



2024

IMPACT REPORT

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Photo credit: Prince Kuko via AMCO

INTRODUCING OUR NEW IDENTITY



As we continue to grow, so does our vision. Nearly ten years ago, our focus was primarily on the conservation of aquatic mammals. However, over the years, we've come to realise that making a meaningful impact requires a more holistic, ecosystem approach — one that gives equal attention to all marine species.

That's why the African Marine Mammal Conservation Organisation (AMMCO) is now evolving into the African Marine Conservation Organisation (AMCO).

We've dropped the "Mammal," not because we value marine mammals any less, but because their survival is closely linked to the health of the entire marine ecosystem. This small change, from AMMCO to AMCO — marks a big shift in our conservation journey.

Don't get us wrong, we're not abandoning our original mission. We're expanding it. Join us as we embark on this exciting new chapter in marine conservation

OUR VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVE



vision

Making the coastal and aquatic environment of Africa a threat-free home for aquatic wildlife, taking into account the best interest of the local people.



Mission

AMCO's mission is to contribute to the protection of the aquatic wildlife and their habitats in Central Africa developing synergies to improve scientific knowledge, livelihoods fishing communities and law enforcement

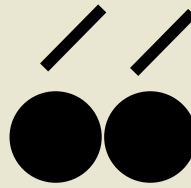


Objective for 2025-2029

By 2029, the major threats to the aquatic wildlife and their habitats are reduced while improving the living conditions of local communities in Cameroon.

WELCOME TO AMCO IMPACT REPORT

Dr. Aristide Takoukam Kamla, Founder/President



All these achievements are the result of shared commitment, from our staff, our supporters, our partners, and the many communities across Africa who believe in the value of conservation. As we look ahead, we do so with renewed energy and deep optimism. The ocean still holds many challenges, but also so much hope, and together, we'll continue working to protect it.

It brings me great joy to share the incredible journey we've taken over the past year. 2024 has been nothing short of transformative, a year of bold steps forward, deep reflection, and meaningful change in how we approach marine conservation in Africa.

Right from the start, you'll notice something new: we are no longer the African Marine Mammal Conservation Organisation (AM-MCO), but the African Marine Conservation Organisation (AMCO). This change does not mean our commitment to marine mammals has lessened. Instead, it reflects a growing understanding that the survival of these species depends on the health of the entire aquatic ecosystem. This new identity signals a broader, more inclusive approach to protecting all marine life and the environments they call home.

Throughout the year, we've seen the real power of collaboration, innovation, and community-led action. From fighting illegal fishing to supporting the next generation of conservation leaders, our work has been grounded in partnership and purpose.

One of the major challenges we've taken on is Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in Cameroon. It's a complex and persistent issue, but thanks to strong cooperation with the Cameroonian government, we've made meaningful progress. A highlight was the approval of a new fisheries and aquaculture law in December 2024, which brought Cameroon's legislation in line with international standards and provided us with stronger tools to tackle IUU fishing.

Our SIREN Citizen Science Programme continued to thrive. This initiative empowers local fishers to be at the heart of conservation by collecting vital data. In 2024 alone, we recorded an astonishing 10,244 new observations in Cameroon using the SIREN app. That brings the total to 31,914 observations, up from around 20,000 the previous year. Even more exciting, the network now spans 10 African countries, with Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe joining us in 2024.

Meanwhile, our Marine Biodiversity Programme helped close critical knowledge gaps and build local expertise. We identified a major manatee feeding site in the Nkam Valley, covering over 600 hectares, and dismantled 23 illegal manatee traps, reducing the number found in migration corridors by an impressive 85%. Our monitoring efforts also logged 309 cetacean sightings across 11 species, all recorded through the SIREN app.

A particularly proud moment was hosting the first-ever West African Dive Lab, in collaboration with our partners at NEWF (Nature, Environment, and Wildlife Filmmakers). We realised many marine scientists in West Africa had never actually experienced the ocean they study. So, we brought together passionate scientists and storytellers from Cameroon, Senegal, and Ghana, who trained and qualified as open-water divers in Sodwana Bay, South Africa. This marks the start of building a strong, skilled community of ocean advocates across West and Central Africa.

In another first, we conducted Cameroon's first scientific dive, revealing extraordinary

marine life, some species previously unknown to exist in our waters.

And what a year for our signature events! The inaugural Street Manatee event in Dizangue was an overwhelming success, bringing together around 3,000 participants. Our fourth annual Street Whale Festival welcomed participants from 20 different countries across four continents, laying vital groundwork for the establishment of a sub-regional network for Marine Protected Areas in Central Africa.

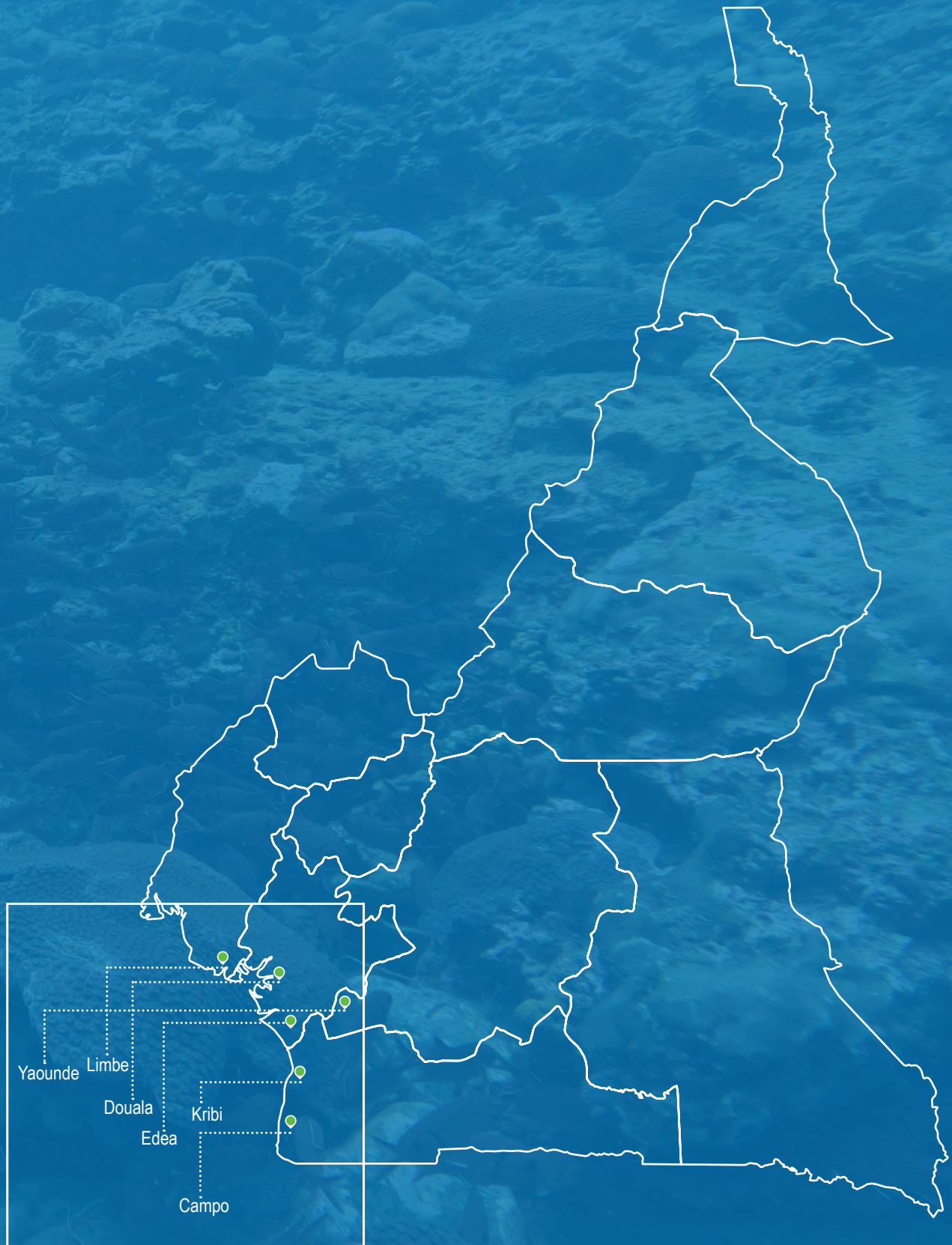
On a personal note, 2024 was a deeply humbling year. I was honoured to [receive](#) the Whitley Award in recognition of our work. But this award belongs not just to me; it reflects the tireless efforts of the entire AMCO team, our partners, and the communities that walk this path with us. This year also marked a turning point for our team's capacity: we began dive training for our staff, giving us the tools to monitor and protect marine life more directly and effectively.

