

# 2017 SMALL GRANT IN AID OF RESEARCH – ANNUAL SUMMARY REPORT

## **Collecting, integrating and publishing available stranding records of marine mammals around Hainan Island in the South China Sea**

Mingming Liu ([liuming@idsse.ac.cn](mailto:liuming@idsse.ac.cn), or [liu-xiaoming@foxmail.com](mailto:liu-xiaoming@foxmail.com))

Sanya Key Laboratory of Marine Mammal and Marine Bioacoustics, Institute of Deep-sea

Science and Engineering, Chinese Academy of Sciences

#28 Luhuitou Road, Sanya, 572000, China

### **SUMMARY REPORT**

The South China Sea (SCS) is known to support diverse cetacean species, yet their stranding information has not been well documented. To fill this knowledge gap, available records on cetacean stranding around Hainan Island in the SCS from 1978 to 2016 were collected and overviewed. In total, 112 records were obtained. Among them, 19 records involved 19 baleen whales (5 mysticeti species) and 93 records involved 134 toothed whales (12 odontoceti species). More stranding events occurred in the waters along the east coast than in the waters along the west coast, which was especially true for toothed whales stranding events. This may reflect the distribution patterns of cetaceans around Hainan Island. The spatial distribution of stranding events might be driven by different oceanographic features between the east and west offshore waters of the Hainan Island. The number of stranding events increased gradually from 1978 to 2000 and more rapidly from 2000 to 2016, which is likely due to both increasing public attentions and increasing anthropogenic activities within the SCS in recent decades. Stranding events were recorded throughout the year but peaked in spring (Kruskal-Wallis test,  $p=0.016$ ). In sum, cetacean stranding events occurred rather frequently around Hainan Island. The establishment of a regional stranding network in the SCS is conducive for further research, conservation and management of cetaceans in this region. More scientific data about the survival status of cetaceans and threats to them in the SCS are also needed.

I organized the major results into a manuscript, and it is in press on the Marine Policy. In acknowledgements, I kept the agreement that expressing

my sincere thanks to the Small Grant in Aid of Research from the Society for Marine Mammalogy. Here, many thanks for the financial support again. I hope that more young graduates or researchers are willing to propose some projects, especially those from developing countries in Asia and Africa.