



CARIBBEAN CETACEAN SOCIETY



**2023**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**



*Barrouallie - Saint-Vincent*

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## MISSION

*The Caribbean Cetacean Society positions itself as a regional tool and essential support service that coordinates cooperation, research, education, and conservation of cetaceans across the different islands of the Caribbean. We are committed to establishing a framework for sustainable and equitable cooperation among local governments, partner organizations, and local communities to work together in preserving these shared species. By strengthening local capacities, addressing gaps in scientific knowledge, and promoting the creation of marine protected areas, we aim to facilitate an integrated approach to cetacean conservation in the region. Additionally, our investment in youth education aims to raise awareness and prepare future generations to become ambassadors for marine conservation.*

# APPROACH

## **Regional Coordinators and Equitable Implementation**

*Our regional coordinators ensure equitable implementation of our actions, tailored to the needs of each island, thereby fostering harmonious and respectful collaboration.*

## **Regional Databases and Standardized Protocols**

*We have established regional databases and standardized protocols to facilitate cooperation and exchange between the islands, enhancing our ability to effectively manage marine resources.*

## **Development of Local capacity**

*We are developing local skills to protect our blue economy by collaborating with governments and communities, thereby reducing our dependence on external interventions and promoting locally tailored solutions.*

## **Multi-year Regional Scientific Campaigns**

*Our multi-year regional scientific campaigns, open to all and covering all species, promote knowledge and resource sharing among all Caribbean islands. The results of these campaigns provide valuable recommendations for cetacean protection and guide our future actions.*

## **Prioritized Educational Interventions**

*We prioritize educational interventions to educate youth in remote and disadvantaged areas, as well as those facing the most pressing threats. This approach aims to promote equity and maximize the impact of our efforts.*

## **Strengthening and Supporting Marine Protected Areas**

*We are strengthening our support for the creation of marine protected areas to ensure effective protection of cetaceans across all Caribbean islands. These areas provide vital refuge for threatened marine species and contribute to the preservation of our fragile marine ecosystems.*

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

*Dear Members and Partners,*

*The year 2023 has been pivotal for the Caribbean Cetacean Society (CCS). We have experienced rapid exponential growth, transitioning from a handful of passionate people to an increasingly expansive network covering much of the Caribbean. CCS has positioned itself as a center of excellence based in Martinique, serving as a coordinating support hub for cooperation, research, education, and conservation efforts to assist governments and biologists across the different islands in better protecting cetaceans, which represent a vital shared resource.*

*This year, we achieved what has never been done before. Our new offices served as the base for this center of excellence, where we welcomed numerous master's students and trained many young individuals. We are immensely proud of the tangible results we have achieved. Our preliminary research, focusing on the analysis of data on pilot whales, sperm whales, Fraser's dolphins, pantropical spotted dolphins, and the threats facing cetaceans, has provided unprecedented insights. We conducted the first expedition to the ABC Islands, meaning that we now cover all six Dutch islands with the same protocol and the entirety of the Yarari sanctuary.*

*Our multi-year scientific monitoring continues to expand and shows remarkable results. More than ever, we are beginning to understand the ecology of different species in the Caribbean, confirming the urgent need to protect them absolutely. We must continue our work and establish new marine protected areas to ensure their survival.*



*This year, we were able to structure ourselves and form a dynamic team. I am more than proud of everything this team is capable of achieving. We even organized a "sea camp" in the village of Barrouallie in Saint Vincent, where we raised awareness among children by taking them out at sea to observe live cetaceans for the first time, completely changing their perspective on unregulated hunting practices.*

*Cooperation within our network has never been stronger, with increasingly widespread representation in all Caribbean areas. We will continue our mission to give a voice to the least represented islands. This reflects our collective commitment to cetacean protection and our determination to pursue our mission with passion and dedication. CCS's vision is a long-term one, and we are laying each brick one by one to evolve conservation through solid foundations encompassing all territories.*

*I thank you for your continued support, and I am excited to see what the future holds as we continue to move forward together. We are, for sure, on the right path.*

