 2023, the IMMA Regional Workshop for the North East Atlantic Ocean was held in hybrid mode in Hamburg, Germany. The IMMA Secretariat collected 51 preliminary Areas of Interest (pAol) from experts prior to the workshop. The total of 395 pAol included many existing spatial and protected area designations in the region. At the close of the workshop, through the expert-based process utilising dedicated selection criteria, 36 candidate IMMAs (cIMMAs) were proposed, and sent for review. Six additional areas were advanced as Aol to go forward. Following independent review and consideration of how the criteria supported IMMA identification, 33 IMMAs were accepted for full status with 10 submissions being reserved as Aol, all of which now appear on the IMMA e-Atlas.

The workshop was attended by 53 experts and observers. Of the total, 14 participated in person throughout the week while 23 participated remotely. There were 7 participating members of the IMMA Secretariat in attendance and 1 remote. Five observers also attended, most of whom made presentations, with 3 others remote. In summary, the participants came from the 12 European North East Atlantic-facing and Baltic Sea countries, as well as Morocco, making 13 in total. In some cases, the expert held a main residence in a country other than where the research was done, and a number of experts have worked in multiple areas in the region. The workshop was organised by the Task Force with support from a grant from the Water Revolution Foundation. Additional funds and hosting were provided by Peter Lürssen with substantial local support and hosting of events, courtesy of Vienna Eleuteri. OceanCare also provided valuable support.

The full report of the workshop can be downloaded from [here](#).

2. North West Atlantic Ocean and Wider Caribbean region

From 13 to 17 May 2024 the IMMA Regional Workshop for the North West Atlantic Ocean and Wider Caribbean was held in hybrid mode in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. The workshop was attended by 57 experts and observers. Of the total, 26 participated in person throughout the week while 7 participated remotely. There were 7 participating members of the IMMA Secretariat in attendance and 2 remote.

In summary, the participants came from the 14 countries in total. In some cases, the expert held a main residence in a country other than where the research was done, and a number of experts have worked in multiple areas in the region. The workshop was organised by the Task Force with support from a grant from the Water Revolution Foundation, with substantial support from the Sargasso Sea Commission through the Sargasso Sea child project of the Common Oceans Programme funded by the Global Environment Facility.

Additional funds and hosting were provided by OceanCare and Animal Welfare Institute. Essential administrative support was given by Tethys Research Institute and Whale and Dolphin Conservation.

The full report of the workshop can be downloaded from [here](#).

¹ Annexed to [UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.27.4.1](#)

3. IMMA implementation and monitoring projects

A small number of IMMAs was selected to launch a pilot project with funding from Whale and Dolphin Conservation to support the collection of baseline information in each IMMA that can be used for monitoring into the future and also to advance implementing conservation actions. The IMMAs selected are:

- Watamu-Malindi and Watamu Banks IMMA and Kisite-Shimoni IMMA, Kenya
- Satun-Langkawi Archipelago IMMA, Malaysia
- Humboldt Current IMMA, Peru
- Gulf of Masirah and offshore waters IMMA, Oman
- Abrolhos Bank IMMA, Brazil
- Southern Caribbean Upwelling System IMMA, Dutch West Indies and Venezuela

Tasks involve evaluating the IMMA status through key characteristics/criteria that can be measured and monitored, and then to move toward appropriate implementation of marine conservation and management. To make a systematic evaluation of the status of an IMMA, comprehensive sets of questions are provided for all users in and around the IMMA (researchers, fishermen, shipping, tourism, oil & gas, etc.) The process for engagement with users starts by introducing the IMMA concept and publicizing it to key authorities and communities. The rationale for local IMMAs is presented and exploration is initiated at the local and national level to determine threats to the species and habitats and the options for implementation of conservation action focused around IMMAs.

The overall goal of this project is to inform users and communities and to encourage adoption of IMMAs as a tool to accomplish national conservation objectives and to fulfil agreed biodiversity targets. In addition to IMMAs, other complementary biodiversity spatial layers (e.g. IBAs, ISRAs, EBSAs and KBAs) will be introduced to show how these might be useful in broader multi-taxa conservation efforts.

This project aims to stimulate and support a programme of IMMA implementation following the identification of IMMAs in a given region. Focusing this work and making it even more important going forward from 2025 is the widely acknowledged biodiversity crisis; the climate emergency which is being addressed by initiatives in many countries; widespread acceptance of the 30 by 30 initiative (country commitments to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030) as part of their National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans; and the recent high seas BBNJ (biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction) work to bring into force the legally binding agreement that will focus attention even to offshore international waters outside of a country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

4. Summary of achievements, 2023-2025:

- To date, the IMMA network has resulted in the identification of 323 IMMAs and 196 Areas of Interest.
- Identified IMMAs provide important habitat for 100 of the 134 recognised marine mammal species.
- 76% of IMMAs were identified at least partly based on important habitat for threatened marine mammal species (VU, EN, CR), based on the IUCN Red List.

- CMS-listed marine mammals (n = 47) for which IMMAs were identified as qualifying species:
 - *Arctocephalus australis*
 - *Balaenoptera bonaerensis*
 - *Balaenoptera borealis*
 - *Balaenoptera edeni*
 - *Balaenoptera musculus*
 - *Balaenoptera omurai*
 - *Balaenoptera physalus*
 - *Caperea marginata*
 - *Cephalorhynchus eutropia*
 - *Delphinapterus leucas*
 - *Delphinus delphis*
 - *Delphinus delphis ponticus*
 - *Dugong dugon*
 - *Eubalaena australis*
 - *Eubalaena glacialis*
 - *Grampus griseus*
 - *Hyperoodon ampullatus*
 - *Inia geoffrensis*
 - *Lagenodelphis hosei*
 - *Lagenorhynchus australis*
 - *Lagenorhynchus obscurus*
 - *Lontra felina*
 - *Megaptera novaeangliae*
 - *Monachus monachus*
 - *Neophocaena phocaenoides*
 - *Orcaella brevirostris*
 - *Orcaella heinsohni*
 - *Orcinus orca*
 - *Otaria byronia*
 - *Phoca vitulina*
 - *Phocoena phocoena*
 - *Phocoena phocoena relicta*
 - *Phocoena spinipinnis*
 - *Physeter macrocephalus*
 - *Platanista gangetica*
 - *Pontoporia blainvillei*
 - *Pusa caspica*
 - *Sousa chinensis*
 - *Sousa plumbea*
 - *Sousa teuszii*
 - *Stenella attenuata*
 - *Stenella coeruleoalba*
 - *Stenella longirostris*
 - *Tursiops aduncus*
 - *Tursiops truncatus ponticus*
 - *Ursus maritimus*
 - *Ziphius cavirostris*

- IMMA combined surface covers 51,503,283 km², 17.8% of the global ocean.
- 48% of the IMMA combined surface area is in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), for a total of 11.2% of the ABNJ surface.

- The Task Force, along with Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), has raised funds and organised a programme to monitor and implement individual IMMAs in six countries (see above).
- The Task Force has participated in many webinars, conferences and workshops largely for information sharing, notably this [OCTO webinar](#) in March 2025.
- Through the IMMA [e-Atlas](#), the IMMA shapefile layer has been distributed to more than 1,000 users in 90 countries to date, a number which increases every year. These IMMA users range from industry and business, scientists and academia, conservation organisations, government agencies and intergovernmental organisations.

Acknowledgements

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