

China dolphin extinction

1 The long-threatened Yangtze river dolphin in China is probably extinct, according to an international team of researchers. They say this marks the first whale or dolphin to be wiped out because of human activity. This report from Quentin Sommerville:



2 **There is every likelihood** that the Yangtze river dolphin **is extinct**, according to the Zoological Society of London. The society participated in **an international survey** which examined over 1,500 kilometres of the river last year and **failed to find a single** baiji dolphin. Back in the late 1990s a similar survey found thirteen live dolphins. In the 1950s their population numbered in the thousands.

3 China's **rapid modernisation** is blamed for the dolphin's **demise**. **Industrial pollution**, heavy river traffic and the construction of the Three Gorges dam are thought to have killed many.

4 However, the World Conservation Union says that an animal can only be **declared** extinct if it hasn't been found **in the wild** for fifty years. The last **confirmed sighting** of the baiji dolphin was five years ago, although there have been unconfirmed sightings since then.

5 But even if a number of the dolphins have survived, they and other freshwater animals, like the Yangtze finless porpoise, are in serious danger of disappearing forever.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2007/08/070808_china_dolphin.shtml

Quentin Sommerville, BBC News, Beijing
08 August, 2007

Vocabulary

There is every likelihood

it is expected or very likely

is extinct

doesn't exist anymore, has died out

an international survey

a review, study or report written by people from different countries

failed to find a single

didn't find even one

rapid modernisation

quickly becoming modern and industrialised

demise

end, extinction

Industrial pollution

fumes and dirt from factories

declared

said by an official body (here, the World Conservation Union)

in the wild

in the natural setting for an animal (not in a zoo or someone's house as a pet)

confirmed sighting

more than one person said that they had seen a particular thing (here, a dolphin)

Questions

- 1 What is this document?
- 2 What is it about?
- 3 What is the problem?
- 4 What are the causes of this problem?
- 5 What do you think should be done to solve this problem or to avoid similar situations in the future?