All these achievements are the result of shared commitment, from our staff, our supporters, our partners, and the many communities across Africa who believe in the value of conservation. As we look ahead, we do so with renewed energy and deep optimism. The ocean and wetlands still hold many challenges, but also so much hope—and together, we'll continue working to protect them.

Thank you for being part of this journey.
With sincere appreciation,

Aristide Takoukam Kamla

WHERE WE WORK



AMCO OVER THE YEARS



11 years
of existence



11 Ongoing
funded projects



6 operational
sites



Fisheries Law
Amended with Govern-
ment Collaboration



3 Ministries,
6 Partner
Universities



1 Web and Mobile
Application
(Siren Network)



31,914
observations
reported through the
Siren Network.



150+ Marine turtles
rescued thanks to the
Siren network



11 countries
using the Siren App



Over 200 km
of beaches patrolled in
search of turtle nests and
stranded animals



50+ university
students mentored



128
Missions at sea



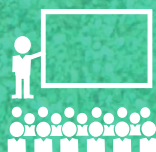
150,000+ people,
including students,
reached through
environmental education



+28,000
local residents
supported



50+
partner researchers
around the world



4 editions
of Street Whale &
1 edition
of Street Manatee
organised



4 alerts
of fishing vessels entering
unauthorised zones



8 Scientific
Publications

Take a Pause...

Celebrating Our Conservation Hero

Before joining our Siren Citizen Science Network, Pa Mensah had little concern for sea turtles, he used to catch them, collect their eggs, and either sell or consume them. But everything changed once he joined the network. He became his village's leading sea turtle advocate, helping to save over 40 turtles and more than 500 eggs before his passing in 2023.

Today, thanks to Pa Mensah's lasting influence, fishers in his community of Batoke, Cameroon, now safely release any sea turtles they accidentally catch back into the sea.

Though Pa Mensah is no longer with us, his legacy lives on through his son, Prince Kuko. Kuko grew up helping his father in fishing and once saw sea turtles only as a resource. Now, he leads conservation efforts: educating fishers and ensuring stranded or caught turtles are returned to the sea.

Last year, we supported Kuko's scuba training. He's not just a certified scuba diver, he's now a dive master, sharing his skills with his community and also helping our underwater research efforts, carrying forward his father's legacy.



Pa Mensah sits before a rescued sea turtle moments before releasing it back into the ocean.

Photo credit:
Pa Mensah's Family



Photo credit: NEWF



I was just a fisher man
but now, I am a dive
master

Prince Kuko, after completing
his dive master training in South Africa



I remember one day a sea turtle came right up to his house and knocked down his TV antenna. In the past, Pa Mensah would have caught it and eaten it with his family—but instead, he released the turtle back into the sea, filmed the moment, and happily shared it with us. Through SIREN, Pa Mensah became a true champion for sea turtle conservation. His passing has left us with a deep emptiness

Dr. Aristide Takaukam Kamla,
Founder/President, AMCO

A. Impact by Program/Initiative

1 Tackling IUU Fishing in Cameroon: Steering Towards Sustainable Seas



Photo credit: Shutterstock

In January 2023, the European Commission issued Cameroon a red card due to the country's non-cooperation in combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, effectively banning Cameroon's fishery products from EU markets. Before this ban, foreign fishing vessels notorious for IUU fishing across the world's oceans were registered under Cameroon's flag. Between 2019 and 2022, for example, the number of fishing vessels flying Cameroon's flag rose from 14 to 129, without a corresponding increase in resources to monitor their activities.

Additionally, Cameroon's waters became a theatre of conflict between artisanal and industrial fishers. Cameroon's fishing laws stipulate that industrial fishers should operate from a depth of 9.26 km (roughly 5 nautical miles), while artisanal fishers are supposed to fish within 9.26 km from the shore. However, this regulation is often violated by industrial fishing vessels that encroach on the shore-

line, damaging the fishing gear of artisanal fisherfolk.

For this reason, we partnered with the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) and Global Fishing Watch in June 2022 to launch a project to combat IUU fishing, supported by Oceans 5 in collaboration with the government of Cameroon. The project aims to bolster the Cameroonian government's efforts to enhance fishery management and combat IUU fishing. It also strives to significantly improve Cameroon's capabilities in the fight against IUU fishing through better fisheries governance, legal frameworks, and control systems.

Since the launch of this project, we have made significant strides towards eradicating IUU fishing from Cameroon's waters. One factor that has allowed IUU fishing to flourish in Cameroon is the outdated fishing legislation, which actors in the fisheries sector have exploited. Not only did it fail to conform

to international fisheries regulations, but it was also lumped together with Cameroon's forestry law, which was enacted in 1994. We collaborated with the government of Cameroon to draft a new fisheries and aquaculture law that aligns with international regulations. The law (Law No. 2024/019 of December 23, 2024) was approved by Cameroon's parliament in December 2024 and will, among other things, strengthen Cameroon's fight against IUU fishing.



The new law is a game changer

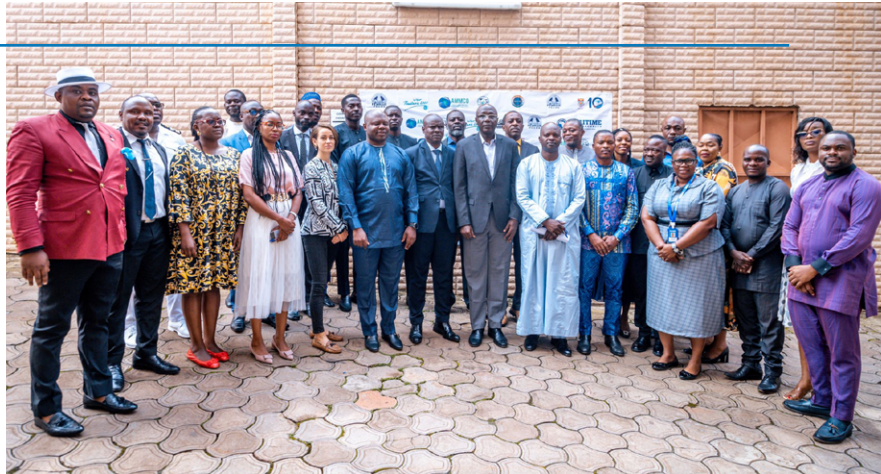
Minister of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries (MINEPIA),
Dr Taïga

Additionally, thanks to our collaboration with Cameroon's Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries

and Animal Industries (MINEPIA), the list of fishing vessels authorised to carry out fishing activities in Cameroon's waters was published for the second consecutive year, ensuring transparency and accountability in the fishery sector. This is the first time this has happened in history.

In collaboration with the Centre for Maritime Law and Security (CEMLAWS) in Ghana, we organised a workshop to raise awareness among media practitioners, civil society organisations (CSOs), and community actors about the destabilising impacts and activities of foreign malign actors in Cameroon's waters. Following the workshop, two journalists who attended the training received financial support to produce media reports on this critical issue, which were published in local media.

