

## **Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report**

### **Submitted to the Conservation Committee by the Government of Argentina**

Here we provide the Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report for 2007, updating information presented the previous years to the Conservation Committee by Argentina.

#### *1. Habitat protection for cetacean conservation and other issues*

The Peninsula Valdes Management Plan through Provincial Law N°4722 includes habitat protection to protect cetaceans.

#### *2. Whalewatching best practice guidelines*

The government of Chubut began in 2006 a participative process in order to discuss changes needed to be made to the whale watching regulations. As a result of monthly meetings held between March and December, representatives from whale watching companies, non-governmental organizations and local authorities participated in this group and drafted new legislation. The new law (that is now in process of ratification) includes also a regulation that describes the Patagonian technique for whale watching and a code of best practices.

The second International Workshop on the Management and Non-lethal Use of Cetaceans was organized by the Ministerio de Turismo y Deporte, el Ministerio de Vivienda, Ordenamiento Territorial y Medio Ambiente from Uruguay, Rocha Town Council and the following NGO's: International Fund for Animal Welfare, Fundación Cethus - Argentina, Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas - Argentina and Organización de Conservación de Cetáceos - Uruguay.

The workshop was held in La Pedrera, Uruguay, between the 19 and 21 April 2007, with the participation of more than 60 representatives from governments, NGOs and whale watching tour operators from 13 Latin America countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panamá, Perú, Venezuela and Uruguay). The future of cetacean conservation in international fora was analyzed from a Latin-American perspective. Several panel members highlighted the big step taken with the establishment of the Buenos Aires Group and its two Declarations. The important advances carried out in the region in management and non-lethal uses of cetaceans were reflected through different presentations and analysis of cases studies. Whale watching tourism was one of the main topics of the workshop due to the growth of this activity in the region.

Participants also evaluated the advances achieved since the 1<sup>st</sup> workshop that took place in Chubut, Argentina in 2005 (IWC/59/CC11). The working groups made recommendations to strengthen strategies in areas of regional interest such as whale watching, non-lethal research and regional conservation strategies. The importance of high quality whale watching that encourages the commitment and participation of local communities and whale watching tourists in conservation of cetaceans and their habitat (using activities like education programmes) was emphasized. It was also recommended to highlight that research done in the region be conducted with non-lethal methods. Finally, recommendations to reinforce the declaration written in the Latin America Meeting on Cetacean Conservation were made. They urged governments to take action in cetacean conservation on the national and international levels and to continue with the work done by the Buenos Aires Group.

#### *3. Training workshops and publication for strandings*

In 2007, a workshop on stranding will be organized by the Dirección de Recursos Naturales - Consejo Agrario Provincial (Province of Santa Cruz) and Fundación Cethus to train provincial governmental technician, Argentine coast guard and university staff. The main objective of this workshop was to give basic information on biology and ecology of cetacean and how to manage a stranded cetacean. This workshop was made as part of the Cooperation Agreement that both institution had since 2002.

A joint programme between the Dirección General de Conservación de Áreas Protegidas, Secretaría de Turismo, Province of Chubut and the Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas was established to determine causes of strandings of Southern right whales in the Peninsula Valdes area.

An stranding network lead by Dirección de Fauna y Flora Silvestre was established in the province of Chubut.

The Dirección de Fauna, Prov of Río Negro is collecting data on stranding and sighting of cetaceans in their waters.

#### *4. International Affiliation and Cooperation Programs*

At the 58<sup>th</sup> IWC Conservation Committee we announced that through the Argentine Cooperation Agency (FO AR) of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Argentine government will launch a program which offers whale watching training workshops in Latin America and Caribbean countries. The objective of this activity is to help and promote responsible whale watching activities in countries of the region, contributing the experience that Argentina has since the establishment of whale watching in 1983, sharing experience, and providing expertise through governmental experts and tour operators. Two workshops were already held. The first one was given in Panama (October 2006) and the second in Nicaragua (March 2007). Future activities will be developed in other countries of the region during 2007 (Venezuela, Honduras, etc.).

Argentina is party of five international fora related to cetaceans:

- International Whaling Commission (IWC)
- Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- Convention of the Biodiversity (CBD)
- Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI)

Researchers from the Argentine governmental and non governmental institutions participated in cooperative programs across the world, including active cooperation between scientists from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and the United States on matters related to research and conservation of southern right whale.

The Franciscana is the most threatened species of the Southwestern Atlantic, due to ongoing bycatch across its range. For this reason researcher from Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay are coordinating effort to mitigate threats related to bycatch and habitat degradation.

A joint program between Fundacion Cethus and Areas Protegidas, Dirección de Recursos Naturales, Consejo Agrario Provincial from the province of Santa Cruz (AP-DRN,CAP) were established to work together in issues related to the conservation of cetaceans, their environment and the impact of the oil exploration and development activities in the province.

Informative panels on Commerson's dolphin, Peale's dolphin, Southern Right Whale and cetacean stranding were provided by Fundacion Cethus and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society to the AP-DRN,CAP and the Subsecretaría de Medio Ambiente, Province of Santa Cruz.

A course of actions for oil spill remediation will be developed in conjunction between Fundacion Cethus and AP-DRN,CAP during 2007 to train main stakeholders in the province of Santa Cruz on this issue.

The Argentine Government hosted on 1 December 2006 in the city of Buenos Aires, the "First Latin-American Meeting on Cetacean Conservation". The Commissioners to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) from Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Peru met together with the representatives of the Commissioners from Chile and Panama. Representatives of the governments of Ecuador, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic and diplomatic observers from the Embassies of Colombia, Uruguay and Venezuela also participated. The meeting underscored the need to strengthen the activities of the Commission, especially those regarding the non-lethal use and conservation of whales, such as the work of the Conservation Committee and continuation of the work on Whale killing Methods and associate welfare issues..

The Commissioners and the representatives of the Member States of the region agreed that the non-lethal use of cetaceans is a permanent commitment of the countries of the Latin-American region and that the development of whale watching tourism and non-lethal scientific research should be supported and encouraged by countries of the region. In this regard, all regional cooperation initiatives in this field which make it possible to disseminate experiences and share knowledge between the Latin American countries are specially valued.

It was also agreed that it is relevant to promote in international bodies the coordinated participation, consultation and active cooperation of countries of the region with an interest in the protection, conservation and non-lethal use of cetaceans, and to initiate negotiations towards the signing of a Latin American instrument to promote the non-lethal use and conservation of cetaceans in the region (for more details see IWC.CCG.588, the Declaration from Argentina).