

The Gangetic Dolphin Endangered Species

Characteristics of Endangered Species	Gangetic Dolphin
Initial rarity	With only 2,000 left broken into several populations the Gangetic Dolphin is rare. Certain populations are already vulnerable to inbreeding and stochastic extinction.
Large area requirements	While there is little detailed information available about the species, a large aquatic predator like this certainly requires a large area for foraging.
Specialized habitat requirements	The preference for the species for area at the confluence of rivers and the requirement for deep waters can be considered specialized habitat requirements for a river species.
Higher trophic level species	As a large predator the dolphin would be considered a high trophic level species. This also increases the vulnerability to the bio-accumulation of toxins in the tissues of the species.
Local Endemics	Although the species does occur in different areas (IUCN, 2005: www.redlist.org), the restricted distribution of the species significantly increases the probability of extinction.
Migratory species	The species travels the length of the river in a regular migration.
Species with poor dispersal abilities	Limited by the salinity of the waters, species are probably restricted to the rivers in which they are born.
Colonial nesting species	Does not apply.
Economic value	The blubber of the species is economically valuable, and there is evidence that the species is used as a food source.
Perceived threat to humans and livestock	Does not apply.
Long lived species/low reproductive rate	Again, natural history information requires additional research but with a predicted maximum longevity of 30 years, and an age of sexual maturity between six and ten years, an expected slow reproductive rate.
Other factors	The use of sonar in foraging makes the species vulnerable to changes in noise conditions in the habitat area.
Threats to Bio-diversity	
Collection: hunting, trapping or poaching	Although there is evidence to suggest that education and regulations are reducing the harvesting of the species, poaching continues.
Habitat destruction or degradation	Increased siltation reduces the areas of deep water necessary for the species.
Habitat fragmentation	The barrages and dams along Ganga and her tributaries fragment the habitat, preventing migration and isolating smaller populations of dolphins.

Introduction of invasive species	Not a known issue for the species
Pollution	Ongoing pollution is changing the ecology of the river and threatens the prey base. The introduction of heavy metals and organic toxins to the river has a high probability of harming the populations.
Indirect Effects	
Changes in the environment	Changes may disrupt species interactions and the autecology of the species.
Noise	Increased boat noise may affect the success of the species foraging.