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AMAZON RIVER DOLPHINS

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *INIA GEOFFRENSIS*



HOW MANY ARE LEFT?

We don't know the exact number of Amazon river dolphins left, but it is likely to be in the tens of thousands. This means that this is a vulnerable species and classified as endangered by IUCN.

MORE ABOUT THEM

Also known as the boto, the pink Amazon river dolphin is widely distributed throughout much of the Amazon and Orinoco river basins stretching through Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, Perú, Ecuador and Guyana. The boto is pale pink in colour and unlike other river dolphins, has a flexible neck which allows it to move its head left and right. The Amazon river dolphin also has a long snout, a rounded head and small dorsal fin, with overall length varying from 2 to 2.5 m. The boto feeds on fish and other aquatic organisms such as turtles and crabs.

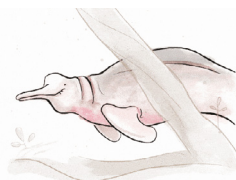
WHY IS THE AMAZON RIVER DOLPHIN THREATENED?

One of the biggest threats that the Amazon river dolphin faces comes from development projects. Big infrastructure projects can alter river flows, which in turn has huge ecological impacts including changing the species composition, disrupting sediment transport and deposition patterns, fragmenting habitat and preventing connectivity – all impacting the dolphin's ability to breed and to survive.

There are many other threats to the boto including mercury poisoning due to gold mining. They are also often deliberately killed for use as fish bait, amongst others.

WHAT IS WWF DOING?

WWF is using innovative approaches like drones to count Amazon river dolphins—a method that is quicker, cheaper and potentially more accurate than traditional monitoring by specialists. WWF Amazon country offices are working together and joining forces with other local NGOs, under the South American River Dolphin Initiative (SARDI), to develop regional approaches to scientific research and protected cross border areas. This local coalition also gathers expertise to establish population sizes and identify main threats to the species and their habitats. One such method includes equipping river dolphins with satellite tags to study their migration behavior.



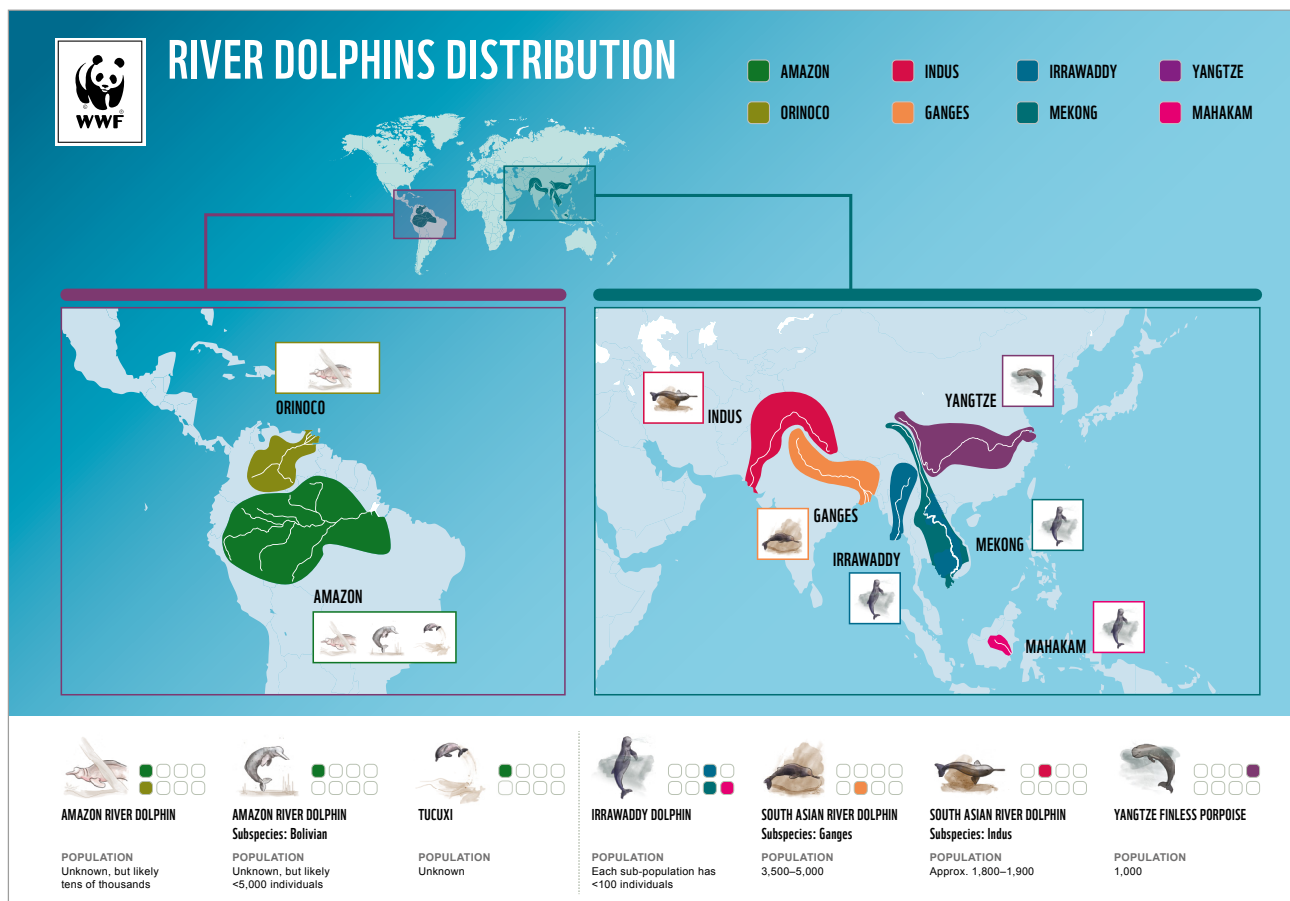
HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Only by building and growing a strong global community of partners will we be able to secure the long-term future of river dolphins.

