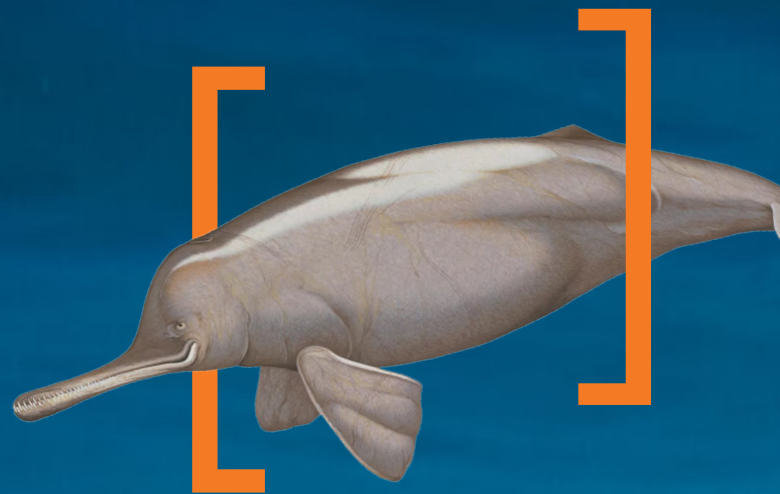


THE GANGES RIVER DOLPHIN

— *Platanista gangetica* —

The Ganges River dolphin inhabits the river systems of Nepal, India and Bangladesh. This vast area is now under threat due to the construction of dams, irrigation systems, pollution, hunting and entanglement. Without addressing these threats, we may lose the sole living representative of the Platanistidae family within the next 100 years.



THREATS



DAMS Construction of **50** dams and many barrages over the last 100 years have geographically isolated river dolphin populations, causing severe range fragmentation. This may be the most pressing issue for the Ganges River dolphin.



POLLUTANTS Concentrations of **Organochlorine** and **Butyltin** are high in dead River Dolphin flesh, due to the industrial and agricultural development near the riverbanks. This can kill prey species and dolphins, and completely destroy their habitat.



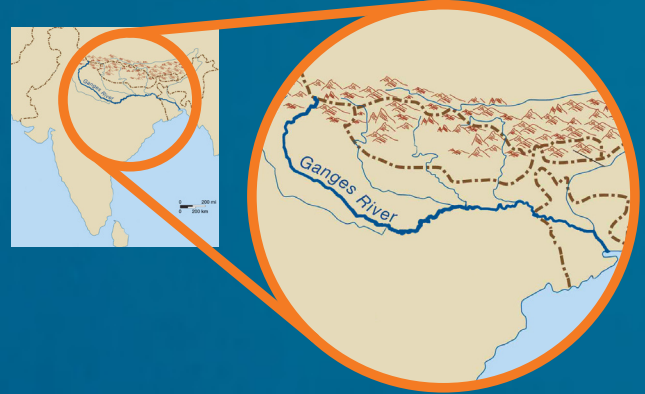
HUNTING Dolphins are killed for their **meat** and by fishermen for their **oil**, which is used as a catfish attractant.



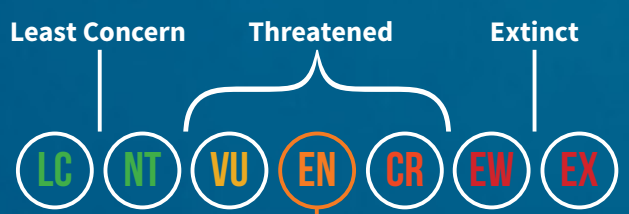
BYCATCH **Gillnets** are a severe problem for Ganges River dolphins throughout most of their range. They cannot echolocate these nets and therefore become **trapped** in them. Some fishermen actively place these nets on the feeding grounds of dolphins to **catch** them for their oil.



Due to these threats, the population plummeted by **60%** between **1957** and **2018**



CONSERVATION STATUS



ENDANGERED

Projected population decline over the next three generations (30 - 60 years): **> 50%**

Global range is a severely fragmented: **< 900 KM²**

 **6000+** **1957**

Large-scale construction of dams and barrages begin in the Ganges.

 **4000 - 5000** **1982**

Riverine pollution increases with industrialisation and intensification of plains agriculture.

 **2000** **1997**

IUCN status: **Endangered**

Significant range contraction due to dams, barrages and fishing activities.

2006

 **1800**

2016

 **1200 - 1800**

Indian National Waterways Act 2016 aims to convert 111 reaches of 106 rivers to inland waterways.

Population trend: **Decreasing**

 **500 - 800** **2118**

IUCN status: **Critically Endangered**

Range contracted to 100km²

3018

Extinct



EXTANT TO EXTINCT:

A STORY OF THE GANGES RIVER DOLPHIN?

SAVING THE DOLPHINS



Create a program which rescues dolphins trapped in irrigation canals and returns them to the Ganges' main channel



Dolphin population fragmentation can be alleviated by controlling and reducing the building of dams and barrages



Create wildlife sanctuaries to protect Ganges River dolphins in key population hotspots



Make the use of high-frequency pingers on gillnets mandatory in dolphin hotspots

TO AVERT EXTINCTION:

More research needs to be conducted to provide an accurate understanding of the problems facing the Ganges River dolphin. As of yet, there is no quantitative analysis of extinction probability. However, past trends show us that the population has significantly decreased and will continue to do so without intervention.

To view references, scan QR code. Infographic by Kevin C. Mathew.

