

VAQUITA



FACTS

Vaquita, the world's rarest marine mammal, is on the edge of extinction. The plight of cetaceans—whales, dolphins, and porpoises—as a whole is exemplified by the rapid decline of the vaquita in Mexico, with about 10 individuals remaining. This little porpoise wasn't discovered until 1958 and a little over half a century later, we are on the brink of losing them forever. Vaquitas are often caught and drowned in gillnets used by illegal fishing operations in marine protected areas within Mexico's Gulf of California. The population has dropped drastically in the last few years.

WHY THEY MATTER

The vaquita is the most endangered cetacean in the world. With as few as around 10 left, the species will become extinct without a fully enforced gillnet ban throughout their entire habitat. WWF is urgently working to ensure they can live and thrive in their natural habitat.

THREATS

The vaquita will be extinct if fishery bycatch is not eliminated immediately. Nearly one out of every five vaquitas get entangled and drown in gillnets intended for other marine species like the totoaba, a critically endangered fish also found in the upper Gulf of California. Entanglement in gillnets set for totoaba was the primary cause that brought the vaquita to low levels by the mid-1970s. Totoaba were overfished by the mid-1970s and were listed as endangered by Mexico in 1975, and by the US in 1979.

PROTECTION

WWF has been on red alert ever since the report from the International Committee for the Recovery of the Vaquita (CIRVA) estimated the vaquita population at no more than 10. In the past, WWF has helped study vaquitas and implement protective measures with the Mexican government and local partners. We have been working with Mexican scientists, government representatives, and other partners and collaborators to develop a long-term strategy for the conservation of the species.

We are now calling for urgent and immediate measures to save the last of the vaquitas.

Based on expert recommendations, WWF has called on the Mexican government to strongly enforce a ban on gillnet fisheries throughout the entire range of the species since September 2014. We also ask that the US and China help stamp out the illegal trade in totoaba products and provide enforcement support to the Mexican government, without which vaquitas will go the way of the dodo.

All information comes directly from the World Wildlife Fund Website