Looking ahead, project partners will continue to support the adoption of the implementing decree. Ongoing dialogue between Cameroon and the EU will be facilitated to enhance cooperation and communication in resolving the “red card” issue. AMCO will assist MINEPIA in developing a national fishery management plan, while the implementation of a programme to generalise IMO numbers is already underway. Additionally, AMCO and EJF will support MINEPIA in drafting application texts, including ministerial orders and decisions. Furthermore, AMCO will collaborate with the Media for Fish and Animal Resources (MEFAR) to ensure effective communication on IUU fishing and related issues



Photos

Top: Group photo during workshop to engage stakeholders and policymakers on the implications of foreign industrial fishing vessel governance in the Republic of Cameroon . Credit: AMCO

Middle: Group photo of the participants of the workshop to raise awareness among media practitioners, civil society organisations (CSOs), and community actors about the destabilising impacts and activities of foreign malign actors in Cameroon's waters. Credit: AMCO

Bottom: Group photo after the signing of MoU between AMCO and Media for Fish and Animal Resources (Mefar) to enhance efforts in combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing through media reporting.



I hope the new law will be effectively enforced to prevent industrial fishing vessels from encroaching on our fishing grounds

Alfred, an artisanal fisherman in Limbe, Cameroon, reacts to the new fisheries and aquaculture law. Credit: Ashunganya NN Precious, via AMCO

2

Siren Citizen Science:

A Mobile App and a Network of Fishers for Marine Conservation



Photo Credit: Anthony Ochieng

When the idea of the SIREN App came to us, our main aim was to put local fishers who share habitats and resources with marine creatures at the centre of our activities and give them a voice. Since 2015, when we established this important citizen science tool, local fishers across Cameroon and in other countries where SIREN is being used have not only played a leading role in data collection by recording sightings but have also been at the heart of our conservation efforts.

In 2024, we made significant strides with the SIREN App, not only in Cameroon but across Africa, with the support of the National Geographic Society. The 2024 Street Whale Festival provided another opportunity to bring together fishermen from Cameroon and other African countries who have been central to the success of the SIREN Citizen Science Programme, allowing them to share their experiences and achievements with the app.

In Cameroon, we documented a total of 10,244 observations with the SIREN App, helping us to make key scientific and conservation decisions for the long-term conservation of Cameroon's marine biodiversity. These include a diversity of

fish species (more than 6,000 observations), as well as rays (1,030), sharks (304), marine turtles, cetaceans (whales and dolphins), and the African manatee. By the end of 2024, the SIREN database had accumulated 31,914 observations, up from about 20,000 in 2023.

The network has expanded to 10 countries in Africa. Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe joined our Citizen Science Programme in 2024. We trained our partners in these two countries on how to effectively deploy the SIREN App for critical data collection to support marine conservation efforts. In São Tomé and Príncipe, we collaborated with Over the Swell, a non-profit organisation dedicated to ocean protection, training them to use the app for reporting whale shark sightings as part of their ongoing Mission William project. Thanks to the data collected with the app, eight whale shark concentration areas have been identified and are now protected. The tool also enables them to monitor observations of coastal, artisanal, and semi-industrial fisheries.

In Gabon, we co-organised training sessions for local organisations on how to utilise the SIREN App in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). A total of 15 organisations were trained, and they are now using the app to

enhance their conservation efforts in collaboration with local communities. Meanwhile, WCS is using the app to collect data for its marine turtle, shark, and ray programmes, with plans to eventually expand to include dolphin sightings. Twenty-nine observations of rays, sharks, and marine mammals were made by the conservation organisation using the SIREN App in 2024. The tool is also used to create participatory scientific maps, contributing to better management of Gabon's marine ecosystems.

In the Keta Ramsar protected area in Ghana, 204 observations were recorded in 2024 with the SIREN App by our partner Keta Ramsar Centre, with a strong presence of green turtles. Night patrols organised by Keta Ramsar Centre helped protect turtle eggs and monitor predators. The SIREN App also recorded successes in the Benin Republic, with data collected through the app deployed to effectively conserve sharks and rays. The monitoring of marine species in Benin extends over 125 km of coastline with the participation of four scientists.

In Senegal, the Directorate of Community Protected Areas and the AGIRE network used SIREN for the integrated management of natural resources in Joal-Fadiouth and other marine protected areas in the country. Thanks to this tool, a sick turtle was

found and treated, and the monitoring of tagged turtles improved. In addition, during patrols, shells of poached turtles were discovered, highlighting the threats to these species.

Over in Guinea-Bissau, the Instituto da Biodiversidade e das Áreas Protegidas (IBAP) was able to collect data on marine turtle nesting on the islands of Orango and Poilão, areas where monitoring of marine turtle nesting was poorly documented in the past.

Finally, in Congo-Brazzaville, Renatura Congo recorded 161 observations in 2024, including 29 humpback dolphins. The organisation plans to increase community collection and involve new actors, such as surfers, to enrich databases and raise awareness of the protection of marine species.

SIREN continued to showcase its impact as a grassroots tool for marine conservation. At the Society for Marine Mammalogy Conference in Australia, AMCO proudly participated in the “Science on a Shoestring” panel, sharing how SIREN enables local fishers and communities to collect vital data on marine megafauna despite limited resources. The initiative received international recognition as it was selected for the final round of the Science on a Shoestring Award, celebrating innovative, low-cost approaches to marine science.

Beyond Africa, SIREN’s reach expanded to the Middle East, where data collected through the app contributed to Sir Bu Nair Island (UAE) being added to the IUCN Green List—a testament to the power of community-based science in driving global conservation achievements.

Building on our successes in 2024, we plan to continue expanding this important scientific and conservation tool in other countries in Africa (such as Nigeria) and also outside the continent (such as Haiti). We also plan to include maritime companies to participate in the collection of critical data with this tool. More importantly, in 2025, we are planning to work with various government officials and policymakers in Cameroon and across the continent to present SIREN and demonstrate how it could be used to inform decision-making.

Siren in Africa



Thanks to Siren,
fishers are no
longer considered
as a problem, but
are now part of the
solution

Cedrick Fogwan, AMCO's
Programme Manager



Photos

Top right: Cedrick Fogwan, AMCO's Programme Manager, receiving the Shoestring Award in Perth, Australia. Credit: AMCO

Middle right: Siren workshop held during the Street Whale Festival. Credit: Anthony Ochieng

Bottom right: A selection of species recorded using the Siren App. Credit: AMCO

3

Sharks and Rays initiative in 2024: a new dawn for fins



Our efforts to conserve sharks and rays in Cameroon, a largely neglected area, yielded positive results in 2024. With support from the Save Our Seas Foundation and the National Geographic Society, we engaged local fishers in sustainable practices in Kribi, one of Cameroon's coastal towns. [This initiative](#) includes a live-release program to train fishers to safely return threatened species, such as the scalloped hammerhead and blackchin guitarfish, to the ocean.

In collaboration with the Stop Pollution Association (ASPOL), we conducted an environmental education campaign focused on sharks and rays in Kribi. This

initiative successfully sensitized approximately 400 students to the critical threats facing these species.

Additionally, we conducted a fish market survey across three communities in Kribi to understand the seasonality of shark and ray landings. So far, over 2,000 individual specimens have been recorded, which is helping us tailor the conservation needs of these species.

We also organized and hosted an Elasmobranch workshop on policy improvements and CITES implementation in Cameroon during the 4th edition of the Street Whale Festival in Kribi. The workshop focused on discussing the challenges and progress in conserving sharks and rays in West and Central Africa.

At the sub-regional level, we developed the Regional Action Plan for the West & Central Africa Elasmobranch Coalition. Our focus in 2025 would be to raise funds to support the implementation of this action plan.

In-depth online interviews were conducted with coalition members from ten countries in the region to address gaps in research, policy, fisheries, and trade. The data collected through these interviews will be presented in two papers: one providing a review of the current policy context in West and Central Africa, and the other serving as a roadmap to assess policy feasibility in the region. This will guide us in identifying where and how legislation can be effectively enforced, starting with the countries that are ready and closest to implementation.



