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Arabian Sea humpback whales

Concerted Action for a unique and Endangered population



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Arabian Sea humpback whales: Key facts

IUCN RED LIST STATUS

Endangered



SCIENTIFIC NAME

Megaptera novaeangliae

RANGE COUNTRIES

Confirmed: India; Iran, Iraq; Kuwait; Oman;

Qatar; Pakistan; Sri Lanka; United Arab Emirates; Yemen

Possible: Bahrain, Maldives, Saudi Arabia

POPULATION ESTIMATE

Fewer than 100 individuals (based on photo-ID off Oman)

THREATS

- Entanglement in fishing gear
- Ship strike
- Underwater noise
- Coastal construction
- Habitat loss

Click [here](#) to download an ASHW map-based **infographic!**

The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) will hold its 14th Conference of Parties in Uzbekistan from 12-17 February, 2024 [Document UNEP/CMS/COP14/Doc.32.2.3](#) contains a progress report on the Concerted Action for Arabian Sea humpback whales, and a proposal to extend the Action for the next three years. Why is this important?

Context and Progress

The [Concerted Action](#) for Arabian Sea humpback whales (ASHW) was first endorsed by the CMS Conference of Parties in 2017 and was extended in 2020. Since that time the plan has helped focus regional efforts into three main categories of action: 1) addressing knowledge gaps; 2) information sharing and awareness raising; and 3) Capacity building and implementation of threat mitigation strategies. Highlights include:

- Consolidation of the [Arabian Sea Whale Network](#), a collaborative network of researchers and conservation organisations in almost all ASHW range countries.
- [Continued research](#) off the coast of Oman including [satellite tagging](#), photo-identification, assessment of [health](#) and [body condition](#) using drones, and photo-based [health assessment](#) and [ship-strike risk assessment](#).
- Passive acoustic monitoring off the coasts of [Oman and India](#) providing evidence of whale presence, song structure, and exchanges across the Arabian Sea.
- Growing citizen science reporting networks in the [UAE, Pakistan](#), India, and Iran.
- Regional collaboration on [ASHW publications](#), work with port authorities and the World Shipping Council, and ongoing collaboration with the IWC.

Why an Extension is needed

ASHW are isolated from other humpback whale populations in the Indian Ocean. However, [satellite tagging](#), [acoustic data](#), and [photographic matches](#) provide evidence that there is movement between Arabian Sea range countries. Threats to this [Endangered](#) population’s continued survival also span political borders, and can only be effectively addressed through collaborative measures from government and industry decision makers. The CMS Concerted Action, from the time of its conception in 2017 was intended to culminate in the development and implementation of a regional [Conservation Management Plan](#), led by government stakeholders, and jointly implemented under the CMS and the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

Members of the Arabian Sea Whale Network have been able to progress research and conservation measures at local and sometimes national scales, and implement many of the activities that would be included in a CMP. However, the CMP itself has not yet been established. A recent [workshop in Oman](#), continued involvement from the IWC and other signs indicate that this goal should be achievable in the next triennium if the extension of the Concerted Action is endorsed during COP 14.

In support of efforts to formalise conservation efforts at inter-governmental level through a CMP, collaboration and exchange has taken place within the framework of the **Arabian Sea Whale Network**, an informal body open to a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in protecting whales in the Arabian Sea. Learn more here: <https://arabianseawhalenetwork.org/>