

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Twenty-fourth meeting of the Animals Committee
Geneva, (Switzerland), 20-24 April 2009

Review of Significant Trade in specimens of Appendix-II species

ACTIVITIES WITH REGARD TO THE POPULATION OF
TURSIOPS ADUNCUS OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

1. This document has been prepared by the regional representative for Oceania*.
2. At the 23rd meeting of the Animals Committee (Geneva, April 2008), the Committee considered a proposal by Israel, to include the Solomon Islands population of the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops aduncus* in the Review of Significant Trade.
3. Following discussion by the committee, and considering a range of submissions including those from observer representatives of the Solomon Islands, the proposal was withdrawn.
4. The Committee concluded its discussion of the item by encouraging the Solomon Islands to pursue its research on the status of its population of that species and, if necessary, to submit a proposal to seek funding through the procedure laid out in Resolution Conf. 12.2. It further invited the Solomon Islands to participate in two meetings scheduled in 2008: an IUCN meeting on population assessment to be held in the Oceania region, and a meeting on non detriment findings (NDF) organized by Mexico. The Committee encouraged the organizers of the NDF meeting to invite the Solomon Islands to participate and to make the population of *Tursiops aduncus* of the Solomon Islands a case study. The Committee also asked the representative of Oceania to report at AC24 on activities carried out between AC23 and AC24 with regard to the population of *Tursiops aduncus* of the Solomon Islands.
5. As recommended, Solomon Islands Management Authority and Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources representatives participated in the population assessment workshop organized by IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group and hosted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Environment Programme (SPREP) in Apia in August 2008.
6. The Solomon's population of *Tursiops aduncas* was also presented as a case study at the Non-Detriment Workshop hosted by Mexico in November 2008. This case study was co-authored by the Chair of the IUCN/SSC Cetacean Specialist Group and a representative of the Solomon Islands Management Authority.

* The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.

7. In preparing this report, the author has considered the report of the Apia Workshop and, as a participant in the Mexico NDF Workshop, was also able to take account of the deliberations in that forum. General advice was sought on this item from the Oceania Region and information was requested from the Solomon Islands Management Authority and Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. The CITES Management Authority provided an update on the current situation.
8. The Population Assessment Workshop in Apia focused on scientific and technical issues relating to the conservation of populations of small cetaceans, especially Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins. The workshop considered in detail all available information on the species, concentrating particularly on the Solomon Islands population, but also considered relevant information from other populations in the region as well as population assessment techniques and management models for similar species elsewhere. It was expected that the assessment framework developed by the workshop would be useful as a template not just for the case of Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins in the Solomon Islands, but also for at least some other populations of small cetaceans elsewhere.
9. The workshop looked at management goals and options for population assessment, reviewed the biology and populations of *Tursiops*, assessed the possible effects of removals from a population in the context of other factors affecting them and looked also at the question of the discreteness of the population of the species around the Solomon Islands.
10. In summary, the participants drew the following conclusions¹:

Populations of *T. aduncus* in the South Pacific islands are likely to be small, i.e. in the low hundreds, given the restricted areas of potentially suitable habitat around most of the islands. Given standard population models applied internationally, the local *T. aduncus* population used as the source of animals for export from the Solomon Islands would have to be at least 5,000 to 10,000 to sustain the permitted level of exports of 100 animals. The current state of knowledge of Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins throughout their range, as well as the information on this species in the Solomon Islands reviewed at the workshop, suggests that abundance in the area of recent live-captures is well below 5,000. Therefore, population assessment efforts in this region should be expanded as soon as possible. Based on workshop discussions, the group concluded that the best methods to assess abundance and delineate populations would be a combination of mark-recapture analyses of photo-identification data and genetic analyses.

11. The case-study presented to the NDF workshop in Mexico² echoed this information, and concluded:

"A credible non-detriment finding to justify further exports will require much more and better-quality data than are presently available. The principal categories of needed data include population structure, current abundance, population growth rate, and recent or ongoing human-caused removals (both deliberate and non-deliberate captures). External technical assistance and substantial financial investments will be necessary to ensure rigorous study designs, data collection procedures, and analyses. Collecting sufficient data, completing analyses, and carrying out population assessment will take several years. For example, a minimum of four field seasons over two years will be needed to generate a robust mark-recapture estimate of abundance for Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins in the Solomon Islands."

12. As noted in the Apia workshop report, the Solomon Island Dolphin Abundance Project (SIDAP), for which *T. aduncus* is the focal species, comprised surveys undertaken in the summers of 2005, 2007 and 2008. This is proposed to run until 2010.
13. The Solomon Islands Management Authority reports that a proposal for targeted survey of *T. aduncus* has received Government funding but requires some further technical and financial support. The Management Authority proposes implementing these surveys shortly.

¹ Reeves, R.R. and Brownell, R.L., Jr., (Editors). 2009. Report of the assessment workshop on Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus*) with the Solomon Islands as a case study. Cetacean Specialist Group, Species Survival Commission, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland. 65 pp. Available from SPREP website: (<http://www.sprep.org>).

² Reeves, R.R. and Horokou, J. 2008. *non-detriment finding for Tursiops aduncus in the Solomon Islands*. (www.conabio.gob.mx/institucion/cooperacion_internacional/TallerNDF/wg5.html)

14. The current annual export quota for the species from the Solomon Islands is reported as 100 animals. Subsequent to the discussion of the exports at AC23 in April 2008, there have been two further reported exports, of eight animals in December 2008 and eleven in January 2009, both to the Philippines. The number exported in the calendar year 2008 was thus eight animals and the number exported in the year to date since April 2008 is 19 animals.
15. The Animals Committee is invited to note this summary of activities.