

Problems and prospects of Ganges river Dolphin

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The Ganga basin is one of the most populous regions on Earth, home to 450 million people at an average density of over 550 individuals per square kilometre. In the delta zone this rises to over 900 per square kilometre. As a result, there is strong demand and competition for natural resources, especially water for domestic use and irrigation, and most of the basin tributaries are regulated by barrages. The Ganga supports a rich fauna and flora, including the endangered Ganga river dolphin *Platanista gangetica* and at least nine other species of aquatic mammal. Reptiles include three species of crocodiles along with one species of monitor lizard and eleven different freshwater turtles. The Ganga also has the richest freshwater fish fauna anywhere in India. The riparian zone supports many plant species that are of both ecological and economic importance. The Ganges River dolphin, locally known as Susu, is restricted to the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Karnaphuli-Sangu, and Meghna river systems and their tributaries, from the foot hills of the Himalaya to the limits of the tidal zone in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan (Anderson, 1879; Jones, 1982; Reeves & Brownell, 1989; Sinha, 1997, 2000).

The study is based on the secondary data collected from different sources like WWF, Freshwater & Wetland Conservation Programme WWF-India (Ganga case study), IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), The conservation action plan for the Gangetic dolphin; 2010-2020, The Ministry of Environment and Forests; INDIA, journals, magazines, newspapers etc. And The main aim of this paper is to assess the current population status, distribution and habitat ecology of endangered Ganges River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*) in GANGA River System of India and to assist the Government, Conservation organization and local community to develop conservation action plan providing them the recent scientific facts about *Platanista gangetica* in GANGA River System. The secondary aim of this paper is to educate local people about the conservation importance of freshwater river dolphin to enhance their active participation in dolphin conservation intervention. The Gangatic Dolphins have narrow ecological requirements and a fragmented population structure. Conserving this species requires coordinated efforts among agencies, organisations, and communities within the species range. Conservation issues can best be addressed by adopting population or regional level approaches for sustainable co-management.

Just as the Tiger represents the health of the forest, just as the Snow Leopard represents the health of the mountainous regions, and the Cheetah, the health of grasslands, the presence of the Dolphin in a river system signals its good health and biodiversity. This move is expected to increase support for the Government's efforts to protect this vulnerable species.

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