



REDUCING FISHERIES BYCATCH

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ENTANGLEMENT IN ARTISANAL FISHING NETS IS THE MAIN CAUSE OF DEATH FOR ATLANTIC HUMPBACK DOLPHINS THROUGHOUT THEIR RANGE.

Atlantic humpback dolphins (*Sousa teuszii*) are found only in shallow waters in estuaries, mangroves and open coastlines- the same waters that are used by small-scale artisanal fishers. These fishers predominantly use gillnets and beach seine nets for catching fish from within the same waters where the dolphins are found. These nets are relatively inexpensive and easy to operate, and gillnets are often deployed before sunset, left to catch fish overnight, and recovered the next morning.

Gillnets are designed to entangle fish. Unfortunately, they also entangle turtles, sharks, rays and dolphins. Although dolphins are not the intended catch of most fishers in the region, once caught, dolphin meat is often used for bait, and sometimes for human consumption, creating a commercial value and market for dead dolphins in some locations.

Fishers in remote coastal regions usually do not realise how rare and threatened Atlantic humpback dolphins are. Once they understand how rare dolphins are, and what an important role they play in maintaining healthy ecosystems, fishers can be valuable partners in reporting and monitoring bycatch, and developing and testing strategies to reduce it.

The CCAHD has several strategies to reduce the most pervasive threat to Atlantic humpback dolphins:

- Interview surveys and national reporting networks are essential means of accurately documenting bycatch when it occurs. Supporting national reporting networks is the first step to identifying and mapping bycatch hotspots.
- Interview data and boat-based survey data can be used to map dolphin distribution against fishing effort to conduct scientifically robust bycatch risk assessments. These can be used to identify where interventions are most needed to reduce bycatch.

- CCAHD partners include the International Whaling Commission's Bycatch Mitigation Initiative and its Expert Panel members who are at the forefront of bycatch reduction research and developments.



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- In areas where bycatch is recorded, or bycatch risk is high, social scientists and fisheries experts can work with local communities to explore, design and test alternative fishing gears or practices, such as banning the use of gillnets in the dolphins' core habitats, promoting more selective fishing gears like bottom-set traps or hand-lines, shorter deployments of gillnets to reduce the opportunity for entanglement, or placing acoustic warning devices or reflectors on nets/gillnets to make them more 'visible' to dolphins.



Fishermen carry a dead Atlantic humpback dolphin from their boat onto the beach. Photo by Tim Collins, WCS.



An Atlantic humpback dolphin calf entangled in an artisanal gillnet in Congo. Photo by Tim Collins.



250,000 Euros are needed to conduct the CCAHD's ambitious bycatch reduction plan over 5 years. Your contribution, no matter how big or small, can make a difference!

- **100-500 Euros** can support the printing and distribution of posters and materials to encourage coastal communities to report bycatch, or provide a fisher with a mobile phone that he can use to take photos and send reports.
- **1,000-5,000 Euros** can fund a local community workshop to raise awareness of dolphins and empower community members to become allies in developing bycatch reduction strategies.
- **10,000-50,000 Euros** could fund a bycatch risk assessment project in a location where data on fishing effort and dolphin distribution has already been collected.
- **50,000-100,000 Euros** can fund a project to trial bycatch reduction strategies in one or more bycatch hotspots.

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