



AMAZING OCEAN GIANTS OF BANGLADESH

The marine waters of Bangladesh are a global hotspot for some of the world's most threatened Ocean Giants including dolphins, porpoises, whales, sharks, rays and marine turtles.

The occurrence of these species in generally larger numbers in Bangladesh compared to other countries in Asia can be explained by the spatial and temporal complexity in the northern Bay of Bengal created by freshwater flow from the world's third largest river system, a seasonally reversing current driven by the monsoon winds and upwelling from the Swatch-of-No-Ground submarine canyon (SoNG).

These conditions support among the world's most diverse and largest remaining populations of Ocean Giants including numerous species at global conservation risk.

Although Bangladesh currently supports relatively large population of Ocean Giants, these species are threatened by fatal entanglements in fishing gears and increasing salinity and changes in current patterns due to climate change.



Threatened marine mammals include Irrawaddy dolphins in nearshore, low-salinity waters; Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins and Indo-Pacific finless porpoises in slightly deeper, more saline waters; and Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins in much deeper, higher-salinity waters at the head of the SoNG.

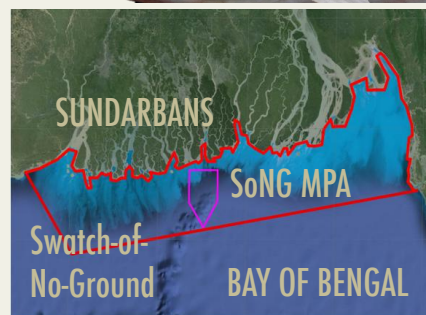
Other threatened Ocean Giants include olive ridley and green turtles as well as critically endangered sawfish, endangered hammerhead sharks, and numerous vulnerable sharks and rays.

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To safeguard Ocean Giants, in October 2014 the Government of Bangladesh declared its first marine protected area in 1,738 km² of shallow estuarine waters offshore of the Sundarbans mangrove forest and deep marine waters at the head of the SoNG. The Bangladesh Ministry of Environment and Forests is currently working with other government institutions and fishing communities to develop and support a management plan to conserve Ocean Giants in the SoNG MPA.

Another promising initiative aims to obtain better information on fatal entanglements of Ocean Giants by engaging gillnet fishermen in a Citizen Science Fishermen Safety Network. These fishermen monitor their nets, rescue live Ocean Giants when they become entangled, and collect information on their fishing practices, catches, and bycatches. In exchange, they are provided with a GPS and training on how to use it to navigate to safety during extreme storms which are becoming more frequent due to climate change.

By establishing marine protected areas and working closely with fishing communities, the Government of Bangladesh is helping to provide a global safety net for Ocean Giants threatened with near term extinction.



Irrawaddy Dolphin



Finless Porpoise



Bottlenose Dolphins



Spinner Dolphin



Humpback Dolphins

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