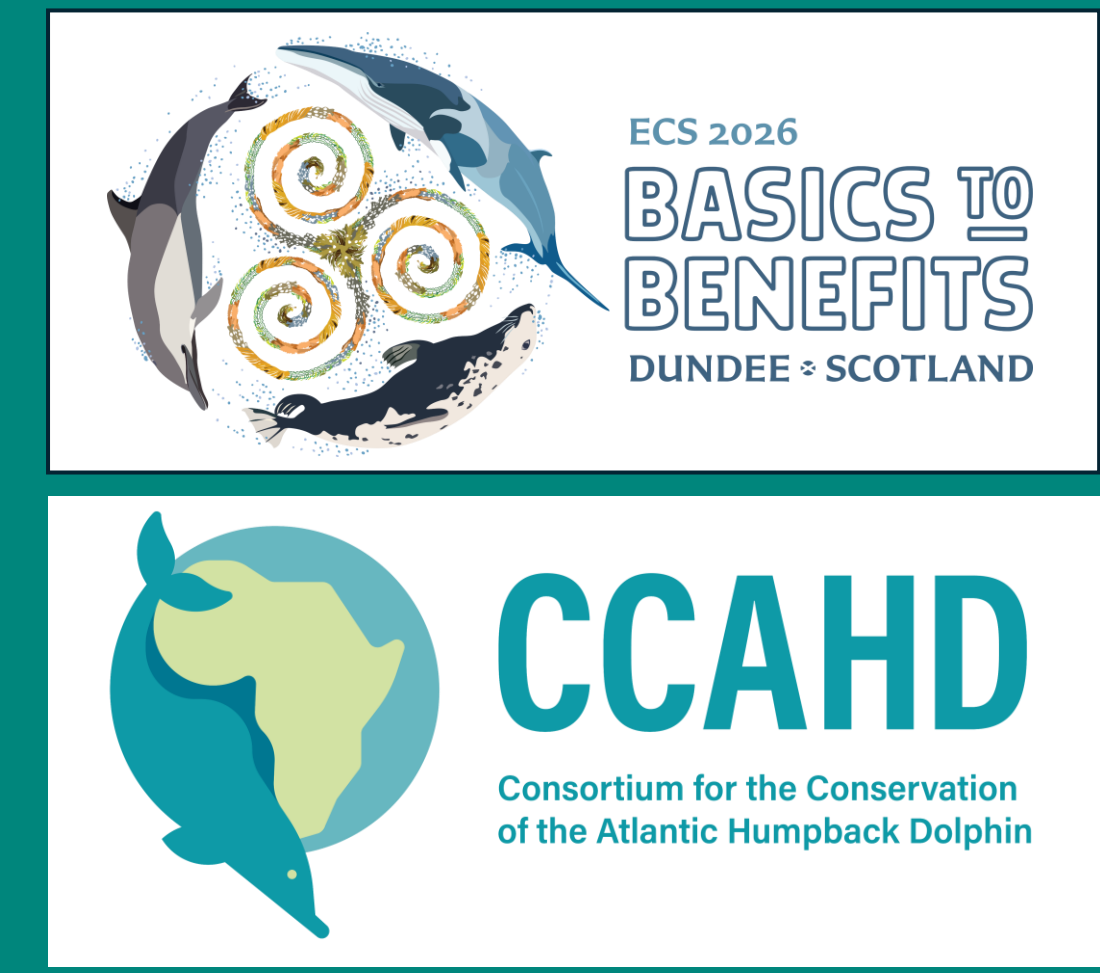


Addressing data gaps for the Critically Endangered Atlantic humpback dolphin through regional collaboration #045

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Introduction

The last range-wide data compilation and review for the Atlantic humpback dolphin (*Sousa teuszii* – from hereon AHD) was conducted in 2015, leading to the species' uplisting on the IUCN Red List from Vulnerable to Critically Endangered in 2017. This and many other recommendations from the International Whaling Commission and other bodies catalysed the formation of the Consortium for the Conservation of the Atlantic Humpback Dolphin (CCAHD) in 2020, and the adoption of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Single Species Action Plan (SSAP) for the species in 2024. The range-wide collaboration resulting from these initiatives, coupled with ongoing work from independent range-country and citizen-scientists has resulted in a significant increase in the amount of available data on AHD distribution and conservation status. This data and its analysis is important to guide future research and threat mitigation efforts.

