



# MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

21 August 2017

Ms. Angela Somma, Chief  
Endangered Species Conservation Division  
Office of Protected Resources  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway, Room 13535  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

ATTN: Ron Dean

Dear Ms. Somma:

The Marine Mammal Commission (the Commission) has reviewed the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) request for information regarding the endangered baiji/Chinese river dolphin/Yangtze River dolphin (*Lipotes vexillifer*) and endangered Saimaa subspecies of ringed seal (*Phoca hispida saimensis*)<sup>1</sup> for use in its five-year review of their respective statuses under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended (82 Fed. Reg. 28304). The announcement requests information that has become available since the previous status review for baiji/Chinese river dolphin/Yangtze River dolphin in February 2012 and Saimaa ringed seal in December 2010.

With respect to the baiji, the Commission is not aware of any evidence that might suggest a change to the statement on abundance and population trends in the previous 2012 five-year review which read:

“The last photographic supported sighting was in 2002 and the last confirmed stranding was in 2001 (Turvey et al. 2007). In November and December of 2006, a visual and acoustic survey failed to locate a single baiji leading to conclusions that the baiji is likely extinct (Turvey 2008; Turvey et al. 2007) [Citations in original]. A few sightings have been reported since the 2006 range-wide survey, but these reports have not been verified.”

With respect to the Saimaa ringed seal, the Commission notes the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List assessments for all pinnipeds were updated in 2016. The assessment of the Saimaa seal provided an up-to-date analysis of the range, population, habitat and ecology, use and trade, threats, and conservation actions with regard to this subspecies, concluding that it is endangered under the IUCN Red List criteria (Sipila 2016). That assessment included a comprehensive bibliography of relevant publications on the subspecies. We note one additional relevant recent publication (Auttila et. al. 2016).

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<sup>1</sup> We note the Society for Marine Mammalogy Committee on Taxonomy periodically updates the taxonomy and nomenclature of marine mammal species and subspecies. On the current list, this species and the four subspecies are included in the genus *Pusa* rather than *Phoca*.

I hope this information will be helpful. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rebecca J. Lent". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Rebecca J. Lent, Ph.D.,  
Executive Director

## References

- Auttila, M., Kurkilahti, M., Niemi, M., Levänen, R., Sipilä, T., Isomursu, M., Koskela, J. and Kunnasranta, M., 2016. Morphometrics, body condition, and growth of the ringed seal (*Pusa hispida saimensis*) in Lake Saimaa: Implications for conservation. *Marine Mammal Science*, 32(1), pp.252-267.
- Sipila, T. 2016. *Pusa hispida ssp. saimensis*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2016: e.T41675A66991678. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2016-1.RLTS.T41675A66991678.en>