

Agenda Item 4.3

Review of New Information on Threats to
Small Cetaceans

Negative Effects of Vessels and Other
Forms of Disturbance

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**3rd Progress Report on IWC Ship
Strike Data Coordination – May 2015**

Action Requested

- Take note

Submitted by

IWC



**NOTE:
DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED
TO BRING THEIR OWN COPIES OF DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING**

SC/66a/HIM/8

3rd Progress Report on IWC Ship Strike Data Coordination May 2015

Simone Panigada & Fabian Ritter (IWC ship strike
data coordinators)



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

3rd Progress Report on IWC Ship Strike Data Coordination – May 2015

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BACKGROUND

The primary objective of the data coordinators is to progress the conservation and management work of the International Whaling Commission with respect to the issue of vessel collisions with cetaceans. In particular, it focuses on work identified by workshops on this issue organized over the last few years and the recommendation of the Scientific Committee for ship strikes co-ordinators as endorsed by the Conservation Committee and the Commission in 2012. Tasks to be considered also derive from the report of the IWC Scientific Committee and in particular from the discussions held during Non-deliberate human-induced mortality of large whales (HIM) working group.

Special attention has been given to populating the global ship strikes database established by the Commission. The tasks assigned to the ship strikes coordinators are appended to this document. This report summarizes the third year of work carried out by the IWC ship strike data coordinators between May 2014 and May 2015. The coordinator's contract was renewed at the end of 2014 and now covers a two year term to follow the biennial Commission meeting schedule. Some of the work carried out and presented in this report represents a continuation of the activities started two years ago, including updates and improvements.

The work of the co-ordinators is being supervised by a steering group comprising Donovan, Leaper, Perrin, and Rojas-Bracho, who have been contacted by the data coordinators for matters arising during the year.

SUMMARY

The activities carried out in the past 12 months resulted in a variety of outreach actions, with a large number of further contacts being established, including follow-up on the guidance documents for sailing and cruise ships drafted previously. In particular, after communication with different shipping representatives, the need to have guidance for the wider shipping industry was identified. The coordinators hence are currently working on a more general document. This document will also benefit from input received during the Ship Strike Workshop held in Panama in June 2014. Effort has also been dedicated to increasing user friendliness, as well as the technical functioning of the IWC ship strike database, which is currently being overhauled. Draft versions of the new system have been evaluated by the coordinators in close contact with the database developers.

As of 1st May 2015, the database held a total of 1156 reports, both historical and recent. 559 of these were previously classified as being "definite strikes". All new entries will still have to be verified by the IWC Ship Strike Data Review Group. For an estimated 250 existing (new)

incidents, the data are expected to be incorporated when the new technical database system currently being developed has been finalized. An overview over the Current state of numbers of cases/reports in the IWC ship strike database is given as **Appendix 1** on page 8.

The coordinators also engaged with the Data Review Group (DRG) to continue the process of classifying cases. A meeting of the DRG was organized during IWC SC65b in Bled, to layout working procedures of the group, as well as the requirements of the new database system and how to implement those (a report of this meeting is available upon request).

Both coordinators participated in an IWC and SPAW/UNEP Workshop to address collisions between ships and marine mammals with a focus on the Wider Caribbean in Panama. This was held in June 2014, after exchanging several messages with the IWC Secretariat regarding the logistical aspects - the drafting of the agenda, the list of invited participants and the outline of the workshop. 30 participants from all around the globe were present, including scientists, representatives from IWC member countries and the shipping industry, as well as local and regional institutions. The workshop evaluated a number of existing operational mitigation measures, including e.g. the adaption of Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS), speed reductions, and Areas To Be Avoided (ATBA). The full workshop report will be presented and discussed during IWC SC 66a.

Contacts with the ACCOBAMS and the Pelagos Sanctuary Executive Secretariats have been regularly maintained to discuss possible synergies in assessing and mitigating ship strikes. Emphasis was laid on facilitating tests of the REPCET system as an alerting tool so as to avoid ship strikes. Similar effort has been done within the Technical and Scientific Committee of the Pelagos Sanctuary held in Genova in November 2014. Moreover, a number of (other) national and international maritime organizations and companies were contacted, including cruise operators such as Costa Crociere, TUI Cruises and HapaG Lloyd. Contacts with Italian Confitarma (Italian Ship-owners' Association) were also made.

