

The primary assessment on the dugong population in Viet Nam

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There is still lacking of information on the historical population status of dugong. The result survey conducted by Research Institute for Marine Fisheries (RIMF) and other institutions estimated that there are from 25 to 100 dugong individuals still living in the southern part of Viet Nam. However, the smallest amounts of 2-3 dugongs were killed each year in Phu Quoc, Con Dao and Phu Quy Islands as well as their adjacent. The biggest dugong reached 3m in length and weigh was more than 500 kilograms. Dugongs swim in the shallow coastal waters of southern part where they have protected from large waves and storms. Dugongs float up only to breathe, and never come on to land.

Dugongs are mentioned as a protected species in “Red-book” of Viet Nam as well as listed by CITES under the highest at-risk category. — AFP/VNS. They only live in or in the vicinity of seagrass meadows, which is being destroyed by pollution, dredging and farm soil being washed into the sea.

It is recognizing that dugongs have long been hunted and traded, which has led to the dramatic decline in their numbers. Other serious threats include the destructive fishing practices, serious typhoons, which destroy the seagrass, and the accidental catch of dugongs in fishing nets, especially in “Cao bay” trawling with big mesh-size net.

Exchanging information and experiences as well as constructive discussions on proper actions and cooperation in terms of the scientific record, coastal management and the responsible fishing operation will be positive direction towards a better future for the dugong population in Vietnam.

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