Photos

Top left: AMCO's Sharks and Rays Program Manager, Ghofrane Labyedh conducting market survey on the seasonality of sharks and rays at the Mboa manga fish market, Kribi, Cameroon. Credit: Hugues Karismatik/AMCO

Middle left: AMCO's Sharks and Rays Program Manager, Ghofrane Labyedh training fishers on life release of rays. Credit: Hugues Karismatik/AMCO

Bottom left: Presentation during Elasmobranch workshop on policy improvements and CITES implementation in Cameroon during the Street Whale Festival. Credit: AMCO

Top right: Photos of Blackchin Guitarfish at the Mboa Manga fish market in Kribi, Cameroon. Credit: AMCO

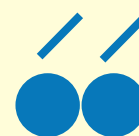
Zoom

Blackchin Guitarfish



We're highlighting the charismatic blackchin guitarfish, a ray species classified as critically endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Despite this classification, this species of ray still lack legal protection in Cameroon.

Through our Siren App, we are conducting surveys at various fish markets to better understand their seasonality. In addition to sensitizing fishermen across Cameroon's coastal areas about the dangers of over-exploitation, we are actively working to secure legal protection for this ray species.



...we are actively
working to secure
legal protection for
this ray species.

4

Our Marine and Coastal Protection Program:

walking along with local communities



Releasing a stranded sea turtle back into the ocean.
Photo credit: AMCO

The goal of this programme is to support the health and biodiversity of Cameroon's marine and coastal environments by promoting conservation and sustainable practices that involve local communities and fishers.

In 2016, we identified a problem along Cameroon's northern coast in localities such as Batoke and Bakingili—critical nesting grounds for sea turtles. Since then, we have launched our annual turtle monitoring programme. We record an average of 3 to 4 nestings per season, primarily of Olive Ridley and Leatherback turtles. However, to date, we have not recorded any successful hatchings, although the sites have previously witnessed hatchling emergence. Current literature offers little insight into the nesting conditions of these beaches, particularly the incubation environment of marine turtle eggs.

To address this scientific gap, our 2024 marine turtle programme focused on monitoring the physicochemical conditions at nest surface and depth (during incubation), conducting morning surveys for nesting traces (October to March), using tide data to track water levels, and calculating average tidal ranges. Findings indicate that climate change-related factors: rising temperatures, sea-level rise and erosion (notably in Batoke with its steep slopes) negatively affect the likelihood of successful hatching.



Measuring surface parameter in a turtle nest: pH, temperature, soil moisture, and sunlight intensity.
Photo credit: AMCO

In response, we are exploring two solutions for implementation in 2025: the establishment of a laboratory-based egg incubation system and the relocation of eggs to less exposed areas to increase hatch success.

Still on the northern coast, we began monitoring water transparency in coastal localities including Down Beach, Tiko, Mabeta, Idenau, Enyengue, and Bamusso. This effort forms part of our long-term biodiversity assessment and a broader plan to establish a national marine park in these areas. Monitoring was conducted in a participatory manner, with local fishers taking the lead. We observed low water visibility across study sites, largely due to human activities (fishing and pollution) and natural factors such as high tides and inland sediment deposition. Rainy seasons (March to August) also correlate with reduced water clarity.

At Lake Ossa, we continued implementing our project to improve management of the Lake Ossa Wildlife Reserve. Working closely with local communities and stakeholders, we achieved the following key outcomes:

- A reserve management plan was initiated through collaborative workshops with government agencies and local partners.
- Eco-guards and AMCO staff received training in professional tree-climbing to install a smart sensor system (The Guardian), which enables real-time surveillance and alerts the conservation service in cases of deforestation or illegal activity.
- Awareness campaigns in six local communities helped build public support for biodiversity conservation.
- Sustainable livelihood initiatives were introduced in Dizangue, including the creation of a community fish farm to alleviate fishing pressure on the lake while providing alternative income sources.
- Over 50 community members received hands-on training in sustainable natural resource management, covering areas such as ecotourism, eco-friendly charcoal production, above-ground fish farming, and ichthy-

ological surveys. These initiatives have helped strengthen local capacity and diversify household income sources.

- Nearly 4,000 fingerlings were stocked in fish tanks, yielding 200 kg of fish—contributing to local food security and household income.
- Since 2023, approximately 249 tonnes of *Salvinia molesta* have been manually removed from the lake's shores, corridors, and islands. This habitat restoration, carried out with local community involvement, enabled the production of around 19 tonnes of ecological charcoal. The charcoal serves both domestic and commercial purposes, supporting a sustainable, circular economy while reducing dependence on traditional wood fuel.



I have learnt a lot from this training, and it has motivated me to draft a business plan to launch my own fish farming business.

Mama Monique, one of the trainees in the fish farming programme, shared her enthusiasm and future plans inspired by the training

Installation of smart sensor system to monitor illegal activities on Lake Ossa.
Photo credit: AMCO

Community fish farm in Dizangue.
Photo credit: Shuimo Trust via AMCO

Installing a temperature logger inside the nest to track conditions during egg incubation. Credit: AMCO

Production of ecological charcoal from *Salvinia* weed.
Photo credit: AMCO

In the Manyange Na Elombo-Campo Marine National Park, we successfully concluded the project “Évaluation des valeurs, pressions et menaces dans le Parc Marin Manyange Na Elombo-Campo pour planifier une gestion adaptée de sa biodiversité”, in partnership with Tube Awu and the park's conservation service.

Established in July 2021, the Manyange Na Elombo-Campo Marine National Park is Cameroon's first marine protected area, covering 110,300 hectares. Its objectives include preserving biodiversity, restricting industrial fishing, protecting aquatic megafauna, supporting sustainable artisanal fisheries, improving community livelihoods, and fostering ecotourism. Despite these ambitions, significant knowledge gaps hinder effective conservation planning.

Our project aimed to build a participatory biological data system involving local stakeholders to identify key biodiversity values, threats, and opportunities for improved management.

By the project's end:

- Three endangered animal groups were identified: cetaceans (humpback whales and dolphins), sea turtles (green and olive turtles), and elasmobranchs (sharks and rays).
- Four habitat types were identified: seagrass beds, coral reefs, rocky bottoms, and sandy substrates.
- Major threats and pressures included IUU (illegal, unreported, and unregulated) fishing and marine pollution from boat traffic and oil spills.
- Over 1,000 fishers, 50 tourists, 600 students, and nearly 100,000 people were reached through awareness campaigns, including social media engagement.
- An IMET (Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool) assessment and a participatory map of the marine park were completed.

The next phase involves developing a comprehensive management plan for the park, building on data collected, participatory mapping, and the IMET evaluation. A key focus will be underwater biodiversity surveys using diving methods to document coral reefs, seagrass beds, and associated species. The plan will also define zoning, guide conservation actions, and address key threats such as IUU fishing and pollution. Continued active engagement with local stakeholders, especially artisanal fishers will be crucial for achieving long-term protection and sustainable use of the park's marine ecosystems.

5

Our Environmental Education Program in 2024:

Inspiring Young Minds, Nurturing Nature



Before we introduced our environmental education initiative, we observed a weak connection between residents of coastal communities and the marine species that inhabit their waters. Many viewed these species solely as sources of food and income, which reflected in unsustainable harvesting practices. To change this perception, we began engaging and educating these communities on the ecological importance of aquatic species, demonstrating that they are not just resources but vital components of an ecosystem that supports their own well-being.

AMCO's environmental education programme seeks to raise awareness among local communities about the need to conserve marine and coastal ecosystems, particularly in Cameroon's coastal areas. Covering regions such as Limbe, Yabassi, Dizangue, and Kribi, the programme aims to develop informed eco-citizens and encourage active community participation in protecting fragile ecosystems. Tailored to local realities, the programme addresses a range of themes including the importance of preserving protected areas and marine biodiversity, threats to aquatic

environments, and the promotion of eco-responsible practices.