*With gratitude,*

*Jeffrey Bernus  
Director of CCS*

# Our Team

**Jeffrey Bernus**  
Director & co-founder



**Valentin Teillard**  
Project Manager



**Rocio Prieto**  
Project Manager



**Raven Hoflund**  
Regional coordinator  
OECS islands



**Dr. Stacey Mac Donald**  
Regional coordinator  
Dutch islands



**Elsa Morin**  
Administrative and Project  
Development Manager



**Josiane Pain**  
Président



**Laura Pittino**  
Secretary & Co-founder



**Dr. Shane Gero**  
Scientific Advisor



**Tadzio Bervoets**  
Policy Advisor

## Students

- **Louise Simon** (Sperm whales)
- **Lucas Bernier** (Fraser's dolphins)
- **Ludvina Renia** (Pan. spotted dolphins)
- **Rebecca Campos** (Humpback whales)
- **Salome Martin** (Pilot whales)
- **Victor Gauducheau** (Anthropogenic threats)
- **Kevin Leckeia** (Whale watching)
- **Margaux Ledissez**
- **Maxime Barrois**

## Skippers

Carla Arozarena  
Canyon Duncan

Cedric Treiber  
Hamed Chahmi

Jean Luc Sergent  
Kofane Andrieux

# IMPACT



**26**

Scientific Expeditions



**22**

Identified and studied species



**25 563**

Kilometers covered during scientific surveys



**20**

territories monitored



**1500+**

Children educated and inspired

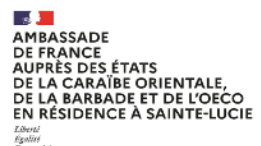


**43**

Educational interventions



# FINANCIAL PARTNERS







722

Cetaceans sightings



17

Reports and publications



12

Students



72

Partner organisations



250+

Participants mobilized and trained



15

Financial partners

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



FDVA  
FONDATION POUR LE  
DEVELOPPEMENT  
DE LA VIE  
ASSOCIATIVE

SIEMIATKOWSKI  
FOUNDATION



BLUE NATURE  
ALLIANCE

akuo  
Foundation



CORAIL CARAIBES

FONDATION  
DE LA MER

# HOPE

In April 2023, a solitary and emaciated whale calf exhibiting unusual behavior was spotted in Martinique, approaching boats and seeking contact. An exemplary cooperation was established between whale watchers, marine stakeholders, and CCS. Faced with this unprecedented event in the Caribbean, CCS convened a group of international experts to assess the situation and formulate a plan of action. The objective was to guide the calf towards an adult companion so it could continue its migration and find nourishment. Unfortunately, despite promising results during an initial attempt to attract the calf, CCS's proposals were limited by partial cooperation from local authorities. Hope was found deceased at the surface 15 days after the initial sighting.