As usual a number of enquiries about the database were received, and we provided relevant literature, general information as well as specific advice how to use the database.

Media work: two interviews were released, one for the *Shared Planet* series (BBC Radio 4) and one for the international channel of *Deutsche Welle*. A press release on 'Ships hitting whales: a problem for both sides' was published by SustainableShipping.com.

A summary of the work of the data-coordinators was incorporated into the latest Report of the Ship Strike Working Group presented to the Commission at its biennial meeting in Portoroz (sLOVEnia) in September 2015. A summary was also presented to the Conservation Committee (CC). The work of the coordinators was commended by the Commission, as well as by the CC.

In June 2014, the data co-ordinators took over the role as advisors on ship strikes for the Global Oceans campaign in collaboration with WWF International. An information brochure for the *Volvo Ocean Race* (a global regatta) was developed (SC/66a/FORINFO/3).

A Power Point presentation on ship strikes (SC/66a/HIM/1) and the role of the IWC has been developed and was first presented at the fourth annual WhaleFest in Brighton (UK) in March 2014.

1. DATA GATHERING

(1) *Liaise with regional databases with large numbers of cases (e.g. US and Australia) in order to facilitate their submission to the global database – this will involve addressing issues of data confidentiality and classification, as well as facilitating easy submission to the database.*

We have been in touch with scientists developing a communication plan to promote the ‘national vessel strike database’ that sits within the Australian National Marine Mammal Data Portal. Relevant state departments who presently collect records of vessel strike have been contacted to update the available information.

(2) *Identify national contact points, organisations and groups that hold data on ship strikes that have not been contributed to the global database and encourage them to submit their data to the global database – this will involve use of mail lists (e.g. Marmam, ECS-talk) and will involve addressing issues of data confidentiality and classification, as well as facilitating easy submission to the database. Telephone interviews with identified contributors should be investigated to facilitate submission of data.*

A number of enquiries about the ship strike issue are received every year, including from agencies, the maritime industry and scientists. Again, we have been providing relevant literature and general information, as well as specific advice on how to use the ship strike database.

A third message to MARMAM and ECS-TALK email lists has been sent, describing the role of the ship coordinators and reiterating the need to increase public awareness about and use of the database, and to facilitate data submission. With this message the new design and increased user-friendliness of the ship strike database was presented, and the cetological community was invited to submit data.

Following discussions held at the Panama workshop and subsequently with cruise operators (e.g. Cruise Lines International Association and World Ocean Council) it was decided to make the document on ‘*IWC Guidance for Cruise Line Operators to Minimise Risk of Collisions with Cetaceans*’ more generally applicable to the wider shipping industry, rather than just addressing cruise ships. The document will provide an updated annex with a detailed list of navigational and educational ship strike mitigation measures currently in place (including reporting).

The coordinators also made contact with a dedicated group on ship strikes that had been formed in the Canary Islands (Grupo de Prevención de Colisiones en Canarias). While there is an invitation to do so, it was not possible to attend the meetings of that group in person so far. Nevertheless, a continued, constant exchange is taking place.

(3) *Follow developments (e.g. in the USA) with respect to establishing criteria for determining cause of death including ship strikes and disseminate this widely.*

During SC 65 in Jeju, the SC agreed on criteria to classify ship strike cases on the basis of newest scientific findings and recent publications. These criteria are now being applied during

the evaluation of the cases in the IWC database by the Data Review Group, and will be included in the new version of the online database (see below).

(5) Regularly review scientific journals for ship strike information and contact authors to collate data for entry into the database.

Current email lists and other sources are being kept under supervision for new publications or reports regarding ship strikes; several authors were contacted and motivated to enter cases directly into the database or provide raw data on collision cases.

(6) Use search engines and other internet news monitoring tools for reports of ship strikes and follow up on reports of new incidents in order to gather information as soon as possible after the incident took place and facilitate its incorporation into the database – this will include informing national coordinators promptly of reported incidents within their area.

Again, we have been following up on a large number of press & internet reports about collisions to establish details about the cases described. This resulted in a number of new cases being entered into the database, including historical incidents and near misses.

