

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

A. Proposal: Inclusion of Delphinus delphis (western Mediterranean 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 Delphinus delphis
(Linnaeus, 1758)
- 1.5. Common Name(s)
 - English: common dolphin
 - Spanish: delfin comun
 - French: dauphin comun
 - Italian: delfino

2. Biological data

2.1. Distribution (current and historical)

The common dolphin is widely distributed, occurring in all oceans to the limits of tropical and warm temperate waters. There are several distinctive forms that probably deserve racial or subspecific status; some scientists recognize more than one species. There are various recognized local forms in the eastern North Pacific, the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, along the European and African Atlantic coasts, in the Indian Ocean, and off Japan (Leatherwood and Reeves, 1983).

2.2. Population (estimates and trends)

No reliable estimates exist for the population of common dolphins in the western Mediterranean Sea. However, the species has almost totally disappeared from the northwest basin (Duguy et al., 1983; Aguilar, 1986 and pers. comm.; Perrin, 1989a).

2.3. Habitat (short description and trends)

Throughout most of their range, common dolphins are pelagic, most likely to be found along or seaward of the 100-fathom contour. In the western Mediterranean, these dolphins are found in waters ranging between 18°C and 23°C (Viale, 1982;

Leatherwood and Reeves, 1983). Main prey items are epi- and mesopelagic fishes such as anchovy, sardine and myctophids; squids are also eaten (Viale, 1982).

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

Sightings in the western Mediterranean indicate a seasonal pattern in distribution and movements. Common dolphins are more frequently observed in the southern part of the Mediterranean during the first half of the year (McBrearty et al., 1986). In the northern part of the Sea, sightings increase during the second half of the year (Pilleri and Knuckey, 1969; Viale, 1982, 1985).

3. Threat data

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

Small numbers were taken off Spain (Aguilar, 1986; Duguy et al, 1982) up to 1988 when this practice was banned (Aguilar, pers. comm.). Off the Atlantic coast of France, some are harpooned by fishermen for consumption at sea (Duguy and Hussenot, 1982). A drift net fishery for swordfish in the waters surrounding the Italian Peninsula is estimated to kill thousands of dolphins (Perrin, 1989b; Notarbartolo-di-Sciara, 1990) and it is likely that common dolphins are caught in these nets.

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

The Mediterranean is a highly polluted sea, receiving a large amount of domestic and industrial effluents. Some areas are under severe ecological stress (Jeftic, 1988).

High concentrations of PCBs were found in one common dolphin stranded on the French Mediterranean coast (Alzieu and Duguy, 1979); this fact points to the level of contamination of these waters.

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

Overfishing and pollution have depleted some fish stocks in the Mediterranean (Northridge, 1984) and these are indicated as some of the causes for decline of the common dolphin in the area (Aguilar, 1986; Perrin, 1989b).

3.4. Threats connected especially with migrations

No information

3.5. National and international utilization

Common dolphins are reportedly used for food by the crew of fishing vessels in the Atlantic coast of France and probably in the Mediterranean (Duguy and Hussenot, 1982; Collet, 1983).

4. Protection status and needs

4.1. National protection status

Specific legislation on cetaceans protect the species in Spain, France and Italy (Klinowska, in press; Aguilar, pers. comm.). No information on other countries of the region are available.

4.2. International protection status

Delphinus delphis is listed in Appendix II of CITES and Appendix II of the Berne Convention. Although the species is categorized as "Not Threatened" by IUCN, populations in the Black Sea, Western Mediterranean and eastern tropical Pacific are considered "At Risk" (Perrin, 1989).

4.3. Additional protection needs

Studies on ways to minimize the sources and effects of habitat degradation, assessment of incidental mortality and estimation of abundance and trends. At the mean time information on population biology should be obtained.

5. Range States

Algeria, France, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Spain and Tunisia

6. Comments from Range States

7. Additional remarks

8. References

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