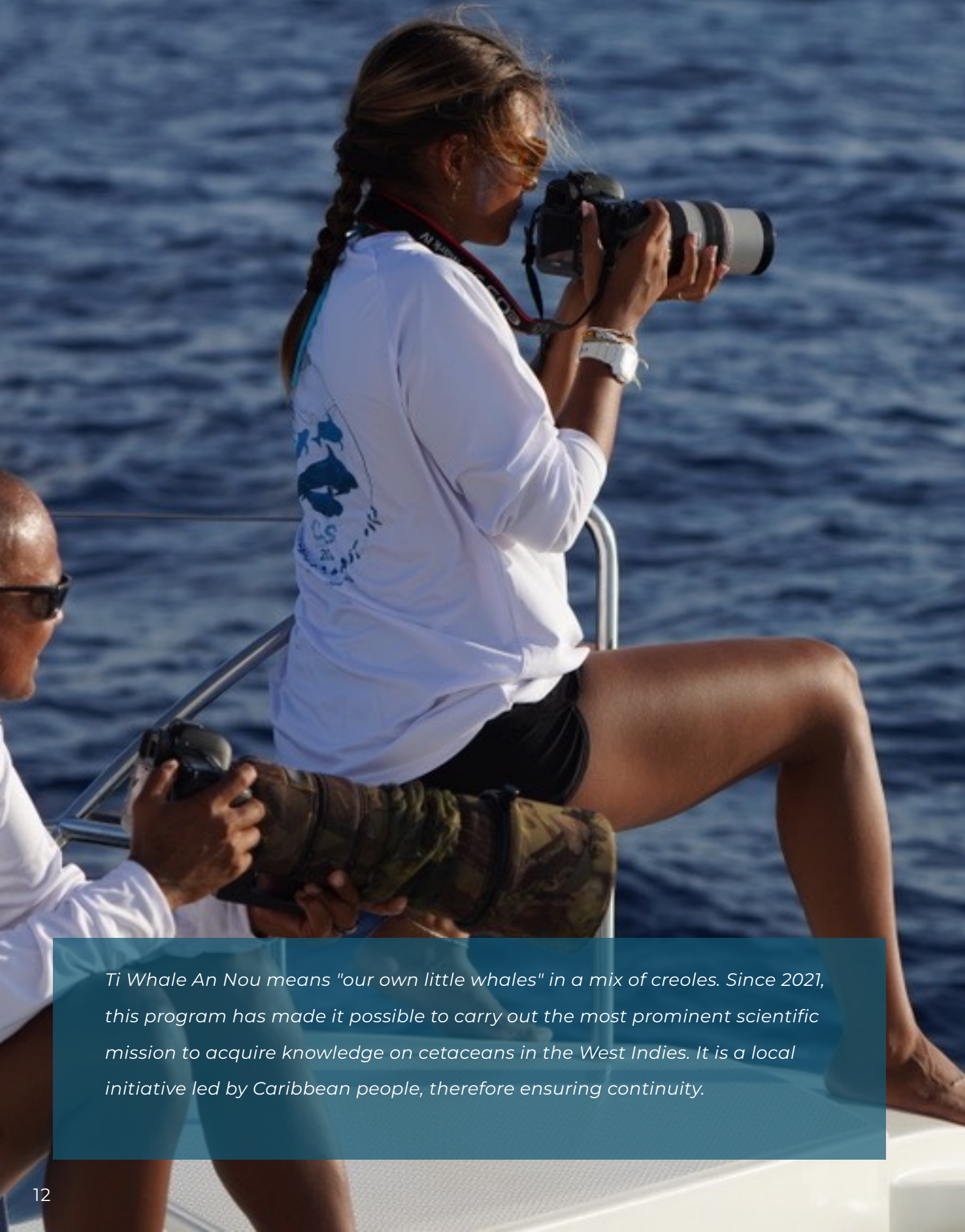




With the growing population of humpback whales, similar events could occur in the future. This situation has provided valuable insights, emphasizing the need to enhance our understanding of distressed animals in addition to the existence of stranding networks. Following several meetings with local authorities, there are plans to more closely integrate the CCS and marine stakeholders into the management of similar events in the future. Additionally, a decision-making framework for action is being developed to establish a more effective response method.

We wish to extend our sincere gratitude to all the scientific experts, whale watchers, sailors, and members of our network for their energy and dedication. Your invaluable support has been crucial throughout this challenging event. Cooperation is essential, especially in protecting species that do not recognize human boundaries. Although the causes of Hope's death could not be determined, we remain committed to continuing our efforts to mitigate all threats in the region.

# TI WHALE AN NOU PROGRAM



*Ti Whale An Nou means "our own little whales" in a mix of creoles. Since 2021, this program has made it possible to carry out the most prominent scientific mission to acquire knowledge on cetaceans in the West Indies. It is a local initiative led by Caribbean people, therefore ensuring continuity.*

