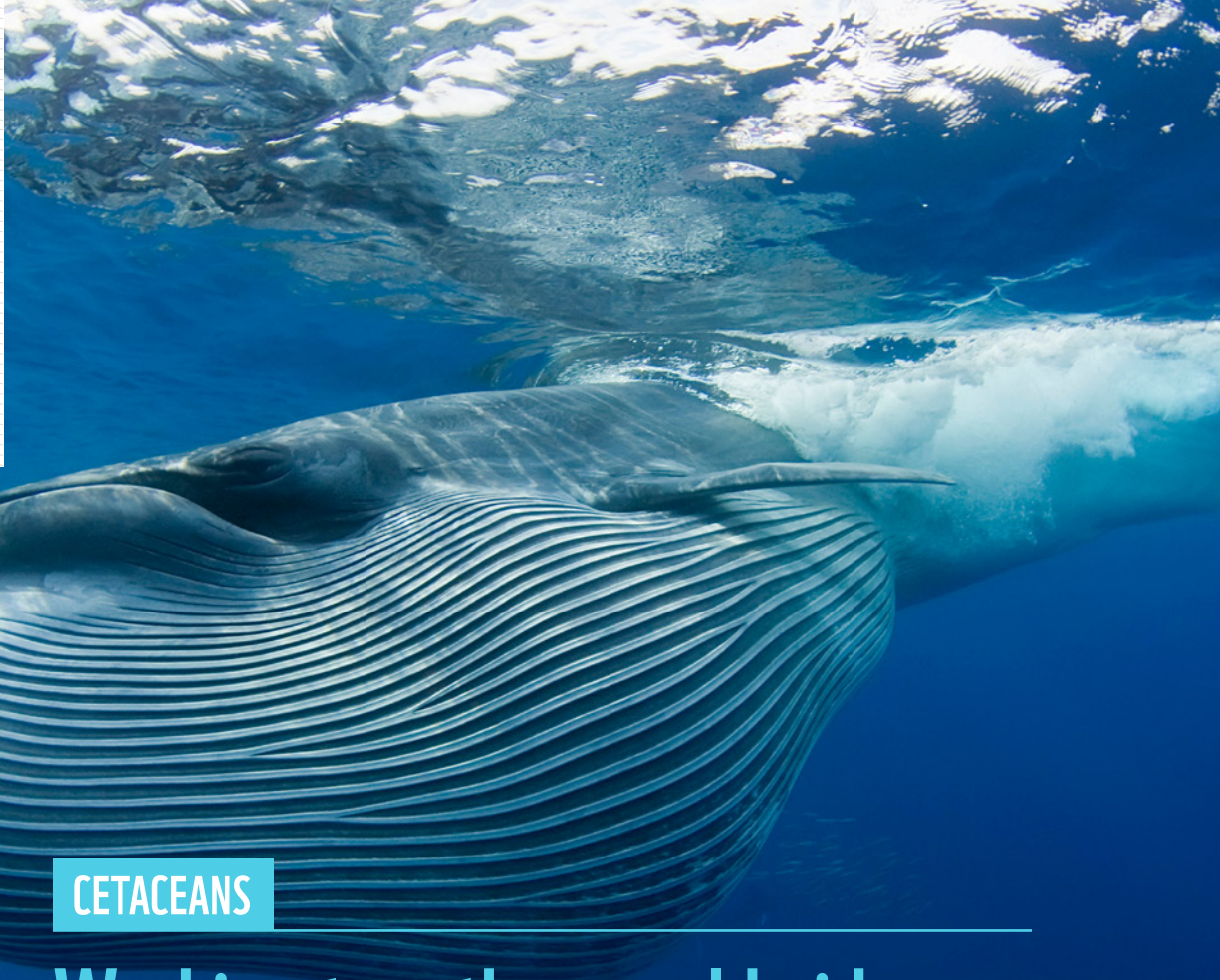




WWF

FACTSHEET

2020



## CETACEANS

# Working together worldwide to protect whales and dolphins

**For over 50 years, we've collaborated with partners from around the world in many ways, from designing safe and innovative field research techniques, advising how to conserve natural habitats, to campaigning for change. These efforts have resulted in a deeper understanding of whales and dolphins and their habitats, new marine protected areas and sanctuaries, and major shifts in policy and practice from local to global levels.**

While we've made significant progress, whales and dolphins remain under pressure globally. An estimated 300,000 cetaceans are killed each year as a result of fisheries bycatch, while populations are suffering from increasing ship traffic and loss of important habitats crucial for their survival. To counter these growing threats, we urgently need a 'new deal' for whales and dolphins.

