



REPORT OF ID-2 ACTIVITY

DUGONG STRANDING AND OTHER EVENTS

PERIOD: August 2005 – February 2018

Conducted by:
DSCP Indonesia

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BACKGROUND

The dugong (*Dugong dugon*) is one of at the least 35 marine mammal species found throughout Indonesia. This relatively long-lived and slow-reproducing animal has a scattered distribution in Indonesian coastal waters (Figure 1). Among the information being used to map the distribution of the dugong were those obtained from stranding and entanglement (alive) or bycatch (dead) events recorded by local citizens. The inclusion of other information beside sightings had been conducted since the the “National Symposium on Dugong and Seagrass” in April 2016, considering limited scientific information on the dugong abundance.

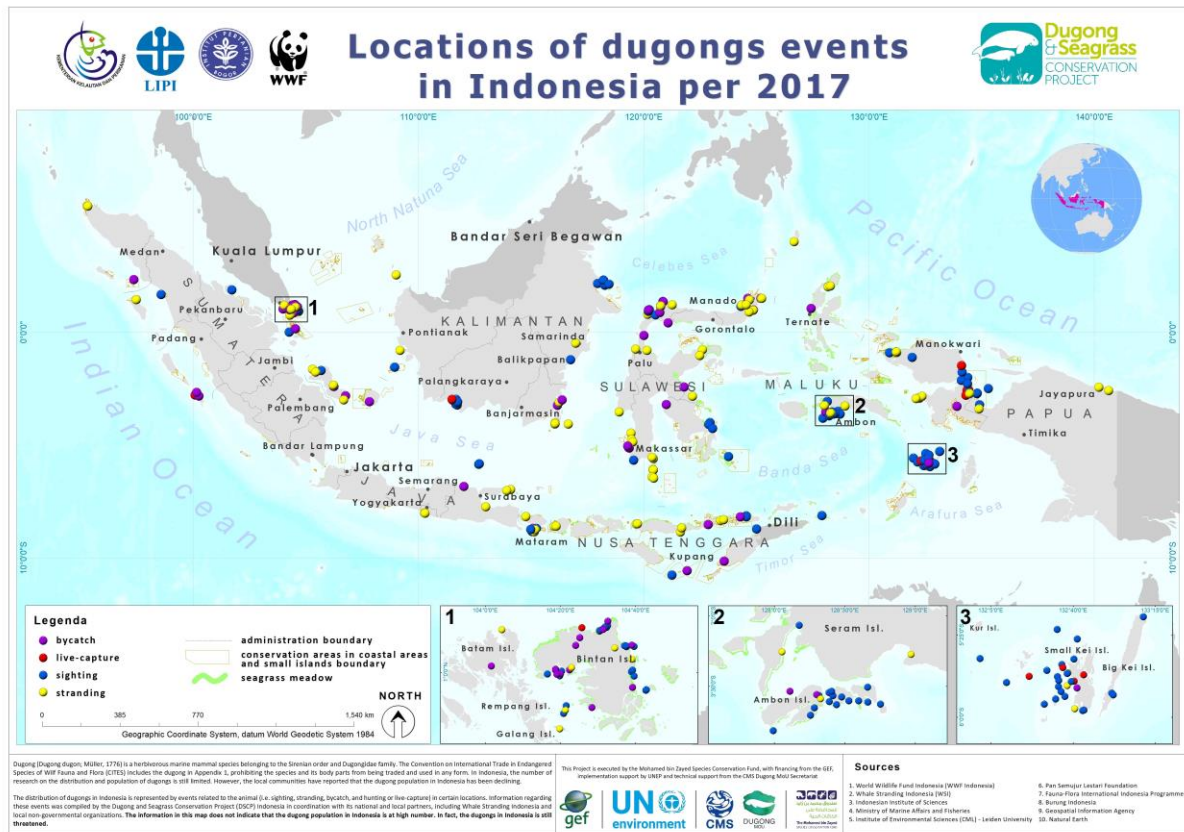


Figure 1. DSCP Indonesia has produced a map of dugong distribution in Indonesia to update the previous map by de longh and his colleagues (de longh et al., 1997). The latest map shows that the dugong distribution is fairly scattered. Some previously recorded areas were also more emphasized by the new information as the habitat of the dugongs.