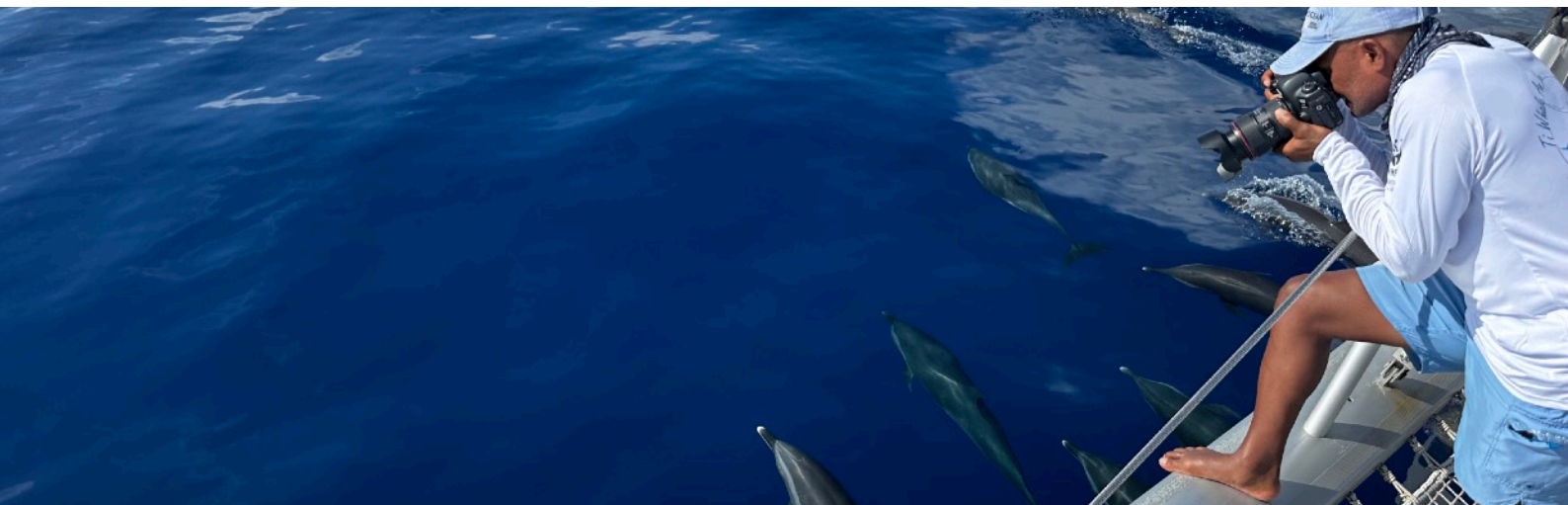
# OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Enhancing knowledge on the diversity, distribution, and relative densities of cetacean species in the Lesser Antilles.
- ▶ Collaborating to estimate population sizes, movements, and distribution of social clans of different cetacean species.
- ▶ Contributing to acoustic database of various cetacean species for improved identification through artificial intelligence systems.
- ▶ Studying the role of environmental variables in the diversity and distribution of cetaceans in the Caribbean.
- ▶ Expanding research to include all islands in the Lesser Antilles and beyond.
- ▶ Providing governments with baseline data to support the implementation of management measures.
- ▶ Establishing a standardized protocol across all territories for long-term monitoring and inter-island comparisons.
- ▶ Strengthening cooperation within the Caribbean network.
- ▶ Developing skills among Caribbean residents
- ▶ Enhancing the attractiveness of our region.
- ▶ Promoting the involvement of youth and women in the field.
- ▶ Educating students and the general public.
- ▶ Fostering the development of the blue economy.
- ▶ Identifying local threats to cetaceans to enable concrete action.
- ▶ Identifying & protecting blue corridors and facilitating the establishment of new marine protected areas.



# COOPERATION

**Cooperation on New Partner Territories:** We have expanded our scope of action by establishing partnerships with new territories, including the British Virgin Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands, the Dominican Republic, Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao. This expansion has bolstered our collaborative network and our capacity to protect cetaceans across the entire region.



**Dissemination of Scientific Results and Training for Sustainable Whale Watching:** In partnership with the fisheries departments of Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and the Embassy of France for the OECS, we have disseminated our latest scientific findings. Additionally, to promote sustainable whale watching on the islands of Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent, we have conducted training sessions. This approach has raised awareness among local stakeholders and promoted practices that align with the sustainable development of the blue economy.