In 2024, we conducted a series of activities to engage local communities and young people, aiming to shape them into future environmental stewards. In Limbe, we reached over 800 individuals across 10 schools. Through poetry, traditional dances, art, and virtual reality headsets, we immersed students in the underwater world, sparking their curiosity and commitment to marine conservation.

By the end of the year, students reported notable increases in knowledge across various themes addressed during the sessions:

- +36.3% for "Nature and Biodiversity"
- +39.5% for "Marine Ecosystems"
- +39.9% for "Cetaceans"
- +30% for "Importance of Marine Fauna"
- +30.7% for "Threatened and Endangered Species"
- +37.7% for "Marine Mammals"
- +24.6% for "Threats to Marine Mammals"
- +38.5% for "Pollution"
- +43% for "Eco-Responsible Habits"

We also launched holiday clubs in Limbola and Bakingili (Limbe) during the summer of 2024. These clubs offered engaging and culturally relevant learning experiences designed to build environmental awareness and responsibility among children. Activities included theory sessions, virtual reality underwater explorations, storytelling, drawing, colouring, singing, interactive quizzes, games, and screenings of cartoons and documentaries.

Additionally, we organised excursions to marine and freshwater habitats across Cameroon to deepen young people's understanding and appreciation of local biodiversity. In Kribi, we partnered with the Stop Pollution Association to deliver the third edition of our Eco-Responsible Holidays initiative. The programme featured workshops where participants explored marine species, particularly rays and sharks. About 400 students participated and are now more aware of the threats facing these species.

In Dizangue, we facilitated an excursion for teachers and students from Collège Saint-Gérard to Lake Ossa, a critical habitat for African manatees. They observed first-

hand our efforts to combat the invasive *Salvinia molesta* plant, which had nearly overtaken the lake, and learned how it is being repurposed into organic fertiliser. The visit also included a tour of our community fish farm, aimed at improving local livelihoods, and our eco-lodge overlooking the lake.

This comprehensive programme continues to inspire young people, connect them with nature, and empower communities to take an active role in marine conservation.

Learning and innovating



Over the years, we have engaged local communities in our environmental education programme using a variety of methods to convey our message. Throughout this process, we have continued to learn and innovate. One key insight we gained is that much of the visual content we initially used did not resonate with the local audience, given that they were foreign

It is for this reason that we [created](#) a children cartoon inspired by local realities to encourage coastal children to love and protect the ocean. This innovative approach proved effective, as the children could easily see themselves reflected in the cartoon, which increased their appreciation for the ocean and its species, especially sea turtles which is the focus of the cartoon.



Photos

Right, (top to bottom):

1. Students from AMCO's environmental club in Limbe, Cameroon pose after Youth Day march pass with a sign advocating for the protection of the ocean and its species. Credit: Cyndi Karel via AMCO

2. Children participating in the summer environmental club at AMCO's branch office in Limbe. Credit: Cyndi Karel via AMCO

3. Students from AMCO's environmental club in Dizangue promoting the protection of the African manatee. . Credit: Annick Zanga via AMCO

6 Street Whale Festival:

A vibrant shore where scientific discovery, conservation action, arts, sports and captivating tales meet

Four years ago, when we came up with the idea of the Street Whale, we didn't know exactly how to go about it, but progressively, this event has moulded be the leading annual gathering in Cameroon and the central African sub-region, bringing together marine scientists, conservationists and conservation organisations, storytellers and local communities to discuss pressing issues affecting the marine world.

The aim of Street Whale 2024 was to strengthen the coalition and synergy for conserving marine and coastal resources, continue advocacy for sustainable management, and bring together sub-regional and international stakeholders to discuss and build capacities on urgent marine conservation problems.

During the 2024 edition of the Street Whale Festival, we welcomed 320 participants from 20 different countries across four continents. Various marine conservation issues were addressed, including endangered species protection, illegal fishing, and engaging local communities in conservation efforts while promoting sustainable marine management across Central and West Africa.

At the event, groundworks were laid for the establishment of the sub-regional network for marine Protected Areas (MPAS) in central Africa. The aim of the network is to unite stakeholders around common challenges such as sustainable fisheries management, conservation of migratory species and collection of data to inform decision-making.

The event also afforded the opportunity for the Coalition for the Conservation of the Atlantic Humpback Dolphin (CCAHD) to have [their first in-person meeting](#). Thirty-five stakeholders from 13 of the 19 countries within the species' range joined partners from the International Whaling Commission,



the Convention on Migratory Species, and Law of the Wild for capacity-building workshops on bycatch risk assessment, stranding data collection, boat-based monitoring, communication, education, and fundraising strategies.

The Siren App was also highlighted as a key tool to engage local fishers in the collection of data on marine biodiversity, with many more African countries expressing their wish to employ the app. It is worth noting that 10 African countries are already using this app to advance their conservation activities.

What also spiced the 4th edition of the Street Whale was the photo competition which was done for the first time since the coming to being of this festival. The idea was to harness the creativity and skills of photographers from various backgrounds, transforming them into conservation photographers who tell the stories of our oceans through their lenses.

Five winners of this competition from across Cameroon underwent online and in-person training while receiving cash prizes to further enhance their photography careers. But more interestingly, upon completion of

training, these photographers automatically became fellows of Nature, Environment and Wildlife Filmmakers, opening them to wider opportunities across the African continent and the world at large to advance their careers.

The event also featured the Street Whale Ambassador competition, which brought together students from various educational institutions. The goal was to raise awareness about marine wildlife among young people and to inspire leadership so they can take meaningful action in the future.

Looking ahead, we are exploring opportunities to host the Street Whale Festival in various Central African countries starting next year with Gabon in collaboration with the Agence National des Parcs Nationaux (ANPN)

Street Whale in Photos



1



2



3



4



5



Zoom

How Can We Reduce Dolphin Bycatch?

The answer lies in plastic bottles. At Street Whale 2024, Cameroonian fishermen gained a simple but powerful new tool to help protect dolphins and boost their livelihoods.

Dr Federico Sucunza and Brazilian fisherman Nene shared an innovative technique: tying small plastic bottles to fishing nets. This helps dolphins detect and avoid the nets, reducing accidental captures. Proven effective in Brazil, the method also increases fish catch, offering a rare win-win for both marine conservation and artisanal fishing.

With this knowledge, local fishermen are now better equipped to fish more sustainably while protecting marine life.



Dr Federico Sucunza and Nene demonstrate how to attach plastic bottles to fishing nets as a method to reduce dolphin bycatch. Credit: Anthony Ochieng

Photos

Main photo: Group photo of participants at the Street Whale Festival.
Credit: Anthony Ochieng

Left, top to bottom:

1. Fun games, painting, and sports during the Street Whale Festival.
Credit: Anthony Ochieng
2. Group photo featuring chiefs and local administrators . Credit: Anthony Ochieng
3. Beach cleaning and eco-walk during the Street Whale Festival.
Credit: Anthony Ochieng
4. Traditional animation during the Street Whale Festival.
Credit: Anthony Ochieng
5. Music concert during the Street Whale Festival. Credit: Anthony Ochieng

7 Securing the Future of African manatees and the Sanaga Watershed: Street Manatee is born



One of the significant achievements we accomplished in 2024 was the successful organisation of the inaugural Street Manatee event which was held in Dizangue, in the Littoral Region of Cameroon. This community holds special significance for us, as it is where AMCO was founded. With support from Seaworld Conservation Fund, PPI and Hanswilsdorf Foundation, the event aimed to promote integrated water resource management within the Sanaga watershed while bringing together key stakeholders, including local communities, public and private companies, international and local organisations, civil society groups, and government institutions.

