

# underwater noise: a major threat to whales

► Humpback whale mother teaching her young calf how to breathe.

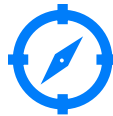


## Whales depend on sound

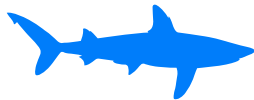
Cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) depend on sound to find food, to communicate with one another and to navigate. Underwater noise, created by humans, can drive whales and dolphins out of their habitats and in extreme cases, cause them to strand on beaches. Noise pollution causes stress and can hinder:



Communication



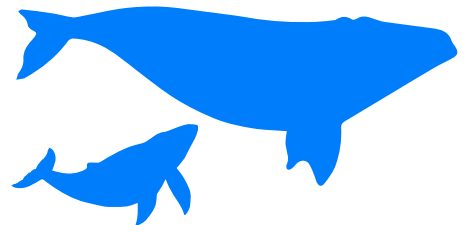
Navigation



Avoiding predators



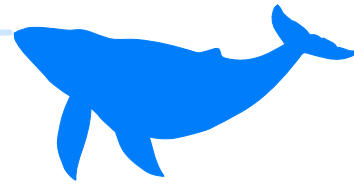
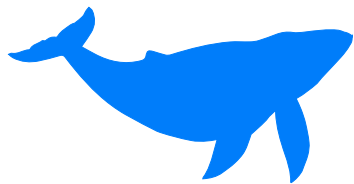
Finding prey



Finding mates



Other animals such as fish, crustaceans and squid are also affected.



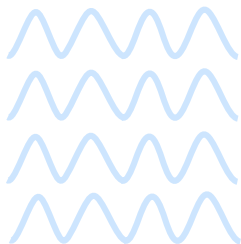
**Blue whales once communicated with each other across the entire ocean**

Today, the distance over which they can hear each other has decreased by

**90%**

Shipping has dramatically increased underwater noise throughout the ocean. In many areas, noise levels even appear to have doubled every ten years between 1960 and

most shipping noise is caused by poorly designed and maintained ship propellers.



Impulsive sounds are explosive underwater noises caused by:

- ▶ loud blasts from airguns while searching for oil and gas
- ▶ explosions from naval mines and torpedoes
- ▶ active sonar during military exercises
- ▶ fishing boat sonar to locate schools of fish
- ▶ pile-driving during construction work

**Shipping noise**

Although impulsive noise is harmful and can even be fatal, continuous noise from ships dominates the ocean soundscape. Shipping has grown tremendously in recent decades and ships are getting bigger and faster. Of all ships globally, around 15% of these cause the most noise. Better maintenance, slower sailing and applying silencing technologies, could reduce shipping noise considerably.

**Whales more threatened than ever**

In addition to underwater noise, other threats such as commercial whaling, injury and death caused by fishing nets and ship strikes, and habitat degradation are threatening the survival of these marine mammals. IFAW is committed to protecting these animals through campaigns, research, rescue, and practical assistance.

**Sonic Sea**

Sonic Sea, the Emmy-award winning documentary created by IFAW and NRDC, with Jean-Michel Cousteau, draws attention to the enormous underwater noise issue that seriously threatens the survival of marine animals and the place they call home.

**Measures**

The United Nations has recognised underwater noise as a marine pollutant, but so far there are few rules that prescribe concrete measures to address this type of pollution. IFAW works to convince politicians around the world to take action now to protect whales for future generations.

▶ **see how at [ifaw.org](http://ifaw.org)**



**#SaveOurSeas**