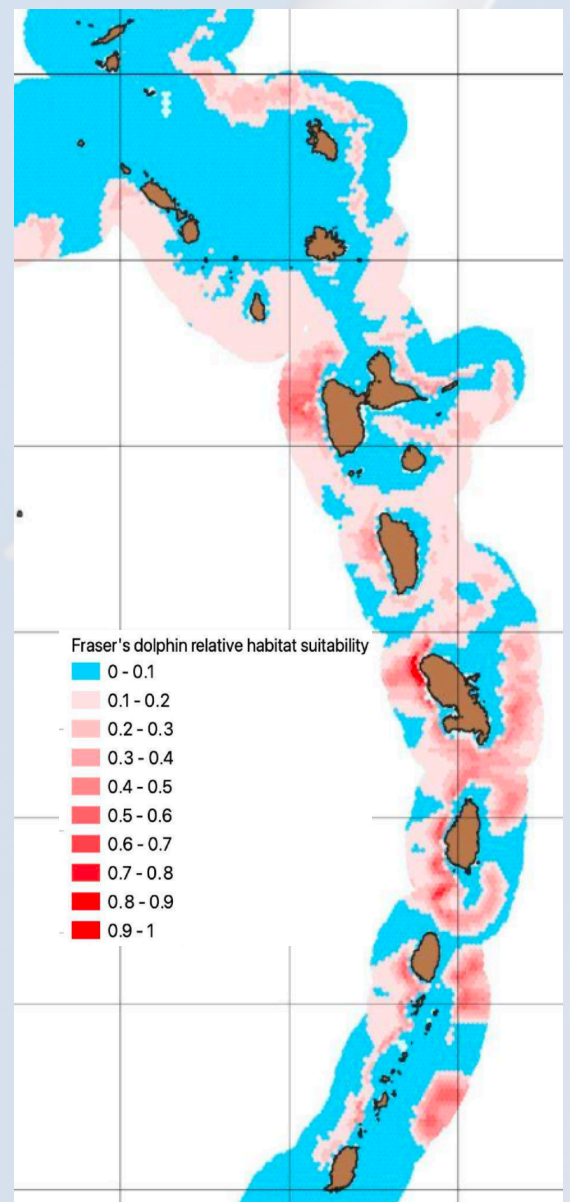
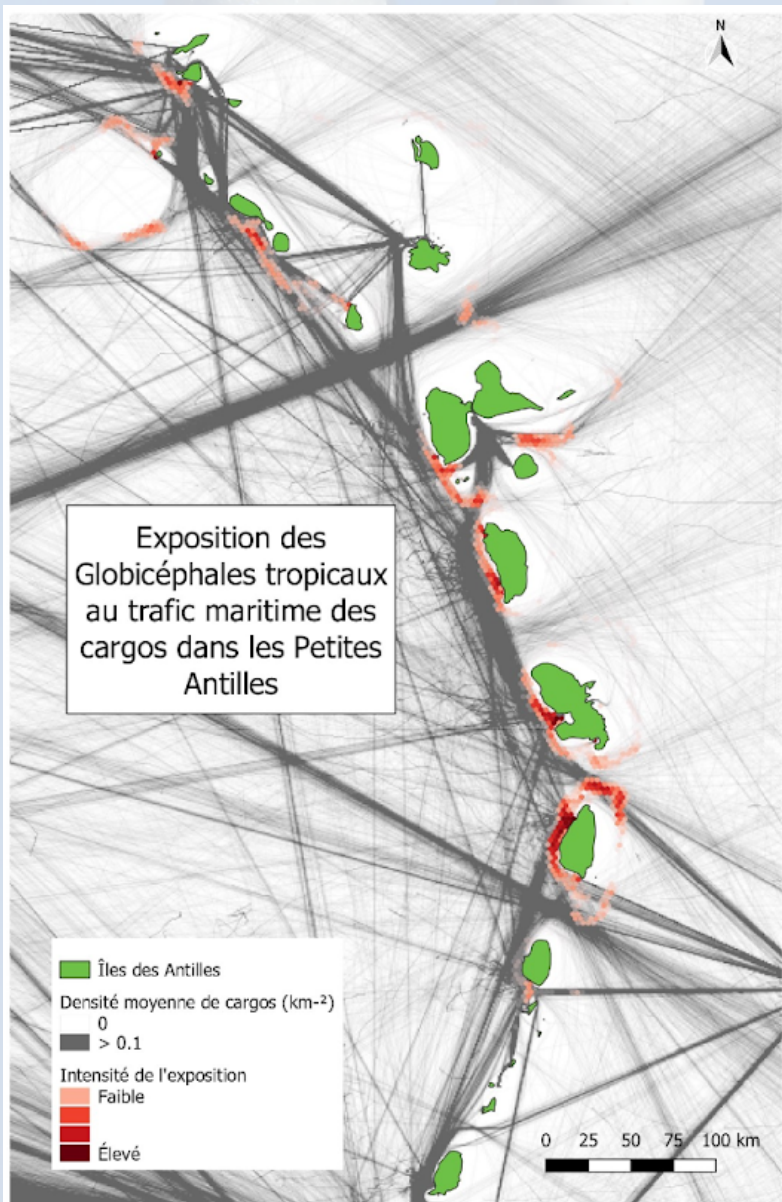
**Participation in International Events:** We have actively represented the region at major international events such as the SPAW COP 12 (Conference of the Parties to the Cartagena Convention), the Humpback Whale Congress, and the European Cetacean Society Conference. This engagement has bolstered our visibility and influence in international initiatives for cetacean conservation.