The event brought together participants from 10 nationalities worldwide and featured symposia, workshops, cultural activities, and sports events. Approximately 3,000 people participated in these activities which enlivened the event. Around 117 people took part in the scientific activities, while more than 1,000 joined the sports and cultural events. Various topics were discussed including how to promote water resource management

in the Sanaga basin, the fight against the invasive plant, *Salvinia molesta* in Lake Ossa, how this plant has affected the distribution of the African Manatee, the impact of human activities and climate change on the sustainable use of clams in the lower Sanaga, and how to use storytelling to advocate for the protection of the Sanaga watershed.

A painting workshop was held during the event involving 50 young people, with various species of Lake Ossa, including the African Manatee painted on their bodies. They were also allowed to express themselves artistically which created a deeper sense of love and commitment to conserve the species that inhabit Lake Ossa and the wider Sanaga watershed.

“I am in love with the manatee”, remarked one of the participants as she admired a manatee drawing on her arm. “I will dedicate my life to protecting them”, she added with a broad smile on her face.

As one of the achievements of the Street Manatee, a collaborative network of stakeholders was established to sustainably manage the resources within the Sanaga watershed. Awareness was also created

amongst stakeholders of the threats to the Sanaga watershed and its biodiversity. The event also led to the identification of the causes of degradation in the watershed and proposed strategies for improved management and biodiversity protection, taking into account the well-being of local communities.

One of our biggest wins of the Street Manatee is that it was held at the heart of the local community. These kinds of events are usually held in big cities, far from the people most affected—but we wanted to do things differently.

By bringing the conference to the community, we made sure local voices were heard and involved. It also gave other stakeholders a chance to see the real issues up close. And importantly, the community itself benefited from the event, both socially and economically.

We plan to organise a Light version of the street manatee, with 20 per cent science, 50 per cent culture and 30 per cent sports. The aim is to reach out to the local population and create a lasting impact by engaging them in the protection of the Sanaga watershed.



Photos

Main photo: Group photo with local administrators during the Street Manatee
Credit: AMCO

Top to bottom:

1. Participants during one of the sessions at the Street Manatee.
Credit: AMCO
2. Traditional dance performance at the Street Manatee Credit: AMCO
3. Children taking part in a freehand drawing activity Credit: AMCO
4. Boat race held during the Street Manatee Credit: AMCO

Zoom

Celebrating Street Manatee's Impact

Following one of the key resolutions from the Street Manatee event, we launched a restoration project aimed at rehabilitating degraded areas along the shores of Lake Ossa with support from Sea World Conservation Fund and Whitley Fund for Nature. These areas had suffered extensive damage from bushfires and deforestation, threatening the health of the lake's ecosystem and the species that depend on it, including the endangered African manatee.

In partnership with local communities and administrative authorities, the initiative began with a strong focus on reforestation. In 2024 alone, we successfully planted around 4,500 seedlings of native tree species such as cashew (*Anacardium occidentale*), bush mango (*Irvingia gabonensis*), and soursop (*Annona muricata*). These species were carefully selected for their ecological value and their potential to support both biodiversity and local livelihoods.

This collaborative effort not only contributes to habitat restoration and climate resilience, but also strengthens community engagement in conservation. It marks a significant step toward the long-term protection of Lake Ossa's fragile ecosystem.



Local administrative officials, community members, and AMCO staff joined hands to plant trees along the shores of Lake Ossa, working together to restore degraded areas and strengthen the lake's ecosystem. Credit: AMCO

8

Our ecotourism program: Connecting People with Nature

Our ecotourism program: Connecting People with Nature One of the ways we empower local communities and promote the conservation of marine resources in Cameroon and across Africa is through ecotourism. In 2022, we initiated ecotourism activities in the fishing community of Dizangue, South-western Cameroon, which is home to Lake Ossa, where the African Manatee mostly occurs. This initiative aims to reduce pressure on the lake, with local gainfully employed in the ecotourism sector.

We have invested in infrastructure, including building a bungalow overlooking Lake Ossa to host tourists during their visits, connecting them with nature. While 2022 and 2023 served as a test phase for this initiative, it matured in 2024, with ecotourism activities booming and benefiting not just Dizangue but also other villages and nearby urban centres.

We organized several ecotourism outings, receiving groups of visitors at AMCO's site on the banks of Lake Mwembe, which is part of the wider Lake Ossa Reserve chain of lakes.

A comparative analysis of statistics between 2023 and 2024 shows an increase in the number of visitors to this lake. From an economic point of view, the three stakeholders involved in ecotourism activities experienced significant economic spin-offs in 2024, as outlined below:

- For the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife's conservation department: 348% increase
- For the community: 118% increase
- For AMCO: 195% increase

These numbers are a testament to the tourism potential in the Dizangue community, and further investment would enhance this growth. We have redoubled our efforts to give this area worldwide visibility by partnering with stakeholders across the board. In 2024, we developed two partnerships with local tourism agencies: THE TOURIST GUIDE and YENGAFRICA. One interesting aspect of this initiative is that the inhabitants of Dizangue and its surroundings are at the centre of it, collaborating with us to make crucial decisions and acting as tour guides.

**Book your Trip
to Lake Ossa
with us now**

While our ecotourism program has gained traction, there is a need for more funding to scale it. We plan to develop an online booking system to enable tourists to book their visits with just a click from anywhere in the world. We also envision constructing an ecological accommodation to host tourists.

Photos:
Ecotourism activities in the Lake Ossa.
Credit; AMCO



9

Our Marine Biodiversity Program in 2024: Charting the course for thriving communities and the ocean

The primary objective of this program in 2024 was to address knowledge gaps and promote the protection of marine and aquatic species in Cameroon by actively engaging communities and enhancing local capacities for sustainable ecosystem management. We focused our activities on the coastal areas of Cameroon, Lake Ossa and the Nkam area where the African Manatee occurs. We intensified our monitoring activities across the above-focused areas with impressive results that are helping us and the entire conservation community in Cameroon in making decisions to better conserve and protect aquatic species. Some of these results include but not limited to:

- Marine monitoring through diving campaigns and boat surveys in Kribi made it possible to observe and document marine fauna, thus enriching knowledge of local species.
- 40 beach patrols in Limbe were carried out to monitor the nesting of marine turtles, identify threats to their nests, and combat poaching. We recorded reported sightings, strandings, and bycatch

of over 100 marine turtles. Among the bycatch cases, 56 were found alive with minor injuries, while 44 were unfortunately dead (or killed).

- Daily market monitoring in Kribi, Limbe and Douala made it possible to better understand the marketing trends of marine species and to assess the extent of harvesting.
- Monitoring at Lake Ossa targeted the presence of the manatee and the state of its habitat.
- Twenty-seven manatee traps were located, including 23 destroyed with the collaboration of former hunters and traditional leaders of the Nkam, thus reducing pressure on this threatened species. More than 85 % reduction of manatee traps installed in migration corridors
- A feeding site of more than 600 ha has been identified in the Nkam Valley, highlighting the importance of these areas for the survival of manatees. Two direct observations of manatees in Lake Ossa were recorded, reinforcing knowledge of their local distribution.
- Area grazed by manatees: more than 500 m² spread over different areas.

- 10 harpoons were observed, among which 5 were recovered and handed over to the authorities of the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife of the Nkam.

- 15 cases of manatees killed were reported on the markets of Douala, including 8 documented with tangible evidence, while 7 others were reported without visual confirmation.

- Presence of manatees confirmed by the observation of 2 faeces in key sites of the Nkam. In 2025, we plan to install small passive acoustic devices such as the hydromoths to detect the presence and habitat used by the species through the recording of their vocalisation.

- A group of common dolphins was observed during sea monitoring in the area near the Lokoundje.

- Cetacean records on the SIREN application brought the total number of documented observations to 309, covering 11 different species.

In 2025, we look forward to intensifying the monitoring of species and habitats to improve knowledge and strengthen conservation. We also look forward to implementing eDNA and acoustic studies to detect the presence of aquatic species via environmental traces.