WWF is excited to work with local and global partners on key projects including:

- mapping and identifying critical river dolphin habitats;
- establishing baseline population numbers and range data; see the [Amazon River Dolphin Dashboard](#);
- investing in nature-oriented tourism and related activities;
- working closely together with governments, and with NGO's and knowledge institutes in SARDI, the South American River Dolphin Initiative;
- creating a global movement to unite and inspire governments, businesses and communities to secure the long-term future of river dolphins, their rivers and the communities that depend on them; and
- working towards a signed Inter-Governmental Declaration by 2023 to protect river dolphins worldwide.

**JOIN US.
TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE
THIS HAPPEN.**



RIVER DOLPHINS AT RISK

River dolphins are found in 15 countries, covering some of the world’s most ecologically diverse river basins, including the Yangtze, Mekong, Indus, and Ganges in Asia and the Orinoco and Amazon basins in South America.

There are however only **six existing species** of river dolphins left in the world today and **they are all endangered or critically endangered**.

WWF’s answer to disrupt and reverse this trend is to build a global movement, the River Dolphin Rivers Initiative, to secure the long-term future of river dolphins, their rivers and the communities that depend on them.

Our vision is that by 2030, we will have stopped the decline of river dolphin populations in Asia and South America and will have restored and doubled the most threatened populations.

There are three major global threats to river dolphins:

- **Unsustainable fishing and fishing-related activities.**
In Asia, of all threats, bycatch causes the highest direct river dolphin mortality. In South America, intentional killing of river dolphins for fish bait and meat results in the death of several thousand dolphins per year.
- **Infrastructure projects that affect habitat connectivity, including hydropower dams and irrigation barrages and embankments.** In Asia, river dolphin habitat has decreased by 50-70% and in South America by 10%. Asia and South America are in the grips of an infrastructure explosion; for example, with hundreds of dams planned in the Amazon alone.
- **Mining, agriculture and industrial development that degrade water quality.** Deteriorating water quality due to agriculture runoff and industrial effluents is a serious threat to dolphins in Asia, while mercury poisoning due to gold mining has been found in dolphins in both Asia and South America.

HOW WILL WE DELIVER THIS INITIATIVE?

WWF has long-term river dolphin conservation experience, but we know that we cannot bend the curve alone. Our solution is to mobilize a powerful global community of partners to secure the future of river dolphins and the communities that depend on healthy and productive freshwater ecosystems.

CARDS - WINNING HAND FOR RIVER DOLPHIN CONSERVATION

Launched in 2021, Conservation Assured River Dolphin Standards (CARDS) is a species-focused tool to measure and improve the effectiveness of river dolphin conservation efforts. Modelled on the successful tool for tigers (CATS), this can be used in all river dolphin range states.

For more information:

www.riverdolphins.org

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