



TUCUXI RIVER DOLPHIN

SCIENTIFIC NAME: SOTALIA FLUVIATILIS

Main © Omacha Foundation Fernando Trujillo, inset © Adriano Gambarini / WWF

POPULATION We don't know exactly how many of these dolphins are left, but we do know that the numbers are decreasing. Since 2021, the species is classified as Engangered by IUCN.

MORE ABOUT THEM The Tucuxi is the smaller, gray counterpart to the Amazon river dolphin. It looks more like its marine cousins and just like them, the tucuxi jumps playfully out of the water, which is a beautiful sight. Its scientific name is Sotalia fluviatilis, which means dolphin 'of the river'. The freshwater species is found throughout the Amazon river basin. The Tucuxi travels in groups of about 10-15 individuals and has a highly developed social structure.

WHY IS THE TUCUXI RIVER DOLPHIN THREATENED? Fishing and infrastructure development continue to challenge Tucuxi populations. Dams fragment their range and limit their breeding opportunities, while also blocking the migratory fish which the Tucuxi feed on. Additionally, they are suffering from being caught in fishing nets, and mercury poisoning due to gold mining is a particular concern for this species.

WHAT IS WWF DOING? WWF is using quadcopter drones to spot and count individuals in the Brazilian Amazon as our priority is to gather an accurate count of the population. By doing this, we are capturing the much needed data to determine future necessary actions to protect this species. In parallel we are also working on addressing the major threats to the species, namely mercury contamination due to gold mining, overfishing and poorly planned dam construction.



HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Only by building and growing a strong global community of partners will we be able to secure the long-term future of river dolphins.

WWF is excited to work with local and global partners on key projects including:

- establishing baseline population numbers and range data; see the [Amazon River Dolphin Dashboard](#);
- working closely together with governments, and with NGOs and knowledge institutes in SARDI, the South American River Dolphin Initiative;
- creating a global movement to unite and inspire governments, businesses and communities to secure the long-term future of river dolphins, their rivers and the communities that depend on them; and
- working towards a signed Global Declaration for River Dolphins in October 2023 to protect river dolphins worldwide.

JOIN US. TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE THIS HAPPEN.



RIVER DOLPHINS AT RISK

River dolphins are found in 14 countries, covering some of the world’s most ecologically diverse river basins, including the Yangtze, Mekong, Indus, and Ganges in Asia and the Orinoco and Amazon basins in South America.

There are however only **six existing species** of river dolphins left in the world today and **they are all endangered or critically endangered**.

WWF’s answer to disrupt and reverse this trend is to build a global movement, the River Dolphin Rivers Initiative, to secure the long-term future of river dolphins, their rivers and the communities that depend on them.

Our vision is that by 2030, we will have stopped the decline of river dolphin populations in Asia and South America and will have restored and doubled the most threatened populations.

There are three major global threats to river dolphins:

- **Unsustainable fishing and fishing-related activities.**
In Asia, of all threats, bycatch causes the highest direct river dolphin mortality. In South America, intentional killing of river dolphins for fish bait and meat results in the death of several thousand dolphins per year.
- **Infrastructure projects that affect habitat connectivity, including hydropower dams and irrigation barrages and embankments.** In Asia, river dolphin habitat has decreased by 50-70% and in South America by 10%. Asia and South America are in the grips of an infrastructure explosion; for example, with hundreds of dams planned in the Amazon alone.
- **Mining, agriculture and industrial development that degrade water quality.** Deteriorating water quality due to agriculture runoff and industrial effluents is a serious threat to dolphins in Asia, while mercury poisoning due to gold mining has been found in dolphins in both Asia and South America.

HOW WILL WE DELIVER THIS INITIATIVE?

WWF has long-term river dolphin conservation experience, but we know that we cannot bend the curve alone. Our solution is to mobilize a powerful global community of partners to secure the future of river dolphins and the communities that depend on healthy and productive freshwater ecosystems.

CARDS - WINNING HAND FOR RIVER DOLPHIN CONSERVATION

Launched in 2021, Conservation Assured River Dolphin Standards (CARDS) is a species-focused tool to measure and improve the effectiveness of river dolphin conservation efforts. Modelled on the successful tool for tigers (CATS), this can be used in all river dolphin range states.

CARDS lite, launched in 2023, is a rapid assessment that provides a baseline of management information, a better understanding of the challenges that range governments face protecting their river dolphins, and a baseline for full CARDS implementation.

Visit: riverdolphins.org

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