A number of papers and other publications were checked for collision cases. Accordingly authors have been contacted to provide further information.

2. OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

(1) Work with the Secretariat to ensure that the IWC ship strike web site pages are kept up to date including:

- *updating publicly available summaries from the database;*
- *providing links to other sources of information material e.g. that produced by international organisations such as ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, CMS, IMO as well as national groups;*

The Terms of Reference for the ACCOBAMS working group on ship strikes were discussed at the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee meeting held in Monaco in April 2014. The list of participants has also been updated, with new names added. A third message to the group has been circulated, presenting the role of the IWC, the ship strikes coordinators and the new layout of the online database.

Media work: two interviews were released, one for the international channel of *Deutsche Welle* and one for the *Shared Planet* series (BBC Radio 4). The latter series explores the relationship between people and the natural world, and the programme focused on whale ship strike in the Mediterranean Sea. The programme covered different aspects of whale and traffic interaction, such as whales at risk in the Mediterranean, presence of hotspots for ship strike in the Mediterranean, as well as potential mitigation measures, like changing shipping routes away from whale migration channels and reducing speed. A press release on 'Ships hitting whales: a problem for both sides - IWC promotes the benefits of reporting ship strikes'

was prepared together with the IWC communication officer and published by SustainableShipping.com.

(2) Monitor and respond to emails addressed to the shipstrikes@iwcoffice.org email address, including reports of new incidents, giving feedback to data providers and dealing with requests for summary information from the database.

As usual a number of enquiries about the database were received, and we provided relevant literature, general information as well as specific advice how to use the database.

(3) Work with the Secretariat to develop a communications strategy. This may include:

- developing approaches to ensure that the current leaflet on ship strikes prepared by Belgium with assistance from inter alia IFAW is as widely distributed as possible within shipping industry (direct to vessels), shipping management companies, and maritime academies;*

The coordinators have been keeping in touch with the new IWC communication officer and submitted a number of suggestions how the website section could be adapted. This dialogue is on-going.

Press releases and web-based news items have been produced and both interviews and email exchanges with media undertaken, following requests to the IWC communication officer (see above).

The IWC ship strike banner and the latest edition of the Belgian leaflet have been presented and distributed at several occasions (ECS annual Conference, WhaleFest, see photos on p. 10).

- exploring ways of raising the profile of the database by contacting other organisations including ECS, ACS, SMM, ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, NGOs, recreational boating associations, maritime organisations;*

Regular email exchanges with the CEO of the World Ocean Council (WOC) discussed the development of public and industry awareness material such as the guidance documents and request for additional data for the database. Moreover, a number of (other) national and international maritime organizations and companies were contacted, including cruise operators such as Costa Crociere, TUI Cruises and HapaG Lloyd, to ask for input on the draft guidance document. Contact has been established with the Italian Ship-owners' Association Confitarma, with inputs from French NGOs to facilitate dissemination of awareness material.

In June 2014, the data co-ordinators took over the role as advisors on ship strikes for the Global Oceans campaign in collaboration with WWF International. An information brochure for the *Volvo Ocean Race* (a global regatta) was developed (SC/66a/FORINFO/3). This product includes general information on cetaceans and a global map of the regatta route with specific information on where to expect larger numbers of cetaceans. The document also describes measures to avoid a collision as guidance to sailors (see https://iwc.int/news_50).

(As mentioned above) contact was established with Italian Confitarma (Italian Ship-owners' Association), to seek support in the dissemination of available information material on ship strikes, as well the guidance documents under preparation by the coordinators.

- *considering the need to update the leaflet.*

During 2013, a new edition of the Belgian leaflet has been produced, and the coordinators took part in the development of the update. The leaflet is now available in six languages: English, French, Spanish, Arabian, Chinese, Russian.

(5) Assist Secretariat with maintaining links with IMO, ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS etc.

The Advisory Committee meeting in Gothenburg provided an opportunity for exchange with the ASCOBANS Secretary (September 2014) and also during the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee meeting in Monaco (April 2014). Both were informed about the role and the purpose of the new data coordinators.

