Critical habitats for marine mammals range from the tropics to the poles, extending from shallow estuarine areas to the high seas. Despite this wide range of habitats, threats to the vital activities of marine mammals are often remarkably similar including commercial fishing, resource extraction activities such as oil and gas, commercial shipping, and water and noise pollution. The application of marine protected areas (MPAs) as an effective conservation tool for marine mammals has been demonstrated in a number of areas. Yet marine mammal protected areas (MMPAs) are poorly represented in most countries and on the high seas. Moreover, there has been no mechanism by which the "community of practice"—comprised of managers, natural and social scientists, decision makers, and other stakeholders—could collaborate, share information and experiences, knowledge establishing, managing MPAs. Thus, in 2006, the International Committee on Marine Mammal Protected Areas, ICMMPA, was established to promote marine mammal conservation through marine protected areas and other area-based management measures, informed by the best available science. A fundamental goal of the ICMMPA is to foster development, best practice management, and evaluation of MMPAs and other spatial tools, and ensure that marine mammals and their habitats are represented in relevant ocean conservation actions, planning initiatives, and international forums. To date, the primary activities of the ICMMPA have focused on networking and collaboration, communication, capacity-building, and training by organizing periodic MMPA conferences, and through the creation and dissemination of publications and knowledge products by the newly formed IUCN MMPA Task Force.

IUCN JOINT SSC/WPCA TASK FORCE ON MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTED AREAS (MMPATF)

The MMPATF has been created by the International Committee on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA), the WCPA Marine Vice Chair, and the Chair of SSC to help support a stronger global profile and to provide a stronger voice for the MMAs constituency within IUCN. A main objective for the MMPATF is to facilitate mechanisms to encourage collaboration, sharing information and experience, accessing and disseminating knowledge and tools for establishing, monitoring, and managing MMP As and promoting effective spatial solutions and best practices for marine mammal conservation within MMPAs.

OUR CHALLENGE

Since its inception, the ICMMPA has been a unique forum to bring together MPA managers, decision-makers, scientists and other stakeholders to exchange information, strengthen partnerships, and figure out the way forward to improve MPA management and marine mammal conservation in the context of such areas. Finding ways to solicit, listen to, evaluate and respond to the evolving needs of MMPA community in what we address in the future is a significant challenge. We will continue to focus our efforts on generating knowledge products through the MMPATF and to convene meaningful conferences to provide an effective forum for sharing information on approaches to marine mammal management and conservation.

THE 3RD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTED AREAS

"IMPORTANT MARINE MAMMAL AREAS - A SENSE OF PLACE, A QUESTION OF SIZE"

To promote marine mammal conservation through marine protected areas and other area-based management measures, informed by the best available science, ICMMPA holds periodic MMPA conferences focused on networking and collaboration, communication, capacity-building and training.

The 3rd International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA 3) will focus on the challenges and strategies of managing very large and very small marine mammal protected areas. Like the first two conferences ICMMPA 3 will highlight new developments in science and management, offer training and capacity-building sessions, and provide a forum for sharing information on approaches to marine mammal management and conservation including knowledge products developed by the newly formed IUCN MMPA Task force.

Who serves on the ICMMPA? Members of the Committee come from a wide range of geographic regions throughout the world, and possess expertise and experience within the disciplines of marine mammal biology, ecology and management of marine protected areas. Current members include scientists, representatives of governmental marine resource management agencies, managers of marine mammal protected areas (MMPAs) and representatives from non-governmental organizations.

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