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Ninth Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPA) in the Wider Caribbean Region

Virtual Meeting, from the 17th – 19th of March 2021

CARI'MAM: AN INTERIM REPORT



UNION EUROPÉENNE

CARI'MAM



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ACRONYMS

CARI'MAM	Caribbean Marine Mammals Preservation Network
GCFI	Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute
IWC	International Whaling Commission
MMAP	Marine Mammal Action Plan
MPA	Marine Protected Area
RAC	Regional Activity Center of the SPAW Protocol
SPAW	Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol
STAC	Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee of the SPAW Protocol
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WCR	Wider Caribbean Region

CARI'MAM: AN INTERIM REPORT

The present document is an interim report of the “Caribbean Marine Mammals Preservation Network” (CARI'MAM) project for years 2019 and 2020.

1. INTRODUCTION

1. The three-year project “Caribbean Marine Mammals Preservation Network” (CARI'MAM) (2017-2020) was presented during the last Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (Panama, December 2018) and the last Conference of the Parties of the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol (SPAW, Roatan, June 2019). This project is funded by the European Union (EU) (€2,903,178.24).

2. As the project only started at the end of 2018, the EU has accepted an extension until the end of 2021. Due to the COVID19 crisis, some actions have been postponed or changed (e.g., meetings, workshops and trainings).



Figure 1. The CARI'MAM network from all the Caribbean region

3. The CARI'MAM project is led by Agoa sanctuary and divided into 7 work packages:

- WP 0. Project management and coordination (led by Agoa/ SPAW RAC)
- WP 1. Review of current regulations related to marine mammals (SPAW RAC)
- WP 2. Project-scale knowledge acquisition (Agoa)
- WP 3. Capacity-building for managers (Agoa/SPAW RAC)
- WP 4. Development of joint acoustic monitoring strategies (Agoa)
- WP 5. Support for developing sustainable and wildlife-friendly commercial whale watching activities (SPAW RAC)
- WP 6. Management plan for MPA with “marine mammal” responsibility (SPAW RAC)
- WP 7. Communication and awareness (Agoa)

4. The SPAW RAC is taking the lead in the implementation of three out of the seven project components (WP 1, 5 and 6) and is involved in work packages 0 and 3.

2. MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2019 AND 2020

WP 0 – Project management and coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment of a project coordinator (Conruyt G, 2019), - Recruitment of an Intern for MPAs management plans analysis (WP6) (Bonnin N., 2020), - Recruitment of a Project officer for CARI'MAM project (Paranthoen N. and then Pusineri C. 2020). - 2 financial and technical reports prepared for the funder
WP 1 – Review of current regulations related to marine mammals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SPAW focal point legal consultation «Current Status of Legislation on marine mammals protection in the WCR». <i>Report submitted to STAC members for information (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.29, Addendum 2)</i> - A scientific and technical analysis of the current state of implementation of the Regional Marine Mammal Action Plan (MMAP) under SPAW was prepared by Courtney Vail and Monica Borobia, as contractors. <i>Report submitted to STAC members for information (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.29, Addendum 1)</i> - Organisation and moderation of a Bycatch workshop during the 3rd CARI'MAM meeting in Dominican Republic. Aim: improved knowledge on the magnitude and impact of bycatch in the WCR. <i>http://www.car-spaw-rac.org/IMG/pdf/cr_global_cari_mam_v3_en.pdf</i> - Organisation and moderation of a Threats workshop during the 4th virtual CARI'MAM meeting (the month of CARI'MAM, November 2020 with IWC participation). Aims: share information and identify gaps and potential mitigation actions. <i>Report available soon on the SPAW RAC website</i> - Translation of the OBSenMER application (French and English available, and Spanish in progress) <i>Annex 1</i> -In progress: A website dedicated to Caribbean marine mammals (part of SPAW RAC website). This website aims to become the reference website for marine mammal conservation in the Caribbean region: general and specific information, links to major programs, stranding metadata. <i>Annex 2</i>