Contacts with the ACCOBAMS and the Pelagos Sanctuary Executive Secretariats have been regularly maintained to discuss possible synergies in assessing and mitigating ship strikes. Emphasis was laid on facilitating tests of the REPCET system as an alerting tool for ship strikes, helping to reach an adequate number of ships equipped with the system (target number is 30 ships) to allow robust statistical evaluation. Effort has also been dedicated to disseminating information on the IWC ship strike database and supporting its use at the ACCOBAMS level, including the Pelagos Sanctuary.

Similar effort was invested in the Technical and Scientific Committee of the Pelagos Sanctuary held in Genova in November 2014, stressing the need to have a coordinated approach and procedure to provide data on a regular basis to the new IWC database.

One coordinator - representing ACCOBAMS - has also participated in the 18th Meeting of the CMS Scientific Council (1-3 July 2014) in Bonn (Germany) and has discussed links to strengthen collaboration.

(6) Provide an annual update to Scientific Committee.

(This report)

(7) Consider developing PowerPoint presentations/posters for use at workshops, symposia, conferences, etc.

In collaboration with the German based NGO M.E.E.R., a Power Point presentation on ship strikes for crew and staff has been developed. This presentation titled 'Ship Strikes: How to Mitigate a Problem With Many Unknowns', provides an introduction to the issue, and answers questions such as 'Why do whales get hit by vessels?' and 'How can we avoid collisions?'. It also includes an overview of the technical, operational, legal and educational mitigating actions currently in place or being discussed. The presentation also highlights the role of the IWC and its global database.

This new information tool was first presented to the WhaleFest held in Brighton (UK) on 14-15 March 2015 (see: <https://iwc.int/the-iwc-brings-ship-strikes-to-the-agenda-of-whale>). The presentation (SC/66a/HIM/1) is now being adapted for more general use, with the aim to distribute it widely to various stakeholders.

Three copies of the IWC ship strike display banner are ready to be displayed at various events (see below).

(8) Consider presenting information at specific conferences (e.g. ECS, SMM etc.).

The coordinators had developed a self-standing banner display during the first year - with the support from the steering group - and three copies were produced. The banner has been displayed at WhaleFest in Brighton, UK (see <https://iwc.int/the-iwc-brings-ship-strikes-to-the-agenda-of-whale>) and the ECS conference in St. Julian (Malta, see photo on p. 10), both held in March 2015. Thus, a large international audience was informed about the work carried out by the IWC on this issue.

3. DATABASE MANAGEMENT

(1) Work with the Secretariat to improve the user friendliness of the database (requires technical assistance) including in response to user problems and suggestions.

A concise review of the structure and design of the database had been undertaken, resulting in a wish list of changes, some of which had been incorporated already. Thus, the technical functioning of the database has been enhanced. The Secretariat meanwhile decided to re-establish the database on the basis of the newest technical solutions available. This work was carried out by IWC's IT specialist Brendan Miller and supervised by the Secretariat in close consultation with the data co-ordinators. In this way it was ascertained that the new system would incorporate any needed details and functionalities to achieve maximum user-friendliness, both for the general public as well as the administrators. Also, and for the first time, special functions were incorporated to enable and facilitate the work of the Data Review Group.

(2) Data entry of new records including data presented in meeting papers and National Progress Reports at annual meetings of Scientific Committee, including sailing vessel cases from Ritter (2012) – priorities for entry to be established with the steering group

A total of 111 entries of collisions between sailing (from Ritter, 2012) vessels and cetaceans are expected to be entered when the new setup of the database has been finalized.

(4) Work with data review group to ensure that all new records are appropriately reviewed including identification of potential duplicate reports.

The coordinators engaged with the Data Review Group (DRG) so as to continue the process of classifying cases. A meeting of the DRG was organized during IWC SC65b in Bled, to lay out working procedures of the group, as well as the needs of the new database technical system

and how to implement those (a report of the meeting is available upon request to the coordinators).

To summarize, the work of the data coordinators thus far has resulted in a variety of outreach activities, a large number of contacts being established, a significant number of new incidents being entered, and increased user-friendliness, as well as improved technical functioning of the database. An overview over the tasks accomplished so far is given as Appendix 2 on page 9f.

