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NEWSLETTER

Gephyreus Project

CMS COP15 APPROVES CONCERTED ACTION FOR THE LAHILLE'S BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN

During the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), held in Brazil in March 2026, a Concerted Action for the conservation of the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin was approved for the 2026–2029 period.

This milestone strengthens cooperation among Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay to reverse the species' critical conservation status and recognizes the urgent need for coordinated actions to address threats such as habitat degradation and bycatch in small-scale fisheries.

The initiative also reflects the collaborative efforts of Gephyreus Project and its partner institutions, whose scientific findings helped underpin this trinational conservation initiative.

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GEPHYREUS PROJECT TAKES ITS RESEARCH TO THE IWC SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

During the 70th meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Scientific Committee, held this year in Bled, Slovenia, the outcomes of the Workshop on Conservation Management Plans (CMPs) for Latin America, organized in Santos, Brazil, in 2025, were presented.

The report, developed with contributions from experts and representatives from several countries, summarizes progress in the implementation of Conservation Management Plans across the region, including the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin CMP. It also served as the basis for discussions and recommendations by the Scientific Committee aimed at advancing their effective implementation.

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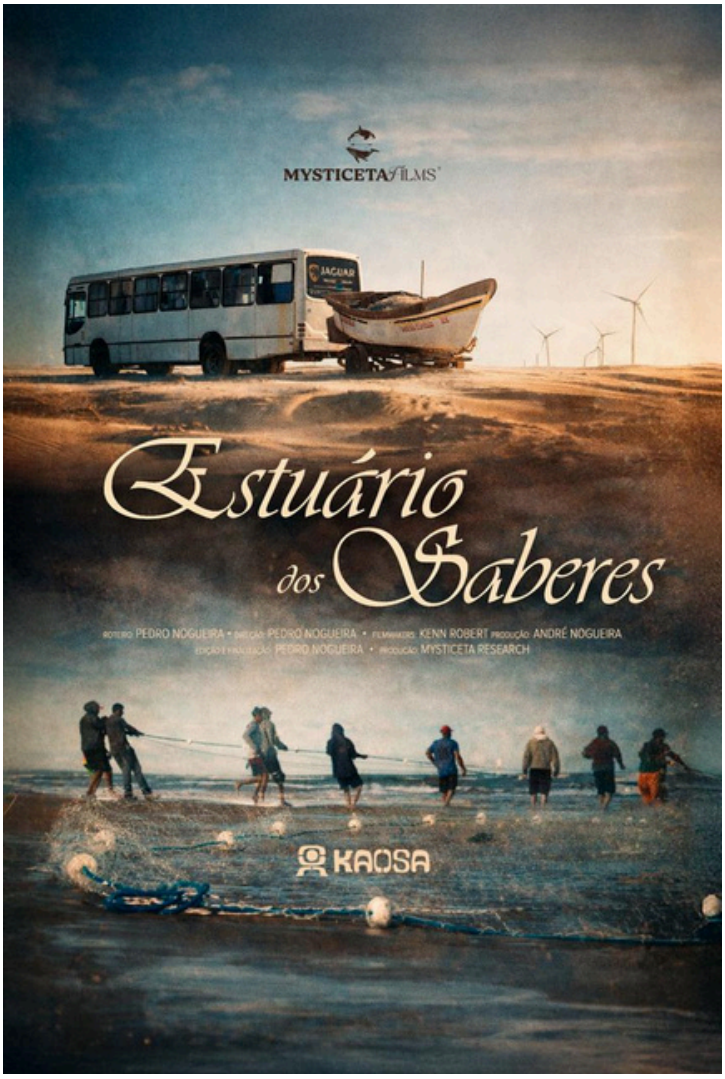

"ESTUÁRIO DOS SABERES" WEB SERIES EXPLORES SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES, LAHILLE'S BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN CONSERVATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL

Kaosa has launched the web series "Estuário dos Saberes" (Estuary of Knowledge), produced by Mysticeta Films with support from the Whitley Fund for Nature and Yaqu Pacha. Across three short episodes, small-scale fishers and researchers from the Patos Lagoon estuary share their perspectives on the transformations affecting fisheries, biodiversity and coastal ecosystems in southern Brazil.

Throughout the series, the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin emerges as a symbol of the connection between conservation and the livelihoods of fishing communities. The production highlights how dialogue between traditional knowledge and science is essential for understanding the impacts of climate change, environmental and social degradation, and increasing pressure on natural resources. Rather than providing simple answers, the series invites viewers to reflect on how to build a more harmonious relationship between people and the environment, recognizing that the future of small-scale fisheries, the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin and coastal ecosystems is deeply interconnected.

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STUDY PUBLISHED IN *BIOLOGICAL CONSERVATION* REVEALS THE DEMOGRAPHIC VULNERABILITY OF THE LAHILLE'S BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN

Researchers from Gephyreus Project have published the first regional-scale assessment of the population dynamics of the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin in southern Brazil and Uruguay in the journal Biological Conservation. Based on six years of coordinated monitoring conducted by Gephyreus Project, the study estimates a subpopulation of approximately 250–340 individuals.