Methods

To compile this update, the authors collected, assessed and summarized the following categories of data:

- Data collected directly by the authors in the context of dedicated cetacean surveys, which include boat-based surveys, shore-based surveys to document live sightings, beach-based surveys to document strandings (which here refer to all beach-cast or floating carcasses regardless of cause), interview surveys with fishers, and systematic fish-landing site inspections;
- Data collected by the authors opportunistically, or by compiling citizen science/third-party reports through a network or reporting system that they manage;
- Data reported through publicly available citizen science reporting platforms, such as iNaturalist (iNaturalist.org) and the SIREN reporting app developed in Cameroon;
- Data reported in peer-reviewed publications.

The compiled data was mapped using QGIS 3.28. Where systematic surveys were conducted using CCAHD or similar protocols for boat-based, beach-based, interview, bycatch or stranding surveys, relative encounter rates were calculated to facilitate comparison between study areas. For more information about the CCAHD protocols and methods, please scan the QR Codes below to access CCAHD website and its resources (including the full manuscript and PDF of this poster).



Results

Table 1: Overview of the types of data collected in each possible AHD range state from 2016 onward, and used to inform this update.

Country	Dedicated boat-based cetacean surveys	Dedicated fisheries interview surveys	Dedicated shore-based observations on effort	Fish landing site inspections for dolphin bycatch	Collection of cetacean acoustic data	Active stranding, bycatch or sighting reporting networks	Incidental reporting of sightings or strandings	AHD presence confirmed?
South of Morocco	x						x	x
Mauritania		x					x	x
Senegal	x	x			x	x	x	x
The Gambia		x				x	x	x
Guinea Bissau							x	x
Guinea	x	x			x		x	x
Sierra Leone							x	x
Liberia		x						
Côte D'Ivoire				x			x	
Ghana				x		x	x	
Togo							x	x
Benin								x
Nigeria		x					x	x
Cameroon	x	x			x	x	x	x
Equatorial Guinea							x	
Gabon	x	x			x		x	x
Congo	x	x	x				x	x
DRC				x			x	
Angola			x				x	x

For more information on this study, including the full reference list, see: Minton et al. (same authors as this poster) (2026). Range-wide update on the distribution and status of the Critically Endangered Atlantic humpback dolphin (*Sousa teuszii*). Document presented to the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission, SC/70/SM/06. 27pp.



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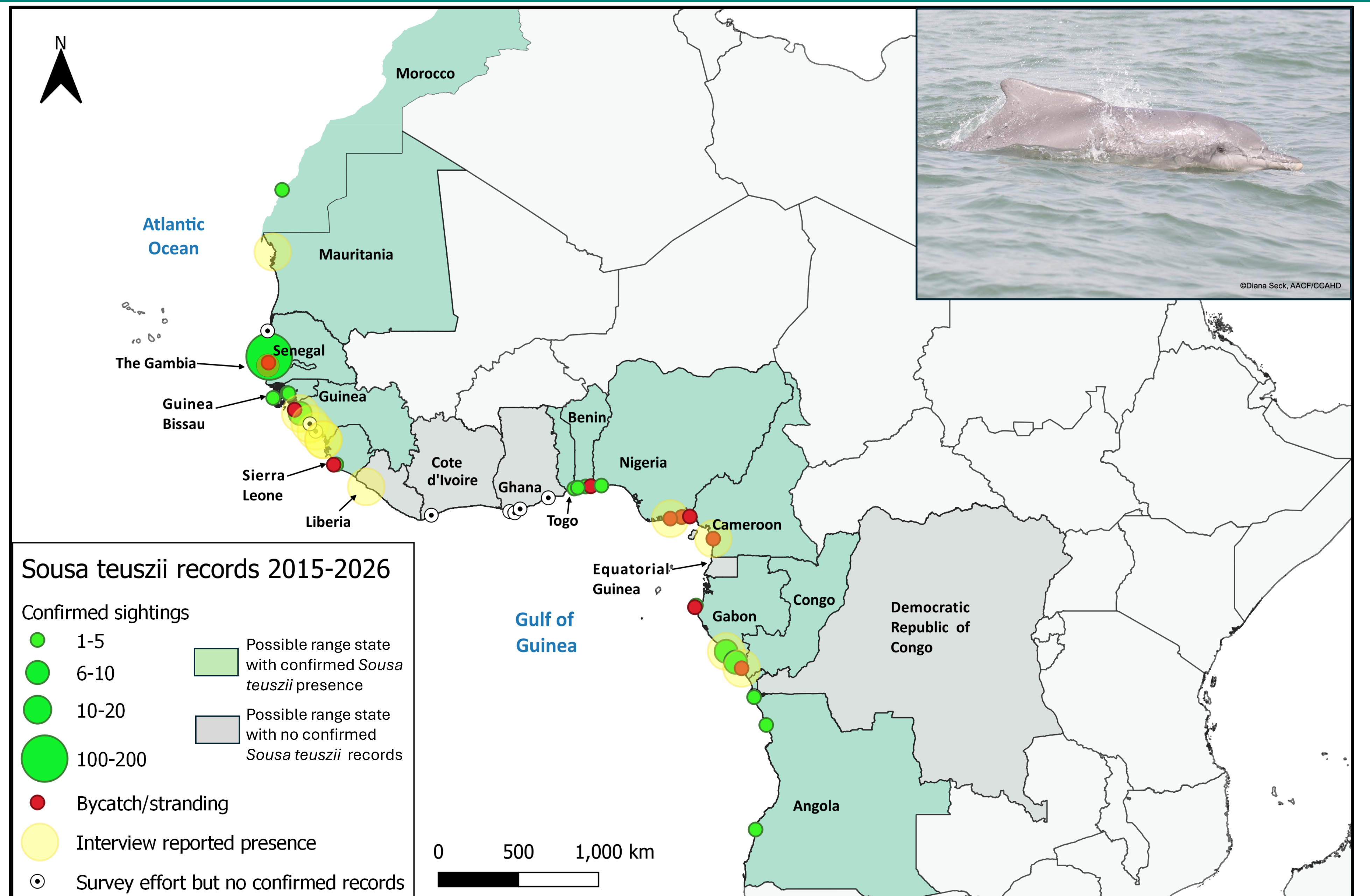


