Iloilo and Guimaras Straits IMMA

Description

The Iloilo and Guimaras Straits are shallow bodies of water, which separate Panay, Guimaras, and Negros Islands in Central Philippines. Water depth in Iloilo Strait ranges from 1 to 60m while Guimaras Strait is relatively shallower with depth ranges between 0.5 to 45m. Water turbidity ranges from 1.2 to 58.6 NTU and salinity between 28-29 ppt. Sightings of Irrawaddy dolphins occurred in shallow estuaries, in water depths less than 10m, with turbidity between 15 to 35 NTU. Historically, both areas appear to have been adjacent to dense mangroves, but mangrove cover has been reduced drastically and has been replaced by aquaculture farms and human settlement. Other notable structures adjacent to the habitat include a coal-fired power plant, alcohol distillery plants, and sea ports.

Area Size

340 km²

Qualifying Species and Criteria

Irrawaddy dolphin – *Orcaella brevirostris*

Criterion A; B (1)

Marine Mammal Diversity

*Tursiops aduncus, Grampus griseus,*

*Pseudorca crassidens, Orcaella brevirostris,*

*Kogia sima, Stenella attenuata, Dugong dugon,*

*Globicephala macrorhynchus*

Summary

The Iloilo and Guimaras Straits are shallow bodies of water connecting the Sulu and Visayan Seas in the Central Philippines. This area hosts one of two Critically Endangered subpopulations of Irrawaddy dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*) in the Philippines. Estimated to number fewer than 30 individuals, this resident population is decreasing as a result of fisheries bycatch and vessel strikes. Sightings of Irrawaddy dolphins in this IMMA are concentrated in areas with freshwater inputs from rivers on the islands of Panay, Guimaras and Bago-Pulupandan, Negros.

Criterion A: Species or Population Vulnerability

The Irrawaddy dolphin, *Orcaella brevirostris*, is an endangered marine mammal found only in the Indo-Pacific region. Small isolated populations are often centred near estuaries and in semi-enclosed, protected bodies of water with freshwater inputs, such as bays, lagoons, and river systems (Arnold, 2002; Reeves et al., 2008). Until recently, the Malampaya Sound population of Irrawaddy dolphin in Palawan, declared by the IUCN as Critically Endangered (Minton et al., 2017), was the only population known in Philippine waters (Dolar et al., 2009). A second population was found in the Visayas in 2007, more than 300 km from the island of Palawan (de la Paz et al., 2017, 2020). The population exists in an estuary and very close to human fishing.
Criterion B: Distribution and Abundance

Sub-criterion B1: Small and Resident Populations

Only a very small population of Irrawaddy dolphins occurs in this area. The first population estimate using recapture and photo-ID techniques made in 2010-2012 was 23 dolphins (CV = 23.6%, 95% CI of 15-36 dolphins) (Dolar, 2012). The second estimate using the same method made in 2013-2014 was 21 dolphins (CV = 25.5%, 95% CI 10-31 dolphins) (SU-IEMS Report, 2014), and the most recent report is 13 individuals (CV = 20.89%; 95% CI = 9-19 dolphins) (de la Paz et al., 2017).

Supporting Information


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PDF made available for download at https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/portfolio-item/iloilo-guimaras-straits/