

# How can we better integrate abundance and distribution information into the process for the identification of IMMAs?

*European Cetacean Society Conference Workshop, Tribunal de Contas, Rua do Esmeraldo (Praça Colombo), n° 20-38, Funchal Madeira, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

Organised by the IUCN Joint SSC/WCPA Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force (IUCN-MMPATF)

## Background

This full-day workshop aims to address the following question: How can we better integrate abundance and distribution information, often visualised spatially through species distribution modelling, into the process for identifying IMMAs? Data on the abundance and distribution of marine mammals is often necessary for informing decision making associated with their protection via marine management and spatial planning. Where systematically collected data may be unavailable other types of data, information, and alternative analytical approaches (e.g. habitat suitability mapping), will be needed to estimate abundance and describe time- and area-use by marine mammals. It is essential that these data and methodologies are considered in a systematic way during the application of criteria to identify Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs), a strategic classification enhancing future marine planning and conservation measures for these species. Moreover, information on abundance and distribution must be considered in a manner that complements and enhances existing approaches based on ecological and behavioural studies, satellite telemetry, genetic analyses, and expert opinion. To this end, the IUCN Joint SSC/WCPA Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force (IUCN-MMPATF) is supporting a technical workshop series aimed at evaluating the main scientific approaches necessary for the identification of IMMAs.

## Workshops Aims

The primary goal of the proposed workshop - the second in the series - is to advance the IMMA initiative by examining how information on marine mammal abundance and distribution can be visualized geospatially through species distribution modelling (SDM) and used to support the identification of IMMAs. Results of the workshop will also contribute towards the creation of an IMMA Toolkit, which will become the primary guidance for the identification of IMMAs, and will be presented formally at the 4th International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA4) in Mexico.

## Facilities for the Workshop

To ensure enough information can be made available to the workshop participants a communal online storage space (dropbox) will be provided to all attendees to submit information and papers of note for consideration at the workshop. This link will be available for two weeks before the workshop, and four weeks after the workshop. A folder named 'Participant Presentations' has been made available for participants to submit PDF copies of their presentations in advance of the workshop. There will also be a folder named 'Participant Poster' for those who wish to submit poster style PDF summaries of research work which they want to highlight to other attendees. Information submitted to this online workshop space will also be presented within the Workshop Proceedings.

## Venue and Registration

The workshop will be held in the main auditorium of the Tribunal de Contas (Financial Court House), on Rua do Esmeraldo (Praça Colombo), n° 20-38, Funchal. A Map to all workshop locations will be provided to all registered ECS conference delegates by the main conference organisers. A smartphone App will also be provided. The workshop hold a participant fee of €25 which must be paid in cash on the morning of the workshop. Receipts for the workshop fee can be provided to attendees in a digital format on request.

## Agenda

09:00 – 09:30 Arrival and Introductions

09:30 – 09:45 **Presentation:** Background to Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs)

*Mike Tetley – IUCN-MMPATF*

09:45 – 10:00 **Presentation:** Using fine-scale cetacean habitat modelling to inform the identification of IMMAs

*Tilen Genov – Sea Mammal Research Unit, University of St Andrews*

- 10:00 – 10:30 **Presentations:** Examples of Methods for Investigating Marine Mammal Distribution and Abundance  
*James Waggit - Bangor University*  
*Guilherme Bortolotto De Oliveira - University of St Andrews*  
*Benjamin Guichard – French Marine Protected Areas Agency*
- 10:30 – 11:00 **Plenary Discussion:** Summarising SDM considerations for the IMMA Toolkit
- 11:00 – 11:15 Morning Coffee Break
- 11:15 – 12:15 **Breakout Focus Groups:** Session One  
Facilitated discussions to list and categorise the variety of SDM methods and datasets available to the IMMA initiative using an informative matrix.
- 12:15 – 13:45 Lunch Break
- 13:45 – 14:00 **Presentation:** What do we model? - Caveats and Assumptions when Modelling Cetacean Distributions  
*Marc Fernandez - University of the Azores*
- 14:00 – 14:15 **Plenary Discussion:** Caveats and Assumptions for SDMs and the IMMA Process
- 14:15 – 15:15 **Breakout Focus Groups:** Session Two  
Facilitated discussions to assess the caveats and assumptions that are known for SDMs available to the IMMA process and how these can affect potential confidence in IMMA identification and boundary delineation.
- 15:15 – 16:00 Focus Group Feedback
- 16:00 – 16:15 Afternoon Coffee Break
- 16:15 – 16:30 **Presentation: Information on other IMMA Workshops and Focus Groups**
- 16:30 – 17:00 **Plenary Discussion:** SDMs in relation to other methodologies for identifying IMMAs
- 17:00 – 17:30 Summary of the SDM priorities for the IMMA Toolkit.
- 17:30 Workshop Finish

If you have any additional questions please contact [immacoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:immacoordinator@gmail.com) for further information.

Please also see the IUCN-MMPATF homepage and IMMA facebook page for information about the IMMA initiative.  
[www.icmmpa.org/iucn-task-force/](http://www.icmmpa.org/iucn-task-force/) and [www.facebook.com/Important-Marine-Mammal-Areas-IMMAs-1020125211364024/](https://www.facebook.com/Important-Marine-Mammal-Areas-IMMAs-1020125211364024/)

Regards

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