**Work on Regional Databases:** We have actively worked on compiling regional data, including existing metadata, identified threats, and publications related to cetacean conservation in the region. This effort has helped consolidate our knowledge and provide a solid foundation for our future actions.

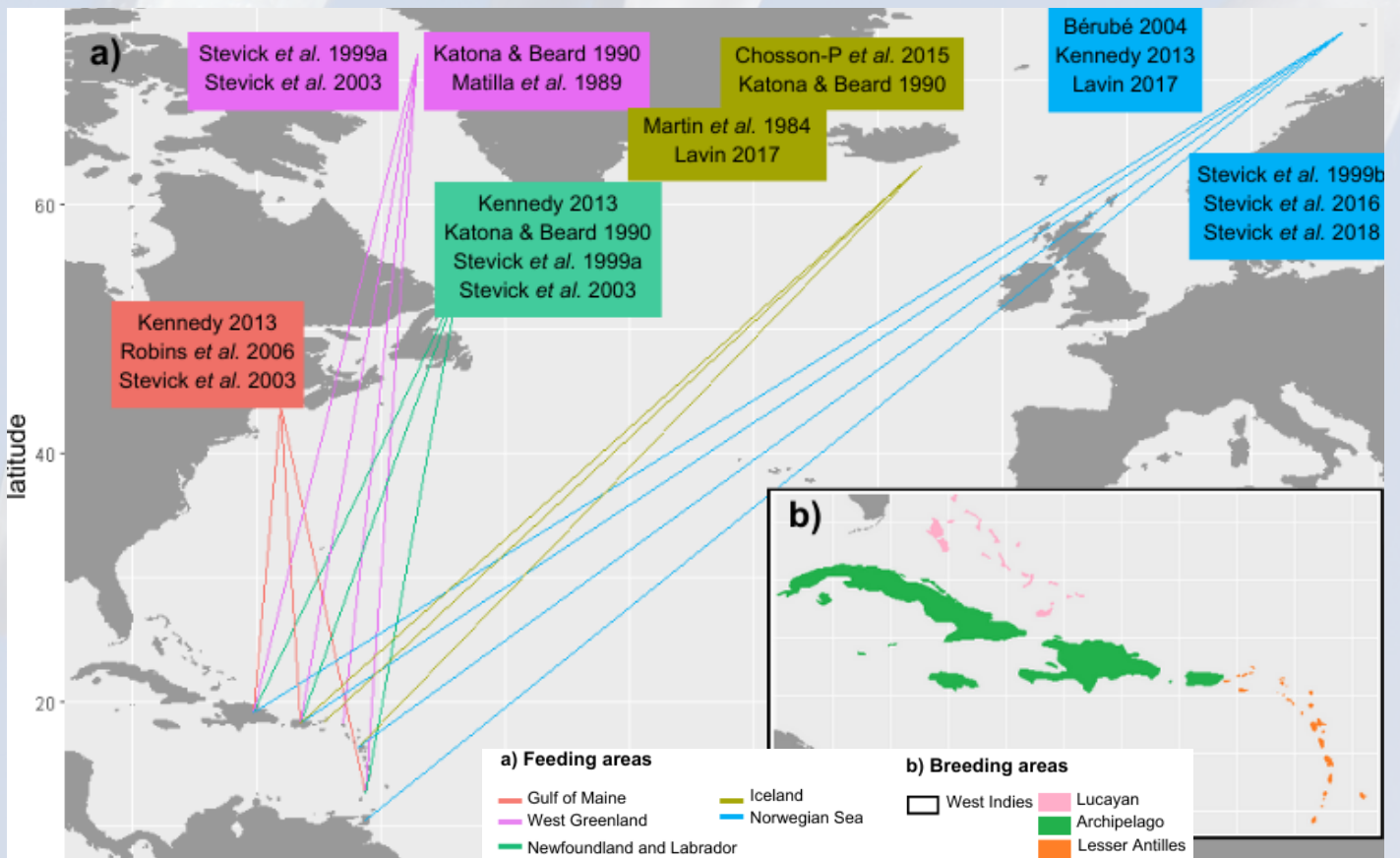
# RESEARCH

Since 2021, the CCS has coordinated 25 scientific expeditions in the Caribbean, studying 22 species of whales and dolphins. These missions have covered a total distance of 25,563 km and resulted in 722 observations. Our protocol has been meticulously tailored to gather crucial information to fill knowledge gaps and address the conservation needs. Since 2023, we have even initiated a seabird monitoring program in partnership with Birds Caribbean. We have implemented a standardized protocol that we have been applying for several years across almost all of the Lesser Antilles. This represents the largest cetacean monitoring effort in the Caribbean.