Figure 1. Overview of Atlantic humpback dolphin (*Sousa teuszii*) records compiled between 2015 and 2026, including confirmed sightings of live animals, stranding or bycatch events, and indications from interview surveys as to whether or not fishers had observed the species in their area.

Table 2: On-effort encounter rates from boat-based surveys and other measures of relative abundance of AHD in sites where systematic survey effort was applied.

Location	Effort applied	AHD encounters/reports	Relative abundance measure	AHD encounter rate per boat hour	AHD on-effort encounter rate per 100 km	Mean AHD group size	Group size range
Boat-based surveys							
South of Morocco (Dakhla Bay) ¹⁰	Hours of navigation	380	12	N/A	N/A	1.0	1
Senegal (Saloum Delta) ^{19,1}		665	112	0.17	1.68	11.0	1-40
Guinea Bissau (Bijagos) ²⁴		16	3	0.19	N/A	4.0	1-10
Guinea (Boffa, Conakry) ^{6,7,18,1}		26	0	0.00	0.00	0.0	0
Guinea (Rio Nuñez-Tristão) ^{6,7,16,1}		120	9	0.08	0.20	13.8	1-30
Cameroon (Kribi) ¹⁷		27	0	0.00	0.00	0.0	0
Gabon (Port Gentil) ²⁰		77	1	0.01	0.26	1.0	1-1
Gabon (Mayumba) ²⁰		1,434	8	0.01	1.22	1.5	1-2
Congo ²⁵		15.4	0	0.00	0.00	0.0	0
Shore-based survey effort							
Congo - Conkouati-Douli ²⁶	Hours of observation effort	270	2	0.0074		2.50	2-4
Angola - Farol de Santa Marta ⁸		3600	1	0.0003		4.00	4-4
Angola - Kissemo ⁸		630	3	0.0048		3.40	2-5
Angola - Ponta do Padrão ⁸		630	0	0.0000		0.0	0
Fisheries Interview surveys							
Mauritania (Banc D'Arguin) ⁹	Fishers interviewed	50	86.0%	% say AHD are present	% have seen AHD		
Senegal (Saloum Delta) ^{19,1}		119	72%		39.5%		
The Gambia ²⁸		43	0.0%		0.0%		
Guinea ^{6,7,1}		564	54.1%		29.1%		
Liberia ^{2,1}		140	46.4%		35.7%		
Nigeria ¹⁵		62	0.0%		88.7%		
Cameroon ¹⁷		236	24.2%		17.8%		
Gabon ^{20,21,1}		74	9.5%		33.8%		
Congo ⁵		167	31.1%		15.0%		
Fish landing site sampling and/or stranding and bycatch reporting networks							
	Total cetacean carcasses/obs.	No. of AHD carcasses/obs.	% of cetacean records that are AHD				
Senegal ¹⁹	550	7	1.3%				
Côte D'Ivoire ⁹	50	0	0.0%				
Ghana ³	1075	0	0.0%				
Cameroon ¹⁷	310	4	1.3%				