The **WWF CETACEAN INITIATIVE** is designed to deliver this by directly tackling the issues surrounding bycatch, shipping and habitat loss, which are increasingly threatening cetacean survival. Working in partnership with world-leading experts in a range of fields, the initiative is equipping practitioners, WWF partners and policy makers with the evidence and tools they need to monitor and mitigate these threats and provide alternatives to harmful practices.



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# WWF CONSERVATION IN ACTION

## CETACEANS



Conserving marine cetaceans worldwide by reducing threats from fisheries and shipping, and protecting critical habitats.



### CANADA

Working on both coasts to reduce the impact of shipping and noise on marine mammals.

Partners: Transport Canada, Quiet Oceans



### PERU

Working with fisheries and government to reduce the impact of fishing and shipping on cetaceans.

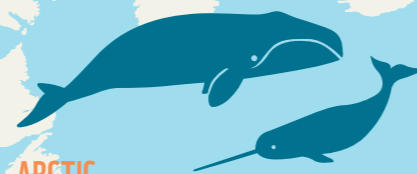
Partners: Instituto del Mar Del Per (IMARPE), Copeinca, International Whaling Commission, Pro Delphinus



### ANTARCTICA

Using digital tags, drones and remote sensing to uncover critical foraging areas for baleen whales and create Antarctic marine protected areas.

Partners: University of California Santa Cruz, Duke University, British Antarctic Survey



### ARCTIC

Working to protect important habitats and safeguard Arctic whales from harmful industry impacts in a rapidly changing Arctic.

Partners: Arctic Council, Arctic communities, IMO



### RIVER DOLPHIN INITIATIVE

Conserving river dolphins, their rivers and the communities that depend on them.

[www.panda.org/our\\_work/water/freshwater\\_initiatives/river\\_dolphins\\_initiative/](http://www.panda.org/our_work/water/freshwater_initiatives/river_dolphins_initiative/)



### CHILE

Collaborating to build a network of marine protected areas for cetaceans.

Partners: Concepcion University, Yagu Pacha



### MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Collaborating to reduce the threat of ship strikes and underwater noise to endangered Mediterranean fin whales and sperm whales.

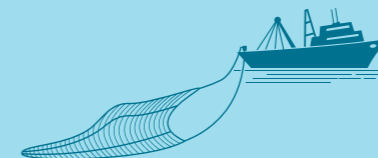
Partners: IWC, IUCN, Quiet Oceans, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Pelagos Cetacean Research Institute, Pelagos Sanctuary, Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS)



### ARABIAN SEA

Fostering regional collaboration and engaging fisheries to protect Endangered Arabian Sea humpback whales.

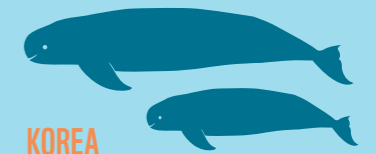
Partners: Arabian Sea Whale Network, Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, IWC, Convention on Migratory Species



### SOUTH WEST INDIAN OCEAN

Working with local organisations and regional fisheries management organisations to reduce cetacean bycatch in the Indian Ocean.

Partners: Newcastle University, civil society organisations



### KOREA

Working with fisheries and government to reduce fisheries bycatch of the Endangered Narrow-ridged finless porpoise.

Partners: Korean Cetacean research Institute, IUCN (Cetacean Specialist Group)



### AUSTRALIA

Supporting local Indigenous rangers to study and protect snubfin dolphins and their habitat.