Through the analysis of our data, we have obtained preliminary information on the distribution and habitat use of sperm whales, humpback whales, pantropical spotted dolphins, Fraser's dolphins, and pilot whales. Studying our numerous photo IDs has enabled us to understand the movements of these species, which is crucial for their protection throughout the Caribbean. We have discovered that some species are resident in specific islands, necessitating localized efforts for their protection, while others migrate between islands, underscoring the importance of cooperation and harmonization of maritime governance for effective conservation. Additionally, a study on scars has provided insights into the anthropogenic threats facing our cetaceans. The continuity of our multi-year monitoring efforts has already yielded unprecedented results, contributing to achieving our long-term conservation goals for tangible and effective protection of cetaceans across the Caribbean territories. All our findings are available on our website in our reports. (<https://www.ccs-ngo.com/reports-publications>)



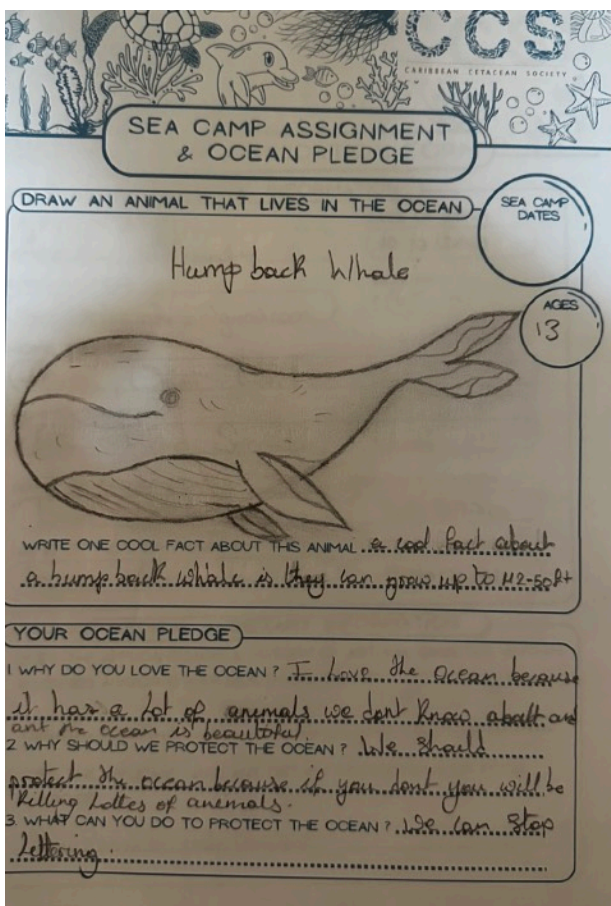
# EDUCATION

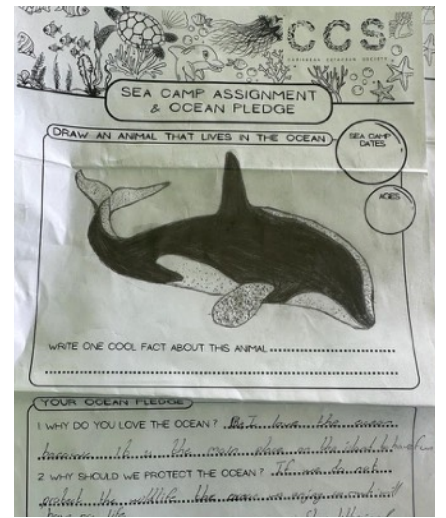
"We protect what we love, and we love what we know." This is why we strive to raise awareness about cetaceans in order to protect them.

