



for a living planet

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Statement

For immediate release

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The Mekong's Irrawaddy Dolphin welcomes the 3rd calf to its population, while its mortality rate sparks concerns

We congratulate the Government's Fisheries Administration-WWF's Mekong Dolphin Research Team, who this week confirmed the record of a new dolphin after the team took photographs of the newborn calf on May 16th while swimming among other seven adult animals in their Kampi pool, Kratie province. The researchers estimated the new calf was then about ten days old based on their analysis of the dolphin photographs. In total, three calves are recorded between January and May 2021, while six newborns were recorded during the same times last year.

We appreciate the dedication of river guards, who conduct regular patrols on river to reinforce the implementation of the law and commend the support and cooperation of the Fisheries Administration and local authorities.

The sighting of the new calf occurred during the Irrawaddy dolphin population survey conducted annually along a 180 kilometres stretch of the Mekong River between Kratie Town and the Cambodia-Lao PDR border. This year, due to travel restrictions to prevent the spread of the COVID-19, the research team missed their survey trips during March and April, which are the peak season for the birth of dolphins.

"All of our research team members were overwhelmingly excited, as always, to have confirmed the record of the newborn dolphin that is the third calf for 2021," said **Mr. Eam Sam Un, Biodiversity Research and Monitoring Manager with WWF.**

The Mekong's Irrawaddy dolphin is listed as critically endangered on the IUCN Red List. The 2020 census of its population by the Fisheries Administration and WWF showed only 89 individuals still swim in the Mekong River.

Mr. Seng Teak, WWF Country Director, explained that every single newborn calf is important for the survival of the currently small Mekong dolphin population, making the protection of the adult individuals from harmful effects of human activities even more critical in order to reduce the species mortality rate.



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Between January and May 2021, the research team unfortunately recorded four dolphin mortalities of which one adult died by the entanglement in gillnet and the other adult died due to old age, while the cause the calf death is unknown.

With similar mortality rate recorded between January and May 2020, WWF's scientists find the trend worrisome and urge the need of even more collective actions and stronger conservation measures to save the species from extinction.

Notes to editors:

The conservation of the Mekong dolphins goes back twenty years ago when the aim was to reduce the animal's mortalities through effective law enforcement, community outreach, livelihoods development and research. The efforts have bent the curve of its population decline with the first time increase from 80 in 2015 to 92 in 2017 individuals.
