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# ENDANGERED SPECIES

## BLUE WHALES <sup>OF</sup> CHILE

The fight for survival of one of the world's rarest species of whale



The blue whale is the largest animal to ever exist and was almost exterminated due to commercial whaling. The blue whale is distributed globally but is one of the rarest species of whale. Only one population in the eastern North Pacific Ocean, off California, is showing signs of recovery. Recently it was discovered that **blue whales found off the southern coast of Chile** may represent a unique population or a subspecies of blue whale.

Based on differences in the Chilean blue whale and the other known populations, the International Whaling Commission determined that blue whales off Isla de Chiloe need to be managed as a separate population. Little is known about this population, but it appears that Chilean blue whales are the smallest population of blue whales in the Southern Hemisphere. Like other large whales, blue whales are threatened by pollution, habitat loss, overfishing, ship strikes, climate change, and becoming entangled in fishing gear.

**SMALLEST POPULATION  
OF BLUE WHALES  
IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE**

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## FALSE KILLER WHALES <sup>OF</sup> HAWAII

A declining population's battle against extinction



False killer whales are a species of large dolphin that lives in tropical and temperate waters around the world. In Hawaii there are three distinct populations of false killer whales, and the **Main Hawaiian Islands insular population of False Killer Whales** is listed as endangered. This population has declined dramatically over the past 20 years, and it is estimated that there are approximately 150 individuals remaining in this population.

They are slow to recover from human impacts such as interactions with fisheries, reduced food supply, and exposure to pollutants. When they were listed as endangered in 2012, the National Marine Fisheries Service noted there is a “greater-than-90-percent likelihood of the DPS [designated population segment] declining to fewer than 20 individuals within 75 years, which would result in functional extinction beyond the point where recovery is possible.”

**FEWER THAN 200**  
ESTIMATED INDIVIDUALS

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## THE MAUI DOLPHIN

The world's smallest known subspecies of dolphin and the struggle against its largest threat – man made pollution



The **Maui Dolphin** is a subspecies of the Hector's dolphin and is the world's smallest known subspecies of dolphin. Maui dolphins are found only off the west coast of New Zealand's North Island. This species is primarily threatened by set-netting and trawling although disease, pollution, mining, and natural predation are also factors.

Estimates from 2012 showed there were only 55 individuals remaining, and many organizations have called upon the NZ government to implement greater protections. In 2014 the NZ government opened up the West Coast North Island Marine Mammal Sanctuary – the main habitat of the Maui dolphin – for oil drilling. In May 2015 the population was estimated to be 43-47 individuals, of which only 10 were reproductively mature females.

**FEWER THAN 50**  
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## HUMPBACK WHALES OF THE ARABIAN SEA

A discrete population's long journey to recovery



**Humpback Whales in the Arabian Sea** are a discrete population of whales that does not migrate. This population lives in the Arabian Sea year-round and is the most isolated and endangered population of humpback whales, thought to contain fewer than 100 individuals. High productivity and upwelling create conditions suitable for feeding at latitudes where humpback whale breeding activity typically occurs. This population is one of only four that maintained its listing on the US Endangered Species Act in 2016 and is at a high risk of extinction.

The Arabian Sea humpback whales face unique threats, given that the whales do not migrate but instead feed and breed in the same relatively constrained geographic location. Energy exploration, entanglements, disease, vessel collisions, and climate change are likely to impact the population's size and/or growth rate.

**FEWER THAN 100**  
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## THE VAQUITA

The last chance to save a critically endangered species from extinction



The tiny porpoise, **the Vaquita**, is found only in the northern Gulf of California, Mexico. The greatest threat to this species is entanglement in gillnets. It was estimated in 2012 that there were 200 vaquitas remaining, a number which dropped by half by 2014. In 2016 the estimate was revised to 60 vaquitas remaining and, sadly, the latest estimates, published in 2017, suggest only 30 individuals.

The Mexican government has taken a number of steps to protect this species. They established a refuge to protect their core habitat and banned gillnets throughout the vaquita's range. Unfortunately there is rampant illegal fishing using gillnets still occurring, and it is predicted that this species could go extinct as early as 2018.

**FEWER THAN 50**  
ESTIMATED INDIVIDUALS