Dugong occupancy in Bazaruto Archipelago region, Mozambique Coast

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The dugong (Dugong dugon) has been listed as vulnerable by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, however the populations from East Africa are likely to be already endangered. In the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region, dugongs are believed to still occur in Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and further east off the islands of the Comoros, Seychelles and Madagascar (WWF-EAME 2004; Cockcroft et al. 2008; Findlay et al. 2011). Although the distribution of dugongs in the WIO is highly fragmented and appears to be declining, Bazaruto Archipelago region in Mozambique coast harbors a population of about 250 dugongs. This population is also believed to be the most and possibly the only viable population of dugongs in the WIO region (Findlay et al. 2011). Thus, this study aimed at estimating the past occupancy of dugongs in Mozambique coast using historical information, and current occupancy based on presence-only data from passive acoustic monitoring, questionnaire interviews and sighting records. Determining occupancy is a useful tool to support prioritization of efforts for conserving rare and threatened species when historical data is limited and population estimates are lacking (D’Souza et al. 2013).