<p>WP5 - Support for developing sustainable and wildlife-friendly commercial whale watching activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey «Status of whale watching activity in the wider Caribbean region». Report posted on the project teamwork platform on January 15, 2020 https://car-spaw-rac.org/IMG/pdf/marine_mamals_watching_survey_en-3.pdf - Organisation and moderation of a marine mammal legislation workshop during the 2nd CARI'MAM meeting in Guadeloupe. Aim: synthesize whale-watching activity management needs and expectations per territory. http://www.car-spaw-rac.org/IMG/pdf/meeting_cari_mam_2_-_en_s.pdf - Organisation and moderation of a Whale Watching workshop during the 3rd CARI'MAM meeting in Dominican Republic » Aim: define the ideal contents for a potential Whale Watching regional label. http://www.car-spaw-rac.org/IMG/pdf/cr_global_cari_mam_v3_en.pdf - Organisation and moderation of a Whale Watching workshop during the 4th CARI'MAM virtual meeting (the month of CARI'MAM, November 2020 with IWC participation). Aims: identify the partners to test and support a regional certification. <i>Report available soon</i> - Recommendations for a regional certification for a sustainable commercial marine mammal observation activity in the Wider Caribbean Region. <i>Report submitted to STAC members for information (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.31, Addendum 1)</i> - Public purchase: legal study, prior to the implementation of a regulatory instrument for marine mammal touristic activities in the wider Caribbean region. <i>Summary submitted to STAC members for information (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.31, Addendum 2).</i> <i>Full report on the SPAW RAC website : https://car-spaw-rac.org/IMG/pdf/report_car_spaw_livable_1_v2.pdf</i> - Exchanges with the SPAW species working group and production of a document by the working group experts: “Toolkit for implementing marine mammals watching guidelines in the Wider Caribbean Region”. <i>Report submitted to STAC members for information (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.32)</i>
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WP 6 – management plans	<p>- Contribution to the development of a tool dedicated to all Protected Areas with a marine mammals responsibility: the marine mammals management tracking tool. This tool was initially developed by MPA managers in the framework of the European project: “Towards a transatlantic partnership of Marine Protected Areas” and will soon be available on their website.</p> <p>- Improve consideration of marine mammals in MPA management plans: regional study and tracking tool proposal.</p> <p><i>Report summary submitted to STAC members for information (UNEP(DEPI)/CAR WG.42/INF.30)</i></p> <p><i>Full report in French is available on the SPAW RAC website : https://car-spaw-rac.org/IMG/pdf/rapport-stagem2-bonnin.pdf</i></p> <p>- Organisation and moderation of a meeting dedicated to management plans during the virtual 4th CARI’MAM meeting (the month of CARI’MAM, November 2020). Aims: Share the outputs of the regional study and create links between MPAs at the regional, national, and local level.</p> <p><i>Report available soon</i></p>
WP 7 – communication and awareness	<p>- GCFI participation. Presentation of a poster on the SPAW RAC activities in the framework of the CARI’MAM project. <i>Annex 3</i></p> <p>- Articles in the SPAW RAC newsletter <i>http://www.car-SPAW RAC.org/?SPAW-RAC-Newsletters</i></p> <p>- CARI’MAM workshops organisation and participation</p> <p>- Development of a marine mammal website (<i>under the SPAW RAC website</i>)</p>

HIGHLIGHTS

- 3-year project 2018-2021 funded by EU
- 3 regional meetings with several workshop sessions organized in 2019 and 2020
- A dynamic network of highly involved stakeholders around the Caribbean region dedicated to the preservation of marine mammals
- Major SPAW RAC outputs:
 - Review of the national regulations dedicated to Marine Mammals in the Caribbean
 - A regional study and a tracking tool to strengthen the consideration of marine mammals in the MPA management plans
 - Development of MPA manager tools: OBSenMER, tracking tool, dedicated part of website
 - Drafting of a proposal for the development of a regional label/certification to support sustainable marine mammal watching in the Wider Caribbean Region
 - A report on the Implementation of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Marine Mammals: a scientific and technical analysis (MMAP) with recommendations
- Need to secure the network and the actions undertaken by CARI'MAM members in the long-term



Annex 1 : Translation of the OBSenMER application (French and English available, Spanish in progress)

OBSenMER is a participatory science tool dedicated to the reporting of megafauna observations made at sea. It is a digital platform on which observers can collaborate according to different modalities, and/or manage the data associated with their observations.

OBSenMER is an open application dedicated to observers at sea: organizations specialized in data collection or simple boaters wishing to contribute to partner programmes.

OBSenMER is totally in accordance with a participative and collective approach. A user charter has been set out so that each user is identified, valued, and can manage his or her own data. The commitments and attributions of each type of user are clearly defined, as well as the rights to share the collected data.

In short, OBSenMER is:

- An open access tool
- A mobile application, to facilitate the collection of information at sea on marine Megafauna, from beginner to expert level.
- A facilitator of exchanges and sharing between the collecting structures and data users (scientists, managers...),
- A common, homogeneous and freely shared database.

How does it work?

Registration is free and without obligation, each user has his or her own private access on the www.obsenmer.org website. He or she can thus consult, enter and download the data collected by the network of contributors.

Depending on the user's profile, access to the different functionalities differs. Users can be: an organization (association, marine park, research laboratory...) that collects data at sea and/or collects information from its affiliated collectors; or an observer (yachtsman, sea user) who reports his or her observations at sea.

For more information on OBSenMER: <https://www.obsenmer.org/pages/home>.

The screenshot displays the OBSenMER web application. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo and links for 'CONTACT US', 'LOGIN/REGISTER', and 'ADD AN OBSERVATION'. Below the navigation bar, a 'Map' section is visible, featuring a search and filter interface. The filter section includes dropdown menus for 'Status' (All status), 'Structure' (All institutions), 'Group' (All groups), and 'Species' (All species). Below the filters, a search bar is present. The main content area shows a map of the Caribbean region with 56540 observations found, indicated by numerous colored markers (blue, yellow, red, pink) scattered across the sea. A legend at the bottom of the map lists various marine species and observation types, such as 'Algal ball', 'Bird band reading', 'Bivalves', 'Butterflies', 'Cetaceans', 'Crustaceans', 'Coral trigger', 'Flora', 'Hydro acoustic point', 'Lion fish catches logbook', 'Lion fishing gear', 'Macroparasitism', 'Microplastic', 'Marine turtles', 'Shellfish', 'Partners society / Charters', 'Pinnac fisher', 'Shadiner', 'Rays and Sharks', 'Squid', and 'Sampling / Taps'. The footer of the page includes the text 'OBSenMER 2020' and the ALTITUDE logo.

