

BLUE WHALE CONSERVATION

Scientific Research

Current estimation is that today's global blue whale population is approximately 10,000 to 25,000 only. Before the 1960s ban on whaling, the blue whale population had been estimated at more than 250,000 globally. Research being undertaken by Oregon State University (OSU) Endowed Marine Mammal Program, Cascadia Research in the USA and the Blue Whale Study directed by Dr Peter Gill in Australia (<http://www.bluewhalestudy.com.au/home.html>) are uncovering new findings in understanding the behaviour and environmental needs of blue whales so that we can learn how to prevent them becoming endangered.

Other conservation efforts to protect the blue whale involve population counts via shipboard surveys performed every three years, and placing observers onboard vessels to monitor the incidental take of protected species, including marine mammals. By locating a possible blue whale mating and calving ground in the Costa Rica Dome — a vital habitat — conservationists hope to better protect them.

Reducing Shipping Lane Speeds

In September 2007, the Centre for Biological Diversity, a California conservation group, petitioned the federal government to reduce ship speeds off the U.S. West Coast to mitigate whale deaths from ship collisions.

Reducing Underwater Noise

Pressure from conservation groups has led to restrictions of underwater noise, and companies involved in oil and gas exploration have begun to limit their use of seismic air guns in some places. A November 2008 U.S. Supreme Court decision, however, determined that the U.S. Navy did not have to limit its use of sonar.

Find further information on the Australian Government Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and The Arts website:

PROTECTING WHALES AND DOPLHINS IN AUSTRALIAN WATERS

<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/publications/pubs/whale-protection.pdf>

FACT SHEET: THE BENEFITS OF SANCTUARIES

<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/publications/pubs/iwc-factsheet-sanctuaries.pdf>

FACT SHEET: HOW THE WORLD BENEFITS FROM WHALE SANCTUARIES

<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/publications/pubs/whale-factsheet3.pdf>