Partners: Balangarra Rangers, Dambimangari Rangers, Murdoch Univ., James Cook Univ.



For more information on our projects around the globe please see [www.panda.org/cetaceans](http://www.panda.org/cetaceans)

## Monitoring and reducing bycatch

Entanglement in fishing gear is the leading cause of death for whales and dolphins whose habitat overlaps with fishing activity. Bycatch has already contributed to the recent extinction of the Yangtze River dolphin in China, and is injuring and killing endangered North Atlantic right whales, the critically endangered vaquitas in Mexico and Māui dolphins in New Zealand, among others.

Numerous studies have shown a direct link between declining cetacean population numbers and interactions with fishing gear, yet not enough has been done to determine how to stop this unwanted and unnecessary cause of death. Meanwhile, regional and international management efforts remain inadequate.

Conservation of our most vulnerable cetacean populations will only be possible if we develop effective ways to prevent and reduce bycatch. Under the WWF Cetacean Initiative, WWF is working with partners to develop viable solutions and working with governments, fisheries and others to implement measures to monitor and reduce bycatch in fishing gear.

## Reducing impacts from shipping

Over the past two decades, the volume of shipping traffic worldwide has increased 300 per cent. Large vessels have become larger still, travelling at greater speed, while more and more passenger ferries traverse our coastlines. For whales and dolphins, this has resulted in greater risk of injury and death as they struggle to avoid vessels' paths – not an easy task given some of the world's busiest shipping lanes directly overlap with their habitat.

Shipping noise is also a threat, with the global merchant fleet acting as the biggest contributor to the doubling in background noise levels underwater in every decade over the last 50 years. Underwater noise created by shipping can disrupt 'echolocation', the sensory ability of whales and dolphins to find food and navigate underwater, while also drowning out their communication with each other, displacing them from habitats, and in extreme cases causing physical harm, including temporary hearing loss.

WWF is playing a pivotal role in helping to develop ship strike mitigation measures in the Mediterranean and Canada, and is collaborating with the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the International Union for Conservation



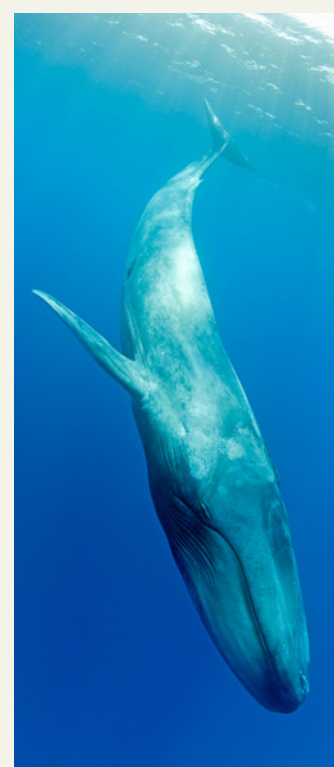
of Nature (IUCN), the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and other local, national and global partners to raise awareness of the issue and reduce ship strikes and underwater noise.

## Protecting critical habitats

Whales and dolphins rely on critical habitats – areas where they feed, mate, give birth, nurse young, socialise or migrate – for their survival. In countless areas around the globe, these are under threat from human activities including intense fishing, increased shipping, off-shore exploration of oil and gas and marine-based tourism. Coastal construction, climate change and water contamination are also putting whales and dolphins at risk.

Only a tiny fraction of critical cetacean habitat is protected from these threats, and greater protection is urgently needed to care for vulnerable populations. Governments and policy makers are often unaware of the importance of critical habitats under their care or tempted to prioritise economic gain over protecting marine and coastal habitat. In some cases, those with power and inclination to act are simply unaware of the tools available to them to protect habitats, and the benefits that habitat protection brings for commercial fisheries – as well as whales and dolphins.

Globally, WWF is working with a range of collaborators to protect 30 per cent of the oceans by 2030.



**For more information**  
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**For more information visit**  
[www.panda.org/cetaceans](http://www.panda.org/cetaceans)



### Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

[www.panda.org](http://www.panda.org)