## Sea Camps

Every year, the Sea Camps organized by our regional coordinator in the Grenadines have an unparalleled impact. With the logistical support of our partner the local NGO from SVG Ripples to Waves, children from the most remote and inaccessible regions of the Grenadines, as well as from the northernmost village of Saint Vincent, have had the opportunity to experience the unique importance of marine megafauna.

This year, we achieved the impossible by also organizing a Sea Camp in the village of Barroualie in Saint Vincent, the main village still practicing small cetacean hunting in the Caribbean. Children there are accustomed to consuming dolphins. It was a unique and eye-opening experience for them to learn about these species and see them for the first time in their natural marine environment. This experience allows them to directly connect with their surroundings and provides them with the tools to preserve our common marine natural heritage. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our financial partners and all the volunteers without whom this event would not have been possible.






## Classroom Interventions

Thanks to our team in Martinique, numerous classroom interventions have been carried out. Through partnerships with other local associations and during public events, we have been able to disseminate information to a wide audience. Primary, middle, and high school classes in many communities in Martinique have benefited from these quality interventions, especially within the framework of the Art and Sea project where we have trained many teachers for even greater impact!



# CONSERVATION

*The impact of CCS in cetacean conservation across the Caribbean exceeds our expectations. Through effective coordination of our efforts and our long-term commitment to the region, CCS generates a significant wave of action, paving the way for more ambitious initiatives. We've demonstrated the possibility of integrating all islands and fostering genuine cooperation while raising youth awareness about their environment and enhancing local capacities for self-sufficiency. Our approach also involves implementing comprehensive standardized monitoring, providing crucial data for cetacean protection.*



*The outcomes of our efforts are promising and could facilitate the implementation of concrete conservation actions tailored to the Caribbean's realities. Additionally, we are actively involved in developing new regulations to enhance cetacean protection in the region. Our crucial data will also be used to safeguard blue corridors and promote the establishment of new marine protected areas or the improvement of existing ones. Furthermore, we conducted a scar analysis study to better understand the anthropogenic impact on Caribbean cetaceans. We also collaborate with whale watchers and fishermen to mitigate negative interactions with cetaceans.*

*This momentum we've established fosters the engagement of all our partners and strengthens the development of a robust network. We firmly believe in the significance of modest yet cumulative actions that lead to meaningful results. Our two regional coordinators have now become expedition leaders, amplifying CCS's impact in their respective regions and serving as sources of inspiration.*

# FUTURE GOALS



*The year 2024 holds as much promise as 2023, if not more. We are poised to continue our trajectory of exponential growth, extending the reach of CCS far beyond the Lesser Antilles. Our ambitious projects currently in preparation are a testament to our determination to intensify our efforts for cetacean conservation.*

*We are firmly committed to continuing our multi-year monitoring efforts with the Ti Whale An Nou program, which is essential for obtaining crucial information on the diversity, distribution, movements, and abundance of different cetacean species. In parallel, we will continue to strengthen local capacities and conduct new analyses on cetacean ecology. Additionally, we hope to establish new marine protected areas and present our findings to the scientific council of the whaling commission, aiming to have a tangible impact on marine conservation in our region.*

*We intend to renew our expeditions to the ABC islands to initiate a temporal monitoring program throughout the YARARI sanctuary, which will enhance our understanding of local marine ecosystems and strengthen our conservation efforts. Concurrently, in collaboration with the French Embassy in the OECO, we are considering implementing a project aimed at improving cetacean conservation in the islands of Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, and Grenada. Finally, we will persevere in our educational efforts to raise public awareness about the importance of preserving cetaceans and their marine habitats.*



CARIBBEAN CETACEAN SOCIETY

Mèsi an píl !  
Masha Dankí  
Thank you  
Dankjewel  
Gracias  
Mercí

The Caribbean Cetacean Society warmly thanks all its partners, volunteers, members, donors, and everyone who has helped us protect the cetaceans of the Caribbean.



All your donations enable us to carry out our projects successfully. Discover how you can get involved with us by scanning the QR code or by contacting us.



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