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Appendix 1: Current state of numbers of cases/reports in the IWC ship strike database

(as of May 2015)

Total reports in database: **1152**

Total cases in database: **116**

There are **978 submitted reports**, **766** of those have not yet been assigned to a case

803 reports were submitted **before 01-01-2010**

87 reports were submitted **between 01-01-2010 and 01-01-2011**

4 reports were submitted **between 01-01-2011 and 01-01-2012**

4 reports were submitted **between 01-01-2012 and 01-01-2013**

73 reports were submitted **between 01-01-2013 and 01-01-2014**

6 reports were submitted **between 01-01-2014 and 01-01-2015**

Appendix 2: Description of tasks of ship strike data coordinators

(green/grey fonts: issues that have been tackled so far or are under development)

(A) Objectives and broad tasks

1. Data gathering

- (1) *Liaise with regional databases with large numbers of cases (e.g. US and Australia) in order to facilitate their submission to the global database – this will involve addressing issues of data confidentiality and classification, as well as facilitating easy submission to the database*
- (2) *Identify national contact points, organisations and groups that hold data on ship strikes that have not been contributed to the global database and encourage them to submit their data to the global database – this will involve use of mail lists (e.g. Marmam, ECS-talk) and will involve addressing issues of data confidentiality and classification, as well as facilitating easy submission to the database. Telephone interviews with identified contributors should be investigated to facilitate submission of data.*
- (3) *Follow developments (e.g. in the USA) with respect to establishing criteria for determining cause of death including ship strikes and disseminate this widely*
- (4) *Regularly contact national co-ordinators or stranding networks (from IWC list) providing them with any new updates relevant to ship strikes and helping to facilitate data entry of any new records to IWC database.*
- (5) *Regularly review scientific journals for ship strike information and contact authors to collate data for entry into the database.*
- (6) *Use search engines and other internet news monitoring tools for reports of ship strikes and follow up on reports of new incidents in order to gather information as soon as possible after the incident took place and facilitate its incorporation into the database – this will include informing national coordinators promptly of reported incidents within their area.*

2. Outreach and communication

- (1) *Work with the Secretariat to ensure that the IWC ship strike web site pages are kept up to date including:*
 - *updating publicly available summaries from the database;*
 - *providing links to other sources of information material e.g. that produced by international organisations such as ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, CMS, IMO as well as national groups*
 - *consider whether there is value in highlighting recent cases/reports on the web page in a positive manner to encourage further reporting*
- (2) *Monitor and respond to emails addressed to the shipstrikes@iwcoffice.org email address, including reports of new incidents, giving feedback to data providers and dealing with requests for summary information from the database.*
- (3) *Work with the Secretariat to develop a communications strategy. This may include:*
 - *developing approaches to ensure that the current leaflet on ship strikes prepared by Belgium with assistance from *inter alia* IFAW is as widely distributed as possible within shipping industry (direct to vessels), shipping management companies, and maritime academies;*
 - *exploring ways of raising the profile of the database by contacting other organisations including ECS, ACS, SMM, ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS), NGOs, recreational boating associations, maritime organisations;*
 - *considering the need to update the leaflet*
- (4) *Liaise with national Port Authorities and Coast Guards for gathering information on ship strikes, to distribute awareness material and eventually access AIS data.*
- (5) *Assist Secretariat with maintaining links with IMO, ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS etc*
- (6) *Provide an annual update to Scientific Committee.*
- (7) *Consider developing PowerPoint presentations/posters for use at workshops, symposia, conferences, etc.*
- (8) *Consider presenting information at specific conferences (e.g. ECS, SMM etc)*
- (9) *Explore funding options for future IWC ship strike work.*

3. Database management

- (1) Work with the Secretariat to improve the user friendliness of the database (requires technical assistance) including in response to user problems and suggestions.
- (2) Data entry of new records including data presented in meeting papers and National Progress Reports at annual meetings of Scientific Committee, including sailing vessel cases from Ritter (2012) – priorities for entry to be established with the steering group
- (3) Further development of database handbook, ensuring that the database documentation remains up to date, is widely distributed and that any changes are notified to all actual/potential collaborators.
- (4) Work with data review group to ensure that all new records are appropriately reviewed including identification of potential duplicate reports.



IWC ship strike banner presented at the Annual Conference of the European Cetacean Society in Malta (left) & IWC Power Point presentation on ship strikes given at WhaleFest in the UK (right)