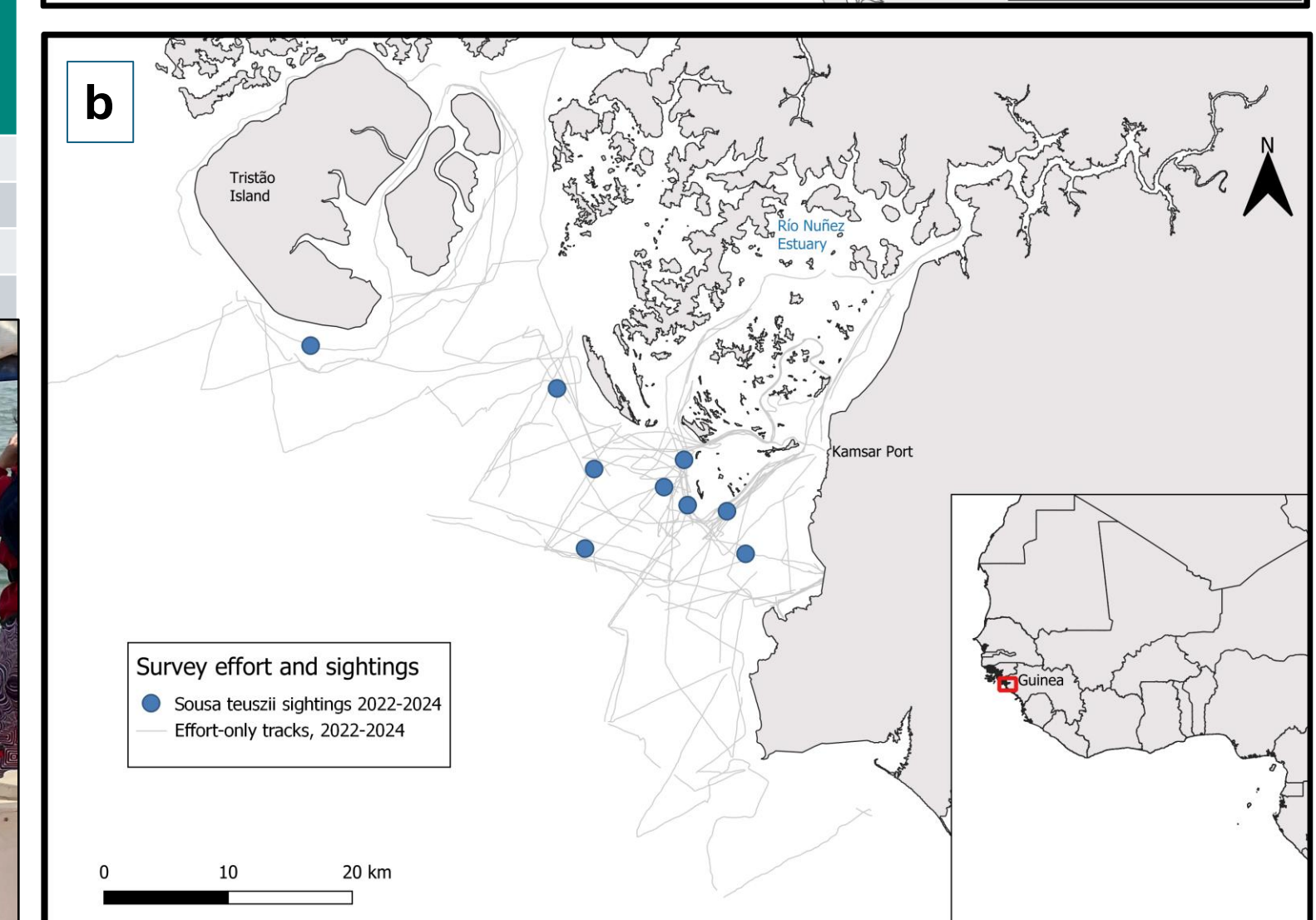
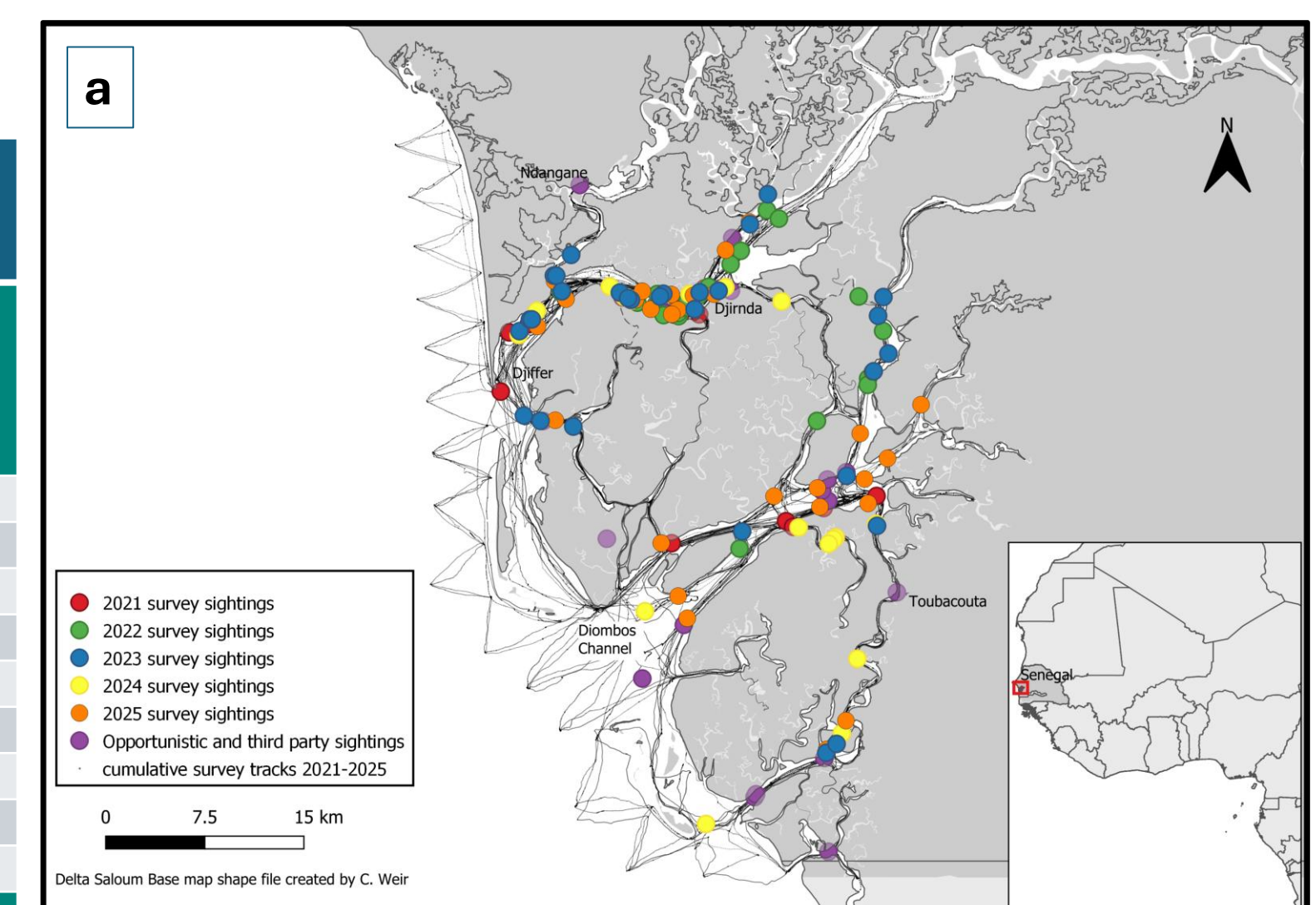


Figure 2 a and b. Boat-based survey effort and AHD sightings documented in (a) the Saloum Delta, Senegal and (b) the Rio Nuñez Tristão area, Guinea, the two study sites where the highest levels of systematic boat-based survey effort were applied.

Conclusions and Conservation Implications

- Regional and international collaboration through the CCAHD and other initiatives has increased awareness and research capacity throughout the AHD Range, resulting in new data that can be used to direct research and conservation efforts.
- AHD are extremely rare in almost all of the range states studied, with apparent refuge populations in the Saloum Delta, Senegal and possibly the Bijagos archipelago, which both include networks of protected areas. Other areas, such as Congo and Gabon show evidence of continued decline.
- Even where opportunistic bycatch or stranding records provide evidence that the species is present, systematic boat surveys yield few or no sightings. Shore-based observation effort and citizen science networks and applications provide valuable insights where resources are limited.
- Bycatch records, direct observations, and fisheries interviews continue to demonstrate that bycatch in artisanal fisheries poses the most serious risk to AHD, likely causing continued declines throughout the species' range, while coastal development, particularly associated with mining and ports presents an increasing risk in many areas. Further research and threat mitigation are urgently required before populations are extirpated.

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