

# DIP IN CHILIKA LAKE'S DOLPHIN POPULATION

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

The Chilika lake is a major tourist attraction due to its Irrawaddy dolphins.

The dolphin population along Odisha's coast and in its waterbodies has increased but the number of Irrawaddy dolphins in Chilika lake has fallen.

Months after undertaking a census in different waterbodies and off the coast of Odisha, the Principal Chief Conservator Forest (Wildlife) has provided data, recorded across the State's Wildlife Divisions, on the number of dolphins, which have overall gone up from 544 in 2021 to 726 in 2022.

## High sighting

The increase in the State's dolphin population is largely due to high sighting in the Mangrove Wildlife Division of the Rajnagar jurisdiction, where 540 dolphins were enumerated in 2022 compared with 342 in 2021. In Rajnagar, the number of bottlenose dolphins rose from 22 to 135 and humpback dolphins from 281 to 332 in one year.

A total of six species of dolphins — Irrawaddy, bottlenose, humpback, striped, finless and spinner dolphins — have been recorded.

The lake, which is a major tourist attraction known for its Irrawaddy dolphins, saw the numbers of its flagship aquatic animal drop sharply from 162 in 2021 to 151 this year. There has also been a fall in the number of bottlenose dolphins at Chilika, from 26 in 2021 to 16 in 2022.

In the remaining four Wildlife Divisions — Puri, Berhampur, Bhadrak and Balasore — dolphin sighting was negligible. The State has a total of 208 Irrawaddy dolphins.

The census for dolphins and other cetacean species included almost the entire coast of Odisha, where estimation was been carried out within a width of one kilometre from the sea beach using the line transect census method at a distance of 500 metres from the beach. Subsequently, recording of dolphins sighted on either side of the line transect was completed. In all, 48 census units were established all along the coastline.

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