

Second Rangewide Estimation of Riverine and Estuarine Dolphins in India starts from Bijnor

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Following up the release of population estimation result of first round by the Prime Minister in the National Board for Wild Life (NBWL) at Gir in March last year, and to take forward the conservation of Dolphins in the country, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change rolled out the second rangewide estimation of riverine and estuarine dolphins under Project Dolphin today from Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh.



The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupendra Yadav had launched the 2nd round of Pan India population estimation of dolphins and their estimation protocol at Dehradun during last wildlife week. This programme is coordinated by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, in collaboration with State Forest Departments and partner conservation organizations WWF India, Aaranyak and Wildlife Trust of India.

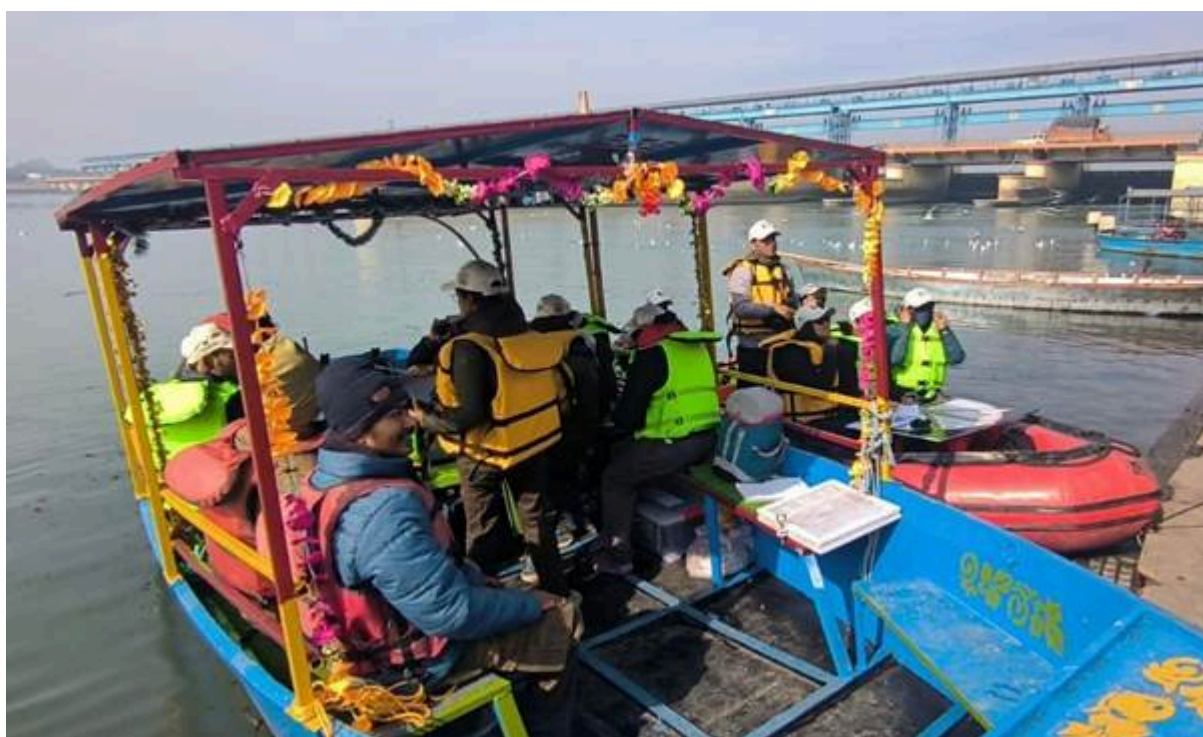
A regional training workshop for forest staff from 13 districts of Uttar Pradesh was held yesterday at Bijnor, and further training would be conducted intermittently for every 10–15 districts to ensure standardized field capacity, as the survey progresses.

The survey commenced with 26 researchers in three boats, recording ecological and habitat parameters, and using technologies such as hydrophones for underwater acoustic monitoring. In the first phase, the survey will cover the main stem of the Ganga from Bijnor to Ganga Sagar and the Indus River. In the second phase, it will cover Brahmaputra, the tributaries of the Ganga, the Sundarbans, and Odisha.

Apart from the Ganges River Dolphin, the survey will assess the status of the Indus River Dolphin and Irrawaddy Dolphins, along with habitat condition, threats, and associated conservation-priority fauna. This initiative will generate robust scientific data to support evidence-based conservation planning and policy action for India's river ecosystems.

The previous nationwide survey (2021–23) recorded an estimated around 6,327 riverine dolphins in India, including Ganges River Dolphins in the Ganga, Yamuna, Chambal, Gandak, Ghaghara, Kosi, Mahananda and Brahmaputra systems, and a small population of Indus River Dolphins in the Beas. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar accounted for the largest numbers, followed by West Bengal and Assam, highlighting the critical importance of the Gangetic basin for long-term dolphin conservation.

The ongoing survey follows the same standardized methodology as the previous exercise, however will additionally cover new stretches and operational areas to include a new species, Irrawaddy dolphin, estimation in Sundarbans and Odisha. This expanded spatial coverage will help update population estimates for this species, assess threats and habitat conditions and support improved conservation planning under Project Dolphin.





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