

# MY ANIMAL ISLAND

## CAMPAIGN FOCUS

### ▶ Ocean Noise

Imagine you and your friend are walking in the forest. You turn to say something to your friend but she's disappeared! You look around but can't see her. You start to call her. The wind picks up and the trees start to howl and snap, there's a clap of thunder and you can barely hear yourself above the sound of the rushing river. This might be a walk in the forest for you, but for every whale, this is a day in their noisy seas.

#### ▶ OCEAN NOISE POLLUTION HARMS WHALES

Whales and dolphins use sound to find their way in the ocean, find food, find mates and communicate with each other. Human-made noise in the ocean – such as the noise of ships, noise from drilling and exploring the sea-bed for oil and gas, noise from underwater building projects and noise made by military activities - can be very disturbing to whales and dolphins, causing them great distress and sometimes leading to injury or death.

When very loud sounds such as military sonar are used to try to detect submarines in the water it can result in mass strandings. Mass strandings occur when lots of whales are so disorientated in the water that they end up on beaches – either dead or dying. It is still unclear how sonar causes these problems and research is being carried out to find out more. The most likely reason is that the noise is causing damage to the ears and/or the animals are developing decompression sickness.



Killer whales coming to the surface in Iceland  
© IFAW | Richard McLanaghan

Ocean noise makes it difficult for whales to find food, mate, communicate and avoid predation! Active sonar has been shown to alter the singing of humpback whales, an activity essential to the reproduction of this endangered species; to disrupt the feeding of orcas; and to cause porpoises and other species to panic and flee.

### DID YOU KNOW ?

Decompression sickness - where nitrogen gas bubbles get trapped in the blood - can also affect human divers when they surface too quickly from deep dives. It is thought that the noise from military sonar causes deep-diving whales like beaked whales to surface too quickly. The nitrogen bubbles that then form in the blood can cause tissue damage making the whales very ill indeed and often causing death.



Cuvier's beaked whale, Azores, North Atlantic Ocean  
© Whale Watch Azores | Lisa Steiner

Sound travels a long way in water so noise disturbance such as military sonar can have effects over a very large area.

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### IFAW PROTECTING WHALES FROM HARMFUL OCEAN NOISE !

**IFAW believes that all sources of powerful human-made ocean noise must be regulated to protect whales from harmful effects.**

- ▶ IFAW is working hard with other groups and governments to try to get ocean noise recognized as pollution in the seas so that laws can be put in place to protect all marine mammals that are affected by our noisy seas.

- ▶ The work of the *Song of the Whale* team is very valuable because the more we find out about beaked whales and where they live, the more we will be able to protect them from ocean noise and the many dangers that they face, including getting caught in drift gillnets set in deep water and marine debris - particularly plastic bags and other plastic items that the whales eat.

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My Animal Island is a project of IFAW  
The International Fund for Animal Welfare  
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