

Assessment of Commerson's dolphin *Cephalorhynchus commersonii* conservation status at Argentine's southern distribution.

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Annual summary report:

The SMM grant awarded to me was useful to perform field activities associated with my post-doctoral project. I am assessing the conservation status of Commerson's dolphin, *Cephalorhynchus commersonii*, currently considered "data deficient" by the IUCN. My goal is to estimate incidental mortality and abundance in Tierra del Fuego Province, Argentina. From September 2013 to April 2014, I conducted direct observations of gillnets in three different fishing areas on the Atlantic coast of the Province. I accompanied fishermen during their fishing duties once or twice per month for a total of 42 field survey days and a sample of 374 gillnet haul out. I collected the following data: net characteristics (height, length, mesh size), species composition, geographical and meteorological data, and number of dolphins bycaught. I also collected data on fishing effort in the region (number of gillnets set and fishing days). These data are currently being analysed to estimate incidental mortality of the species on the basis of catch per unit of effort (CPUE). Moreover, I conducted a pilot coastal aerial survey for Commerson's dolphin. Data from this survey has been pooled with that from a previous estimate from 2001 to calculate sample size and expected levels of variability (CVs) and to design a new region-wide survey to be conducted at the end of 2014. By estimating bycatch removal I will be able to evaluate the conservation status of this species and will provide important information to improve their management at its southern distribution in Argentina.