Simulation models indicate that, although some Management Units are expected to remain relatively stable under current conditions, the overall subpopulation faces a risk of decline, with severe reductions projected under scenarios of habitat degradation and increased bycatch—threats that are expected to intensify in the future.

The study highlights the importance of long-term monitoring and institutional collaboration to support evidence-based conservation actions.

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Conservation Medicine: International mission paves the way for a Lahille's bottlenose dolphin Health Program

In March 2026, specialists from the National Marine Mammal Foundation (NMMF), United States, carried out a mission to southern Brazil to visit two Lahille's bottlenose dolphin populations monitored by Gephyreus Project and assess the feasibility of establishing a long-term health monitoring program for the species. The initiative is part of an action included in the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin, currently coordinated by Brazil under the framework of the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

In recent years, an increasing number of dolphins presenting skin lesions and other signs of possible health impairment has raised concerns among authorities and coastal communities in southern Brazil. The recurrence of these cases, together with growing public concern, highlights the need to better understand their causes and develop technical approaches capable of supporting effective conservation actions.

Internationally recognized for its research on the health, physiology and behavior of marine mammals, the NMMF develops interdisciplinary research programs integrating veterinary medicine, ecology and human health. During the mission, field activities were conducted in the dolphin habitats of Laguna (Santa Catarina State) and the Patos Lagoon (Rio Grande do Sul State), alongside visits to fishing communities and discussions on ongoing research, the species' biology and ecology, as well as capture, handling and biological sampling protocols.

Why does it matter?

These assessments are essential to responsibly evaluate the feasibility of a future capture–health assessment–release program, enabling the collection of key information on the health status of Lahille's bottlenose dolphins. Potential health indicators include:

- Body condition and nutritional status;
- Reproductive health;
- Exposure to contaminants;
- Infectious diseases;
- Physiological stress and responses to environmental change.

These data will contribute to a better understanding of the threats faced by the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin and help guide future conservation actions.

A new chapter for Gephyreus Project

Over the past several years, Projeto Gephyreus has established a long-term regional monitoring program for the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin, generating essential information on abundance, survival, population structure, habitat use and threats to the species. Developing a dedicated health program represents the next step in this process, bringing ecological research and conservation medicine even closer together.

Beyond the technical activities, the mission strengthened collaboration between Brazilian and North American researchers and laid the foundation for future joint research initiatives and the training of teams that will contribute to developing this program. More than a technical visit, the mission marks the beginning of a new phase in the conservation of the Lahille's bottlenose dolphin, bringing together ecology, veterinary medicine and international collaboration to better understand and protect one of South America's most threatened dolphin species.

EXCHANGE BETWEEN RESEARCHERS FROM THE BOTOS DA BARRA PROJECT AND THE BOTOS DO ARARANGUÁ PROJECT STRENGTHENS COOPERATIVE FISHING STUDIES

On 9–10 February 2026, researchers from the Botos do Araranguá Project participated in a technical exchange with the Botos da Barra Project team. The activity promoted the exchange of expertise on monitoring, photo-identification and strategies to safeguard cooperative fishing, strengthening collaboration between the groups studying this unique human–dolphin interaction in southern Santa Catarina, Brazil, and reinforcing the collaborative network of the Gephyreus Project.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE BOTOS DA LAGOA DOS PATOS PROJECT, LAMAQ AND THE BOTOS DA BARRA PROJECT ADVANCES PHOTOGRAMMETRY STUDIES

Between 1 and 3 April 2026, the Botos da Lagoa dos Patos Project hosted researchers Gabriela Oms (Graduate Program in Ecology, UFSC–LAMAq) and Elisa Ilha (Graduate Program in Ecology, UFRGS–Botos da Barra Project) for fieldwork focused on collecting photogrammetry data on Lahille's bottlenose dolphins in the Patos Lagoon estuary.

The data are part of Gabriela's master's research and will support investigations into the demographic structure of the species across its different Management Units, as well as how these differences influence population viability. The collaboration further strengthens the trinational research network led by the Gephyreus Project.

COOPERATIVE FISHING WITH DOLPHINS RECOGNIZED AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF BRAZIL

In December 2025, IPHAN officially recognized cooperative fishing with dolphins in southern Brazil as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Brazil. The designation acknowledges the knowledge and practices shared by artisanal fishers and Lahille's bottlenose dolphins in regions such as Laguna (Santa Catarina State), Araranguá (Santa Catarina State) and Imbé (Rio Grande do Sul State), highlighting the cultural significance of this unique interaction and strengthening efforts to safeguard this remarkable tradition.

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Photo: Mariana Alves (IPHAN)

www.gephyreus.org +55 53981201467 projetogephyreus@gmail.com @projetogephyreus