Photos

Top left: A former manatee hunter hands over his hunting gear to the President of AMCO. Credit: AMCO

Middle left: Signs of manatee feeding at the Nkam River. Credit: Shuimo Trust via AMCO

Bottom left: Dead sea turtle at Batoke Beach, Limbe, Cameroon. Credit: Guy Mengoue

Top right: Distribution of farming equipment to local residents of communities along the Nkam River. Credit: AMCO

Zoom

Conserving with Communities

For us, real conservation means prioritising the wellbeing of local communities. Instead of simply telling them not to kill sea turtles, manatees, or dolphins, we provide reasons why they shouldn't, and offer alternatives that not only redirect their focus but also significantly improve their lives in the long term. That is why, now more than ever, we have strong support from local communities.

This didn't happen by chance. It began with an honest conversation, some years ago, between our president and a local fisher at Lake Ossa. The fisher accused us of caring more about aquatic life than about people. That moment marked a turning point in our conservation approach. Since then, we have heavily invested in the communities we work with, and it's paying off.

For example, in communities along the Nkam River, where the African manatee is found, we are helping residents move away from hunting manatees by supporting them with farm inputs to practise sustainable agriculture. We have supported Bonandolo 3 and Bodiman with equipment, including water pumps and sprayers, to boost their farming efforts.

The results are already visible: 2 hectares of watermelon, 1 hectare of okra, and 1.5 hectares of chilli are now under cultivation, alongside thriving nurseries. Most importantly, several former poachers have surrendered their weapons and fully committed to farming, choosing conservation over exploitation.



I used to hunt manatees, but today, I am one of their protectors. With support from AMCO, I now grow a variety of fruits, including oranges and limes which I sell in the local market to support my family.

Former manatee hunter in the Nkam River standing in his farm
Photo credit: Shuimo Trust via AMCO

10 Contribution to Scientific Knowledge

One of our primary goals is to contribute meaningfully to scientific knowledge, particularly in the field of freshwater ecosystem conservation. In 2024, we made a significant stride with the publication of a peer-reviewed scientific article detailing our efforts to control *Salvinia molesta*—an invasive aquatic plant that threatens biodiversity and livelihoods in and around Lake Ossa.

The study documents the successful deployment of a biological control agent, *Cyrtobagous salviniae*, and highlights how real-time monitoring tools were used to track progress and inform adaptive management. This research not only offers a scalable model for managing invasive species in similar environments but also strengthens the scientific basis for ecosystem restoration in Cameroon and beyond.

Several additional research papers,

currently under peer review and expected in 2025, build upon this work and explore related themes such as biodiversity monitoring, community engagement, and sustainable conservation strategies.

Our publications aim to bridge the gap between science and action, helping policymakers, practitioners, and local communities make evidence-based decisions that benefit both nature and people.

Optimizing aquatic weed management in Lake Ossa, Cameroon: Harnessing the power of biological control and real-time satellite monitoring

Logan Herbert ^a, Annick Zanga ^b, David Kinsler ^c, Victoria Ayala ^a, Aristide Takoukam Kamla ^b, Rodrigo Diaz ^a  



This research not only offers a scalable model for managing invasive species in similar environments but also strengthens the scientific basis for ecosystem restoration in Cameroon and beyond.

11

Training and Capacity Building: No One is Left Behind

One of our core values as an organisation is to continuously build our capacity, as well as that of our collaborators and partners, in order to better conserve aquatic species and their habitats. In 2024, we made great strides in this direction.

For the first time ever, we organised the West African Dive Lab in collaboration with our partner, Nature, Environment, and Wildlife Filmmakers (NEWF). This initiative arose from the realisation that many marine scientists in West Africa have been studying marine-related issues without ever having the opportunity to explore the ocean firsthand. Passionate marine scientists and storytellers from Cameroon, Senegal, and Ghana were certified as open-water divers after completing training at Ekhyaya, NEWF's research and diving hub in Sodwana Bay, South Africa. Through this programme, we aim to build a critical mass of skilled professionals equipped to protect West and Central Africa's marine biodiversity.



So far, we have conducted feasibility studies and identified suitable dive sites in the coastal towns of Limbe and Kribi (Cameroon). We plan to launch the dive centre in 2025, with our newly certified dive masters leading its operations

Following the West African Dive Lab, we sent two of our staff members to South Africa for training to become certified dive masters, as we plan to establish the first recreational and dive training centre in Cameroon. So far, we have conducted feasibility studies and identified suitable dive sites in the coastal towns of Limbe and Kribi. We plan to launch the dive centre in 2025, with our newly certified dive masters leading its operations. This facility will not only serve Cameroonians but also attract diving enthusiasts from across the Central African subregion.

With support from the Consortium for the Conservation of the Atlantic Humpback Dolphin (CCAHD), we received training, together with our partner Tube Awu, in boat-based marine monitoring techniques. This included transect design, marine species observation, photo collection, data digitisation, and archiving. In addition, basic training in acoustics was provided remotely by Julie Oswald and Vincent Janik of the University of St Andrews, introducing participants to the principles of acoustic monitoring, an essential, non-intrusive method for studying marine species.



The experience was just so amazing. I can't believe I'm qualified today....I can now dive all around the world.

Diana Seck, one of the dive trainees from Senegal.
Phot Credit: NEWF



Photos

Top right: Dive training at eKhaya, NEWF Storytelling, Research and Dive Centre, Sodwana Bay, South Africa. Credit: NEWF
Bottom Left: AMCO and Tube Awu staff during cetacean survey training with CCAHD in Kribi, Cameroon. Credit: AMCO



B. Celebrating our conservation wins

Like a seed taking root, our conservation efforts blossomed in 2024. Today, we celebrate!

Photo credit: NEWF

1. Restoration of Lake Ossa from Invasive Species

One of our key achievements in 2024 was the successful restoration of the ecological balance of Lake Ossa—one of Cameroon’s largest natural lakes, spanning nearly 4,000 hectares in the Littoral Region—through targeted efforts to control *Salvinia molesta*, an invasive aquatic fern.

This protected area serves as a critical habitat for the African manatee, a species that inhabits both freshwater and marine environments along West Africa’s coastline, as well as for other notable wildlife such as softshell turtles and various waterbirds.

Since its invasion in 2017, *Salvinia molesta* had spread across up to 2,000 hectares of

the lake by 2021, blocking access to native aquatic plants that are vital to the diet of the predominantly herbivorous manatees.

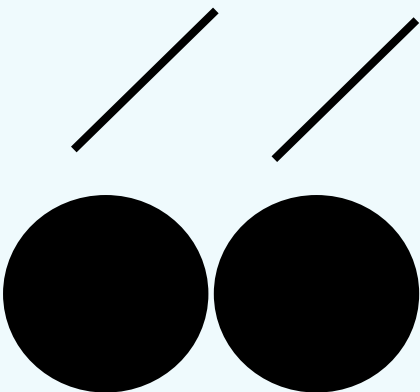
After exploring various solutions to combat this invasion, including traditional removal methods, we ultimately opted for a natural predator: the salvinia weevil. We released this weevil into the lake to feed on the invasive fern. As a result, Lake Ossa is now largely free of this invasive plant, with coverage reduced from 50% in 2021 to less than 15% in 2024, and manatee sightings have become increasingly common.

Local communities that rely on the lake for their livelihoods through fishing have resumed their activities, and the local economy—previously affected by the invasion—has

begun to recover.

In a related development, we have initiated feasibility studies, with the support of SeaWorld & Busch Gardens, for the construction of a manatee rehabilitation centre in Cameroon. This centre will provide care for stranded and injured African manatees. It will be the first of its kind in Africa, and local communities will play a vital role in its operation by reporting sightings through the SIREN app.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to SAFACAM, BIOPAMA, JFGE, PPI, WFN, IUCN-AWI, LSU and SeaWorld & Busch Gardens for their support throughout this journey.