Stranding and other events, in fact, still hold an important role in our understanding of dugong populations and the current threats to the dugongs in Indonesia. Not all reportedly stranded animals, for instance, were naturally beached. If examined well, both dead and live-stranded animals might show if there is a human involvement in the stranding itself. In the case of dugongs, the well-known threats to the animal were subsistence hunting and local consumption due to the high value of its body parts. Well-documented stranding events could show the handling of the dead or live dugongs. The local citizens from some areas of Indonesia, however, are well-known as consumers of dugong meat and traders of its tusks.

This report presents the frequency of dugong stranding and other events relevant events in Indonesia from January to June 2018. The information is expected to support the examination of the threats to dugongs in Indonesia and the current situation on the dugong population in Indonesian waters.

METHODOLOGY

Information on stranding and other events related to dugongs in Indonesia were obtained from data collected by the WWF-Indonesia, the Whale Stranding Indonesia community, direct reports to the Facebook fanpage Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project (DSCP) Indonesia, and online articles.

RESULTS

There has been 125 events recorded that involved at least one stranded, bycaught, entangled, or captured dugong since August 2005. These information were often (54%) obtained from personal communications through social media platforms and from online and printed mass media articles (37%). One of the platforms to share information on events related to dugongs has been a WhatsApp Group titled “Whale Stranding Network” since late 2013. The number of reports obtained from the group was, nevertheless, unclear.

The highest number of records of all events were obtained in January and February. The sex of most dugongs during all events were not known, although 8% were identified as females. Many (43%) records of dugongs have no information on age as well, but calves were present in 12% of all events.

Strandings

Locations

Many (58%) events involved stranded dugongs, either dead (43%) or alive (14%). The highest number of stranding events were recorded in Central Sulawesi and West Papua, respectively. Since 2016, both provinces have always been mentioned within the records, contributing at least one stranding event every year.

Time

Stranding events were often recorded in January and February. Since 2016, there has been at least two stranding events recorded during each of those months. The number of stranding events recorded has increased steeply (by 68%) in 2016 and increased again by 23% in 2017.

Sex and Age Group

The sex of most (89%) and the age of many (42%) stranded dugongs were not known. However, there has been one event in which a dugong was found stranded with another that was believed to be its calf.

Source of Information

Stranding events were recorded from various sources, including online and printed mass media articles (43%) and personal communications (46%).

Bycatch and Entanglement

Locations

The highest number of bycatch and entanglement events were recorded in Riau Islands. Since 2010, the province have always been mentioned within the records, contributing at least one bycaught or entanglement event every year.

Time

The number of bycatch and entanglement events recorded increased steeply (by 90%) in 2017.

Sex and Age Group

The sex of most (86%) bycaught and entangled dugongs were not known, while many (40%) dugongs involved were identified as adults. However, there has been one event in which a dugong was found entangled with another that was believed to be its calf.

Source of Information

Almost 60% of bycatch and entanglement events were known from personal communications. However, sometimes (36%) bycatch and entanglement events were also identified from examining the chronology described in online and printed mass media articles.

Live-Capture

Locations

West Papua was not only known as one of the locations where dugong stranding events was highest in number, but also known as where 40% of live-capture or killing of dugong occurred.

Time

Due to the small number of recorded events (n = 10), live-capture or killing of dugong was not observed of having a pattern of month. However, in November 2017, three events were recorded in three different provinces—Bangka Belitung, North Maluku, and West Sumatra.

Sex and Age Group

The sex (90%) and age (70%) of most captured dugongs were not known. However, there has been one event occurred in West Papua in which a female dugong was killed, while its calf was capture before it died of unknown cause.

Source of Information

Almost all events (90%) where a dugong was captured alive or deliberately killed were reported through personal communications.

REMARKS

While it was clear that bycatch or entanglement, and live-capture were the cause of death of many dugongs, most (65%) stranded dugongs were not examined for the cause of death. It is expected that the activities of DSCP Indonesia in raising public awareness on dugong and its conservation issue will bring more awareness on the importance of carcass examination and well-obtained documentations.