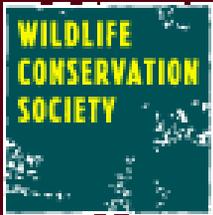




Shushuk Mela 2012

Sharing the challenge of conserving cetaceans
with communities



The Wildlife Conservation Society's Bangladesh Cetacean Diversity Project works to conserve cetacean diversity and abundance in Bangladesh with local communities and institutions.



The Educational Outreach Program aims to foster support among local communities, resource managers, partner organizations and institutions for effective cetacean conservation interventions.



The goal of the interactive, traveling exhibition featuring the amazing diversity of cetaceans (the scientific grouping of dolphins, whales and porpoises) living in the rivers, estuaries and deep-sea waters of Bangladesh is to share information about the endangered freshwater dolphins, and engage villagers in discussions about efforts to conserve these animals, maintain sustainable fishing livelihoods, and cope with the impacts of declining freshwater flows and climate change.

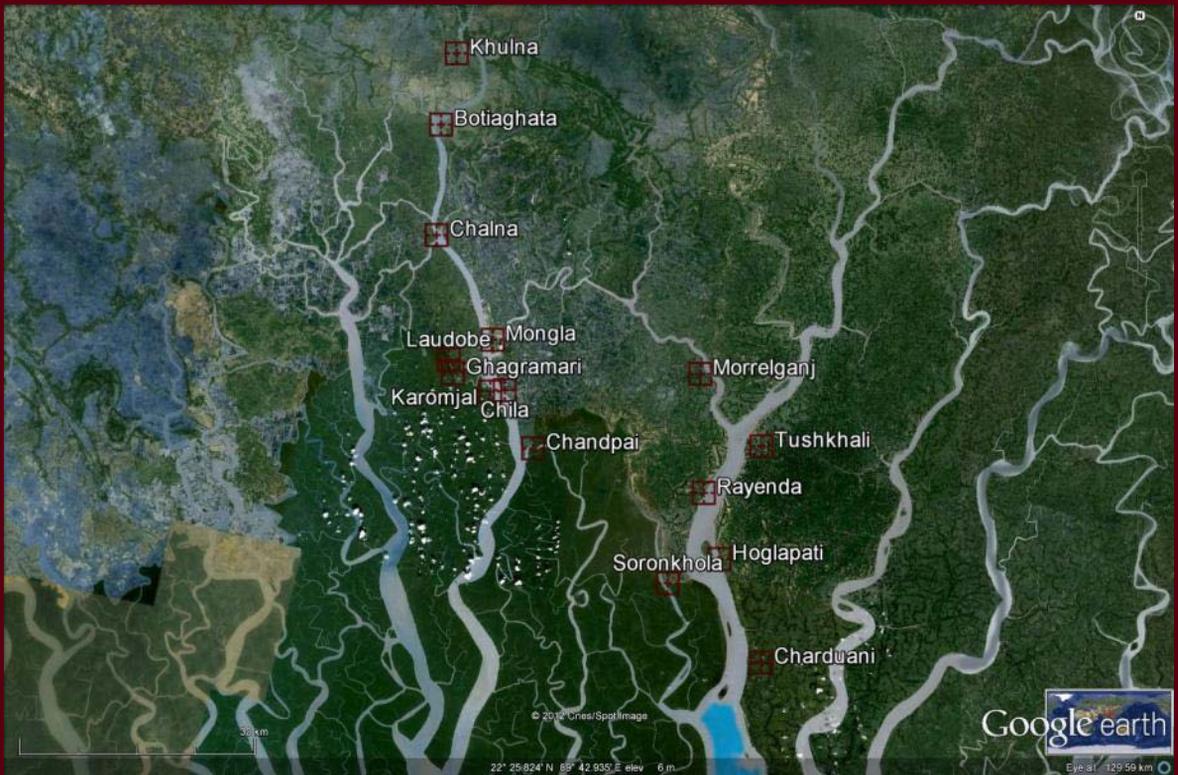


Messages of the Shushuk Mela 2012

- The Ganges River dolphin is a dolphin.
- Dolphins are mammals.
- Our freshwater dolphins are endangered.
- The recently declared three wildlife sanctuaries for the protection of freshwater dolphins in the eastern Sundarbans Reserved Forest aim to protect natural resources essential for human and dolphin communities
- Share news about dolphin entanglement, stranding or mortality through the Dolphin Hotline.



A traditional palm leaf harvesting barge was modified into a floating information center.



15 locations were selected as anchor points for the traveling exhibition. These had been identified during earlier studies as places of origin for fishermen active in the three new wildlife sanctuaries.





The third Shushuk Mela was inaugurated by the Chief Conservator of Forests in Khulna on February 18th 2012. About 30 senior representatives of the Forest Department along with media and NGO representatives attended the opening ceremony.



The Shushuk Mela 2012 was open to visitors for 26 days.



A total of **19,128 people** visited the floating dolphin exhibition. 55% were under the age of 16, 28% between 17 to 40 years of age.



On an average 736 guests were welcomed per day.

Visitors were guided through the exhibit by a team of 2-3 WCS staff and 5-7 volunteer interpreters.



Whenever possible groups of up to 25 persons were formed considering age classes to facilitate age-appropriate interpretation.



The exhibits included life-size models of seven dolphin species present in Bangladesh and a life-size painting of a Bryde's whale, 6 interactive games, a show case with skulls, teeth and bones of freshwater dolphins, and 37 information panels. Photographs and drawings were used to illustrate the panel content, with texts reduced to a minimum. Games were used to visualize the concept of sustainable fisheries, the feeding behavior of toothed versus baleen whales, the physical adaptations to life in the water, and the differences between fish and dolphins.



The Educational Outreach Team visited all schools in the area to invite the students and their teachers to the exhibition. In every classroom they gave a brief introductory session. Many teachers accompanied their students during class time.





Approximately 10,000 coloring booklets about the whales and dolphins of Bangladesh were handed out to primary and secondary school students. 3000 posters and 15,000 stickers promoting the Dolphin Hotline were distributed among adult visitors, including shop owners, fish traders and local leaders. About 500 copies of a color-illustrated book and about one hundred copies of the documentary movie 'Shushuk, Our Rivers and Mankind' were disseminated among headmasters, teachers and local government representatives.



19 film shows drew crowds of up to 800 spectators, with an average of 333 viewers every evening.

A total of estimated 6345 people watched the documentary films “Shushuk, Our River and Mankind” and “Exploring Our Waters” focusing on the Ganges River dolphins in Bangladesh and the work of the Wildlife Conservation Society.



The interpreters and crew members shared the responsibilities of running the exhibition as well as housekeeping.



Concept

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Design

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Dolphin Models

SM Asif Mahbub

Construction

Zahangir Alam

Interpretation

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