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Lake Ossa in October 2020

Photo credit: AMCO

Lake Ossa in April 2024

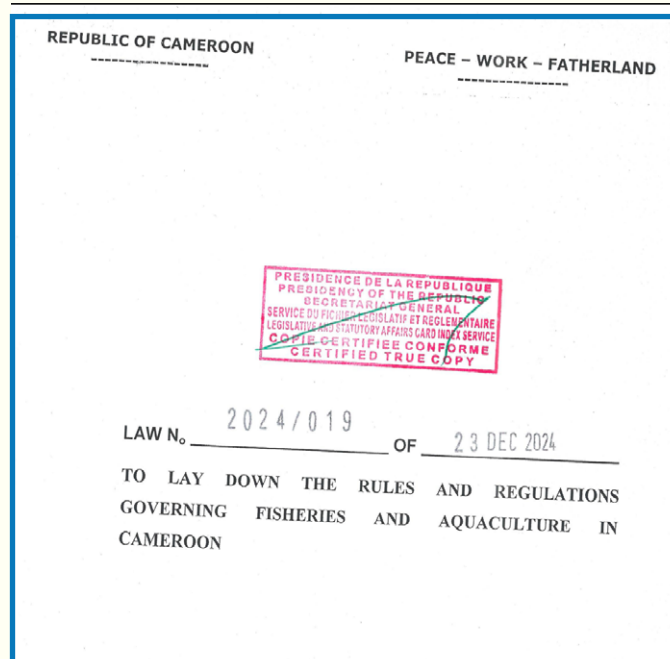


2. Reforming Fisheries Legislation to Combat IUU Fishing

One of the underlying factors that has enabled illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing to persist in Cameroon has been the country's outdated legal framework governing fisheries. For years, key actors in the sector took advantage of gaps and weaknesses in the legislation. The previous law not only fell short of international standards, but it was also bundled together with Cameroon's forestry legislation, which dates back to 1996.

Recognising the urgent need for reform, we worked closely with the Government of Cameroon to support the development of a new, dedicated law for fisheries and aquaculture. This collaborative effort culminated in the adoption of Law No. 2024/019 of 23 December 2024, which was passed by the National Assembly and enacted into law.

This new legal instrument marks a significant step forward. It brings Cameroon's fisheries governance in line with international norms and provides stronger tools to address IUU fishing—laying the groundwork for more sustainable and transparent management of the country's aquatic resources.



3. Global Recognition

We were honoured to receive international recognition for our conservation work in 2024. In May, our Founder and President, Dr Kamla Aristide, was awarded the prestigious Whitley Award for his groundbreaking efforts to protect the habitat of the African manatee from a persistent threat, *Salvinia molesta*, an invasive freshwater fern that began choking Lake Ossa in southwestern Cameroon in 2017.

This lake is a key habitat for the African manatee, a species heavily hunted for its meat. During the award ceremony, Aristide stressed the need to “address the underlying causes of nutrient enrichment in the lake to restore its former glory as a wildlife haven.”

Aristide was also selected as one of ten finalists for the Indianapolis Prize Emerging Conservationist Award, further highlighting his leadership in conservation.

In addition, our SIREN Citizen Science Programme was honoured at the 25th Biennial Conference on the Biology

of Marine Mammals held in Perth, Australia. The programme received the Shoestring Award in recognition of its cost-effective and impactful approach to closing data gaps and conserving marine life in Africa. The award was accepted by Cedrick Fogwan, the lead on SIREN deployment.

This recognition is especially meaningful to us, as it reflects the dedication and passion of the local fishers across Cameroon's coastal regions and beyond, whose tireless efforts form the backbone of the SIREN Programme. Their invaluable contributions have shaped key conservation decisions and advanced sustainable fishing practices while protecting vulnerable species.

Photos

Top right: Aristide receiving the Whitley Award in London, England: Credit: Whitley Fund for Nature

Bottom right: Cedrick Fogwan at 25th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals in Perth, Australia about to receive the Shoestring Award. Credit: AMCO



C. AMCO in the media in 2024

In 2024, more and more media outlets started paying attention to our work. This growing interest shows just how important and relevant our conservation efforts are—both here in Cameroon and around the world.

From the lively Street Whale Festival to our fight against illegal fishing and our campaign to stop *Salvinia molesta* from taking over Lake Ossa, there was plenty to talk about.

One big highlight was a powerful article by [France 24](#) that told the story of our Founder and President, Dr Kamla Aristide, and his work to save the African manatee and restore Lake Ossa. The article made waves internationally, getting picked up by over 136 media outlets including Fox News, Yahoo News, MSN US, the Daily Mail, and many more. We were also featured by global media like the [BBC](#), [Mongabay](#) and [TV5Monde](#).

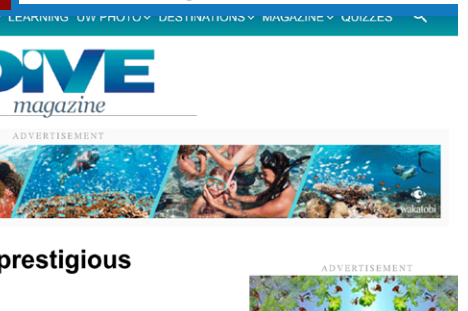
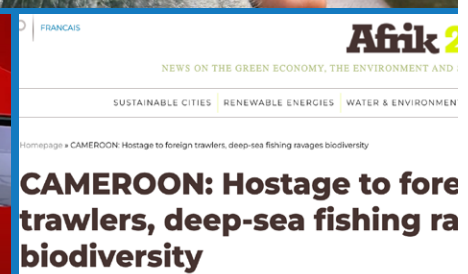
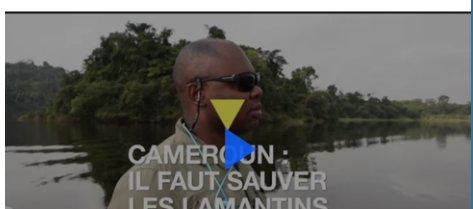
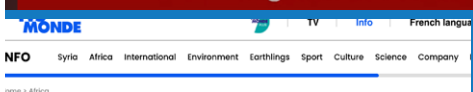
This coverage helped spread our message even further and brought attention to important environmental issues in Central Africa that are often ignored. It also reminded us that good storytelling is a powerful way to raise awareness and inspire action.

With this growing media interest, we feel even more encouraged to keep going—to deepen our impact, involve more communities, and work towards a healthier future for our oceans, rivers, and lakes



Saving the mysterious African manatee at Cameroon hotspot

Dizangué (Cameroon) (AFP) – Ever since his first hard-won sightings of African manatees, award-winning marine biologist Aristide Takoukam Kamla has been



PARTNERS

- Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries
- Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife
- Oceans 5
- National Geographic Society
- SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund
- Fondation Hanswilsdorf
- Le Comité Français de l'IUCN/PPI
- Food and Agriculture Organization
- Manta Trust
- Save Our Seas Foundation
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature
- Synchronicity Earth
- Wildlife Conservation Network
- Nature, Environment and Wildlife Filmmakers
- Le Programme de Microfinancements du Fonds pour l'Environnement Mondial
- The Rufford Foundation
- Global Environment Facility
- Le Comité français de l'IUCN
- Consortium for the Conservation of the Atlantic Humpback Dolphin
- MCPZ Foundation
- Society for Marine Mammalogy
- Environmental Justice Foundation
- Dolphin Quest
- L'ambassade de France au Cameroun
- Institut Française – Cameroun
- Cameroon Wildlife Conservation Society
- Limbe Wildlife Centre
- Commune de Dizangué
- Communauté Urbaine de Kribi
- Port Autonome De Kribi
- Institut Des Sciences Halieutiques de Yabassi
- Association Communautaire De Recherche Et De Développement
- TotalEnergies
- Société Africaine Forestière Et Agricole Du Cameroun

We extend heartfelt thanks to all our partners for your unwavering support throughout the year. Your collaboration, resources, and shared vision have been vital to our progress in our conservation efforts. Together, we've made meaningful strides in protecting our oceans and coastal communities. We deeply value your continued partnership.

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