Annex 2: A website dedicated to Caribbean marine mammals (part of SPAW RAC website)

The **Wider Caribbean** Region has over 35 species of **marine mammals**, making it one of the areas on the planet where this group is the most diverse. These are mainly very mobile species, which can move between different territories. This is why several projects have been carried out to better understand these animals and bring together the actors working to protect them in this space.

The latest project is the **CARI'MAM project**, which aims to network partners from the Greater Caribbean Region working to improve the knowledge and preservation of marine mammals.

Discover them

The numerous species of marine mammals present in the Caribbean are protected by several legislation. This chapter present more information about these animals and how to observe them in the wild.

Study and conservation

Scientist work for several years to better understand marine mammals in the Caribbean. With other organizations, they allow a better protection of these species. Discover these methods, databases used and become actor of their protection.

CARI'MAM project

The CARI'MAM project is a cooperation project financed by the European program Interreg (ERDF) that aims to reinforce the network of stakeholders working on marine mammals in the Great Caribbean Region.

Digital library

The SPAW-RAC works for several years for the conservation of marine mammals in the Caribbean. This section groups all the bibliographic references and educational resources on this subject. It contains also the link to the professional platform for partners Teamwork.

A part of the SPAW RAC website is dedicated to marine mammals and is still under development.

It is composed of 4 major chapters:

- “Discover them”: this chapter presents information on marine mammals and how to observe them in the wild.
- “Study and conservation”: it presents scientist study methods and how to contribute to marine mammal conservation.
- “CARI’MAM project”: A page to present the project
- “Digital library”: Bibliographic reference and educational resources on marine mammals.

For more information, see: <http://www.car-spaw-rac.org/?Marine-Mammals-999>

Annex 3 : Presentation of a poster on the SPAW RAC activities in the framework of the CARI'MAM project

Marine Mammals in the Wider Caribbean Region

The marine mammal fauna of the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR) is diverse, and marine mammals have significant ecological, aesthetic and economic value to the countries and territories of the region.

For many marine mammal species, waters of the region serve as primary habitat for critical activities that include feeding, mating and calving. However, the WCR is also the one of only two regions in the world to have experienced the extinction of a marine mammal species (the Caribbean monk seal) in the past 250 years.

CARIBBEAN MARINE MAMMALS PRESERVATION NETWORK

In 1983, the Caribbean nations adopted the **Cartagena Convention**, the only regional and legally binding agreement on environment. Among the three protocols stemming from the Convention, the Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol is the one dedicated specifically to biodiversity conservation. It supplies a unique legal framework for the conservation of the region's biodiversity. This Protocol has been ratified by **17 countries**. The SPAW RAC is tasked to implement SPAW protocols activities.

Lead by AGOA sanctuary (AFB) in close connection with the SPAW-RAC and with other partners, the INTERREG cooperation project CARI'MAM aims at enabling **collaboration among Caribbean territories featuring a wide array of legislative and regulatory situations with regard to marine mammals preservation and Marine Protected Area (MPA) management.**

This cooperation is intended to :

- facilitate the **migration of marine mammals** across the biological corridor of the Antilles
- Increase the **efficiency of MPA management** with regard to marine mammals

This projects is divided into 7 Work Packages (WP) implemented by the partnering agencies. The SPAW-RAC is currently steering three of them.

Cartagena convention

Adopted in 1983

26 states

Oil spill pollutions

Adopted in 1983

25 states

Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW)

Adopted in 1990

17 states

Land-based pollutions (LBS)

Adopted in 1999

13 states

PERIOD

START DATE

01/10/2017

END DATE

30/09/2020

BUDGET

2 727 275,00 €	2 045 456,25€ (75%)
total cost	FEDER contribution

Current status of legislation and threats

- Legal analysis of existing marine mammal (MM) protection **legislation** around the Caribbean.
- Review of MM mortality through **collision and bycatch**.

Currently

2019-2020

Technical review of the Action Plan for the conservation of Marine Mammals in the Caribbean

International survey to update data on the current status of legislation on marine mammals

17 countries solicited

Development of sustainable Cetacean Watching Activities

- Review and **characterisation of whale watching activities** in the wider caribbean region.
- Creating a **regional label or certification for whale watching commercial activity**. A necessary step to harmonize good practices in the wider caribbean region.

Currently

3 workshops

+ than 80 participants

19 Caribbean territories

International survey to characterize the Whale Watching activities

Inclusion of Marine Mammals into MPA management plans

- Inventory of current expertise** within network of managers.
- Analysis** of management plans
- Test and **develop joint tools** for a better inclusion of marine mammals into Marine Protected Area

Currently

testing new tools for a better inclusion of marine mammals into marine protected area